



Colac & District
Family History Group Inc.

Coladjins

Inc. No. A0022664A ABN 29618437272

Autumn 2020 Issue 111

Dear Members,

Thinking of you all as we contend with these unusual and difficult circumstances. I hope this finds you and your family well.

As you know, the Colac & District Family History Group is closed, but there is still action behind the scenes as we adjust to “survival mode”.

Norma and Merrill have set up measures by which members, who are interested, can transcribe certificates and other files via their computers at home or do some research for the Almost Forgotten project or write stories. I certainly encourage this, as none of us knows how long these restrictions will continue.

It would be wonderful to make progress on these projects, perhaps more than in normal times, and a way of turning this crisis into something positive.

Please contact Norma on the secretary email address to enquire how you can be involved in any of these activities.

We are all dealing with disappointments – travel plans disrupted, long awaited events postponed, and so many have their work routines interrupted or ceased. Let us be thankful we have plenty of food to sustain us, and we are able to keep connected via social media. Be mindful of each other, and remember our older friends, family and neighbours, for whom a phone call or an old fashioned card or letter would be a great joy.



I look forward to seeing you all when we come to the end of this anxious time, and normality returns. May you stay safe and well, occupied and stimulated.

Diana McGarvie, President.

DAY TO DAY ACTIVITIES OF YOUR FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

28 DECEMBER

ARCHER FAMILY REUNION

Some of our volunteers were treated to traditional singing and dancing when the descendants of Colac pioneer, William Brown Archer, spent time at the History Centre during their reunion weekend. One of his sons had married a “beautiful Cook Island girl” and the descendants had travelled from as far as the Cook Islands and New Zealand to visit Colac.



Descendants of William Brown Archer

11 FEBRUARY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Diana McGarvie has accepted the role of President for one more year and Robyn Currie, her co-president for the past year, has taken on the role of Vice President. Jill Judd has stepped down from the committee after several years of valuable service and Lexie Picken was welcomed in her place. All other positions remain the same. Bill Ledin conducted the election and congratulated the committee and office bearers on their appointments. The February General Meeting followed and Bill had been asked to be the guest speaker. Some time ago he had talked to our group about his father's war diaries which had hardly been looked at since they were brought home at the end of the First World War. Since giving that initial talk, Bill has used his annual winter break in Queensland to digitise and transcribe the diaries. He then had books printed for each of the members of his family.



Bill & Margaret Ledin

29 FEBRUARY

HARLOCK FAMILY REUNION

Report from Diana McGarvie

Descendants of the pioneers to this area, Benjamin and Rebecca Harlock, assembled at the Beac Recreation Hall to reminisce, renew old acquaintances and make new ones, as well as honour those who were committed to researching the family history many years ago, when it was a very different process.



Diana, Raye and Mary, three of our volunteers, created this family tree display for the event

One of these persons was Janet Larson, great grand-daughter of these early settlers, who travelled with her nephew from Sandringham, to be part of the celebrations.

It was my pleasure to meet her for the first time, though I had for many years heard reference to her amongst family stories, as the ‘guru’.

Some family members had travelled long distances to attend, including South Australia, Queensland and urban and rural Victoria. All claimed it was well worth the effort.

A casual lunch was shared, along with the excited chatter of stories and photos, and it was proudly made known that Charlie Harlock's name (Grandson of Ben and Rebecca) was displayed on the WW1 Honour Board right there in the room.

This part of the day continued until about 3pm. Some of the party then visited the Beac Cemetery, while others made their way to the History Centre to view the Family Tree display in our window, previously

prepared by a small group of members. Norma, Merrill and Lynette had generously given their time on a Saturday afternoon to welcome the visitors, attend to book sales, and provide further information regarding the family. I'd like to extend my thanks to Raye and Mary, whose assistance with the research, photo printing and executing of the display in general was exemplary. A combined effort, which contributed to the great success of the event.



Diana, centre explains our research to Harlock relatives

DAY TO DAY ACTIVITIES OF YOUR FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

10 MARCH FAMILY HISTORY GROUP OPEN DAY

At irregular intervals we have held Open Days or evenings to encourage our members and the general public to come along and learn about what happens at the Family History Group. It is a time when we showcase the work of the volunteers, the current projects that are being undertaken, and resources that are available and information about early Colac pioneering families that has been accumulated.



On Tuesday, 10th March we held an Open Day and were really pleased with the turn up.

Norma gave a demonstration on how our database (which has more than 250,000 entries), makes it easy for researchers to find information on their Colac families. Mary and Raye demonstrated how photographs and other information are added to the database. Beryl talked about “Duty Called”, the project that’s aim is to record all Colac & District men and women who have served in the armed forces or nursing corps or peace corps. And our other volunteers were on hand to answer questions and provide demonstrations. During the afternoon one of the guests found a photograph of a family member that she previously hadn’t seen and another one was shown how to access the National Archives for naturalisation records. The day was concluded with a delicious afternoon tea.

16 & 17 MARCH NEW VOLUNTEERS

Two new volunteers were welcomed to the family history group following the open day held the previous week. After some initial training, Meryl and Irene spent the rest of the day working alongside some of the regular volunteers. We are looking forward to their company and assistance and the new skills that both of the ladies will bring to the group.

23 MARCH HISTORY CENTRE CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Lockdown! Covid19 had reached Australia and the government announced that it was closing down all non-essential gatherings. The executive members of the family history group called an emergency meeting to develop a strategy to keep our volunteers connected, busy and safe. InfoTech volunteers, Bernie and Phil, spent several days working on a system to link home computers to the server and allow data entry to be done directly from home. This has enabled Lyn to begin work on the Colac & District rate books. Several other volunteers are using Excel spreadsheets instead. Lorraine and Lexie are working on birth certificates and Raye is developing a database from the “Duty Called” project folders. Meryl is working on wedding anniversaries from old newspaper articles and photographs and Norma is working through other newspaper cuttings. Robyn is doing research for on-line enquiries and transcribing names from the map collection. Others are researching and writing stories for the Almost Forgotten project. So you can see we are keeping busy!

Norma, our secretary and usual volunteer co-ordinator, is in charge of distributing the work and keeping track of the resources. Several large lever-arch files, each containing hundreds of documents for transcription, were loaded into the car for distribution to our volunteers. The folders are deposited on a volunteer’s front step in bags and exchanged for completed work which had been placed outside earlier. Sometimes there is a wave or “hello” through the window or door, but no close contact. When the lockdown is over, we envisage that there will be thousands of entries to add to the database.

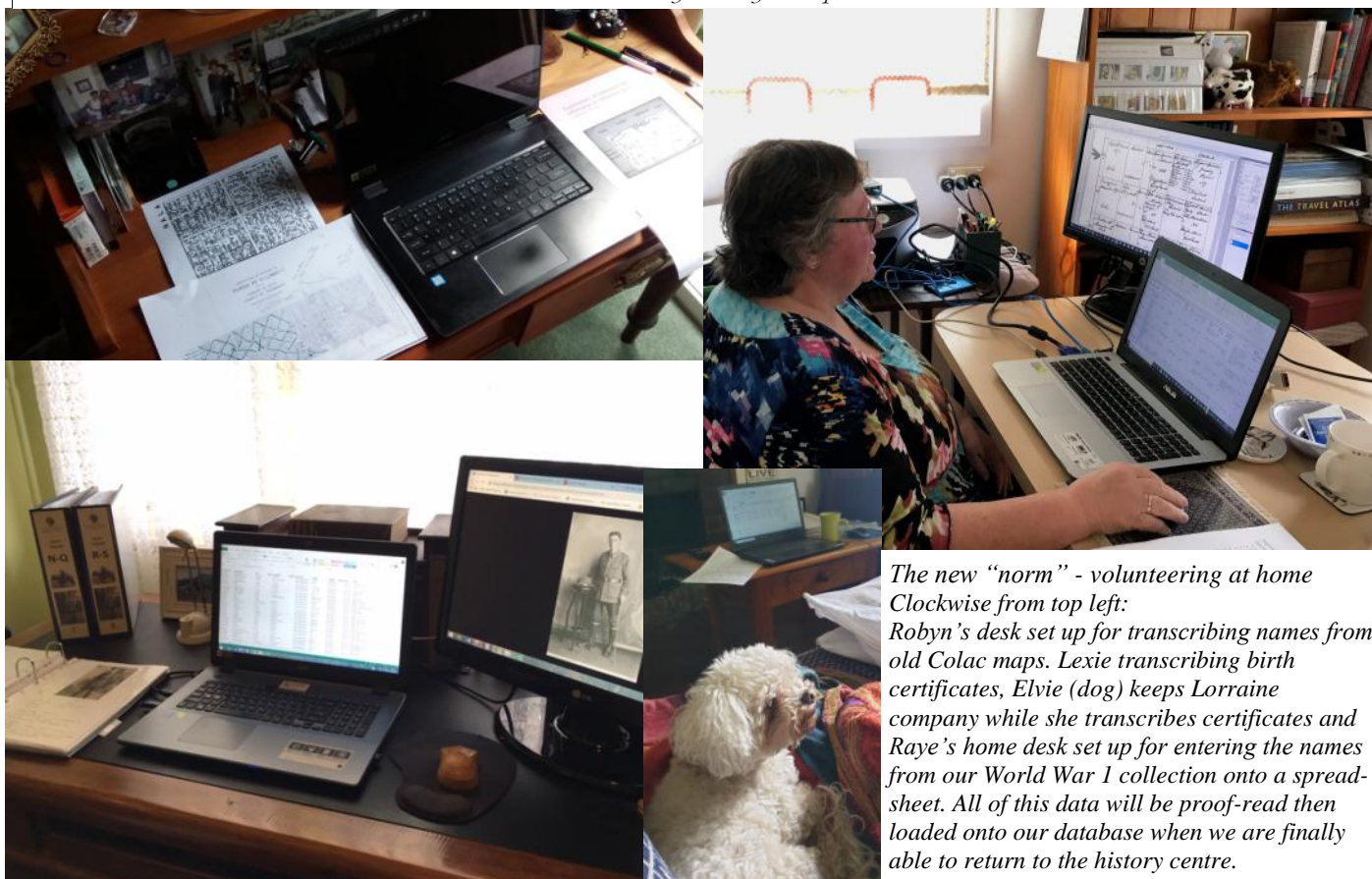
THE CHANGING FACE OF VOLUNTEERING AT THE FAMILY HISTORY GROUP



The usual scene any Monday or Tuesday at the Family History Group prior to mid-March 2020. Some of our many volunteers busy entering information onto the data base, proof reading, or researching for Duty Called, Almost Forgotten projects or responding to queries.



March 23 until?Family History Group in Lockdown



*The new "norm" - volunteering at home
Clockwise from top left:
Robyn's desk set up for transcribing names from old Colac maps. Lexie transcribing birth certificates, Elvie (dog) keeps Lorraine company while she transcribes certificates and Raye's home desk set up for entering the names from our World War 1 collection onto a spreadsheet. All of this data will be proof-read then loaded onto our database when we are finally able to return to the history centre.*

Almost Forgotten Pre-1900 Burials in the Colac Cemetery



CATHERINE AGNES DARCY c1845 - 1898

Catherine Agnes Darcy was born to parents John Daly and Winifred Daly (nee Quaily) in c1845. Home was in the beautiful but rugged surrounds of County Clare in Ireland. There is scant history of the family at this point until, in 1865, we are reacquainted with the now twenty year old Catherine. The young dairy maid had made her way to Liverpool to board the vessel *'The Wennington'* which is to set sail for Australia. Catherine arrived in Melbourne in September 1864 and drifted towards the Geelong region. It is known that, initially, Catherine worked as a servant until, at age twenty-three, she married Patrick Darcy during a small ceremony in Geelong on April 20th 1868.

Patrick too, hailed from County Clare, having been born to parents Patrick Darcy and Sarah Lang in c1841. The newlyweds settled in Swan Marsh where they worked as dairy farmers for most of their married lives.

The first of Catherine's and Patrick's six children was born in Camperdown in 1870 and was named 'Patrick' in deference to his father and to his paternal grandfather. Sadly, this firstborn child died from unknown causes in 1871. A second son, John, arrived in 1871 but tragically, he too passed away prior to his third birthday.

Their first daughter, Sarah Mary Darcy, entered the world at Colac in 1875. Apparently of a more robust constitution we know little of her early life. However, at age 39, she married Peter Harris at St Mary's Colac in 1914.

The fourth child, a daughter, carried the name of her mother. Catherine Agnes Mary Darcy was born in 1876 at Colac. She shortly thereafter joined her parents and sister on the farm at Swan Marsh. A third daughter, Winifred Bridget Darcy was born in 1881. She remained unmarried and was afflicted with a serious illness, leading to her death in 1919 aged thirty-eight years. The sixth child, and fourth daughter, Mary Margaret Darcy was born in 1883 and was the last of the children born to the couple.

Patrick and Catherine Darcy were well respected in their local community. Patrick was admired for

his farming instincts and, in particular, for having the best Shorthorn cattle in the district. Catherine too, was respected by her peers, was well known and had a positive influence locally.

Unfortunately, tragedy struck the family on August 8th 1898 when Catherine died after a long battle with breast cancer. Their beloved mother and devoted wife was a relatively young fifty-three years of age and never got to see any of her daughters married. This loss was particularly difficult for fifteen year old Mary who was left without her mother's guidance at such a tender age.

An obituary in the Colac Herald dated August 9th 1898 outlined that Catherine had resided in the district for twenty-five years and was considered a woman of 'charitable disposition' who fully deserved the respect she had been afforded in the area. She was a 'good living woman in every sense of the word'; a glowing description of this Irish woman who had travelled half a world away from home and successfully built a life for her family. Catherine was buried at the Colac Cemetery on August 10th 1898. An article printed in the Colac on August 12th 1898 commented on the esteem in which she was held as indicated by the large number who attended her funeral. The writer described the cortege which comprised '...50 to 60 vehicles and a large number of horsemen' and commented further on the many floral tributes which adorned the coffin. The solemn procession travelled fifteen miles from the family's home in Swan Marsh to the cemetery for the burial.

In 1899, the year following Catherine's demise, Patrick, aged fifty-eight and a widely respected dairy farmer, used a clearing sale to dispense of his livestock. Agents described it as an extremely successful event and the Colac Herald reported that selling had been so intense that Mr Darcy had to '...buy one of the milkers back to supply his own use.' Patrick remained in the local area until his death on February 5 1926 aged eighty-seven years. He was duly buried in the Colac Cemetery on February 8th 1926.

STORY BY PAULINE MORGAN

FIVE COLAC BROTHERS IN WW1

Five of the seven sons of William and Ellen Evans of Colac East enlisted for service in the First World War and only three would return. When war was declared in 1914, James, the eldest son was one of the early Colac recruits. He enlisted in September and was already at the front when three of his brothers, Cecil, George and William enlisted the following July. Another brother, Thomas, father of two small children, whose wife had died in 1914, enlisted in 1916. In a horror decade for the Evans family, three grandparents, a sister and sister-in-law died and two of the brothers were lost in the war.

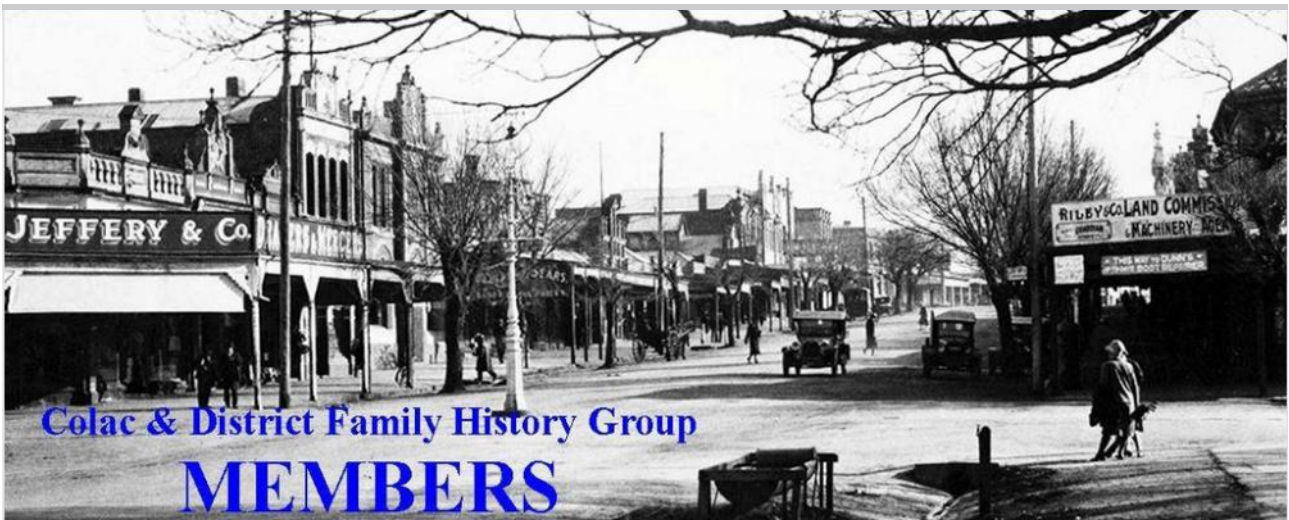
RECORD ENLISTMENT.
In connection with the present war a record has been established in this district by the Evans' families. From two families, viz., Mr W. Evans, Colac East, and Mr Mark Evans, Colac (brothers), six sons have enlisted, viz. —William, George, James, Cecil, John T. and John Arthur Evans. The first four named boys are already at the front, while the latter two have enlisted during the past fortnight.

Colac Reformer 22nd February 1916 p2



George Evans, one of the three brothers who survived the war

STAYING CONNECTED DURING COVID19



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/colacfamilyhistorygroupmembers/>

A new facebook group has been established strictly for the use of current members of the Colac & District Family History Group during this isolation period. We know that a lot of our members are using this time to do some family history research and because we don't have access to the History Centre, they are not able to use the resources. This group is a place where we can all share information, stories, photographs, tips, tricks or resources and we can also ask questions and help each other with research.

You will first need to apply to join by clicking on the link (if you are receiving this newsletter by email) or by going to facebook and typing "colacfamilyhistorygroupmembers". There is an approval process where one of the administrators will check if membership is current and although all members will be able to post onto the page, each post will first be checked by an administrator to ensure that it is within the guidelines.

You will also be sent an email inviting you to join the page. We look forward to hearing from you.

USEFUL INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Have you been thinking about buying a Certificate to help with your research? Check out this special offer from Vic BDM - available until the end of May 2020



Discount offer and new Ask a Family History Expert service

Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria are offering downloadable uncertified historical certificates for \$20 each until the end of May. This is a saving of \$4.50. To purchase a certificate, go to www.bdm.vic.gov.au

If you purchase a certificate with details of early Colac district names on it, please consider sharing the information with us. They are an invaluable resource for research.

ENGLISH WILLS

It is now possible to buy a digital copy of Wills & Probates 1858-1995, 1996 to Present and Soldier's Wills 1850-1986. If searching for entries between 1858 and 1995 it can only be done by surname and year and can be time consuming so it helps if you have the details you need from a site such as Ancestry. The cost involved is GBP 1.50 each and it will take up to ten working days to arrive. It is available at: <https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk/#wills>

GORDON BEACH CERTIFICATES



Gordon Beach is a keen family historian, having commenced researching his own family more than twenty years ago. Gordon said, that while undertaking his research, he was in a financial position to be able to purchase many birth, death and marriage certificates - and he found the information to be very helpful. As many of the older certificates contain multiple entries, he realised that they would be useful to other researchers as well and considered how he might be able to share the information and several years ago he established a website. The site has moved locations at various times, but it is always easy to find—Just Google “Gordon Beach Certificates” or go to:

<https://beach.wixsite.com/australianbdmrecords>

It is definitely worth checking to see if Gordon has a copy of the certificate you are looking for and by our experience, he responds to requests very quickly. Our researchers on the “Almost Forgotten” Pre 1900 burial project have found the website very useful.

FREE AUSTRALIA-WIDE BIRTH, DEATH & MARRIAGE LOOK-UPS



Australian Surnames Group

Australian Family History Group - Free genealogy help for all states of Australia

This site offers free birth, death and marriage look-ups for all states of Australia and also contains some New Zealand records. They also offer help with “brick walls” and host forums and chat groups. Worth having a look and seeing if it is useful for you. <https://www.tapatalk.com/groups/australiansurnamesgroup/>

CAN YOU HELP TO IDENTIFY THESE PEOPLE?

In this section we will publish photographs that have been donated by the public but not all of the names are known.



From Maree Ritches: This photo was taken of local boys who worked for Wattie Pic peas who had a factory at Warrion in the nineteen sixties. Peas were grown around the district. The identity of all but one of the men is known. From back left: John Laurie, Gary Bourk, Mick Prasevic. Front row: Patrick Daffy and the man on the right front is unknown. If you can help, please email: secretary@colacfamilyhistory.org.au We would also be interested in associated stories

This is a unique period in our history. Think about recording what you are doing, how you are feeling and how this is affecting you or your family. Take an “isolation photograph” We would love to have any stories or photographs that you are willing to share.

Email: secretary@colacfamilyhistory.org.au

USUAL OPENING TIMES

Mon & Tues 10pm to 2pm
Thur & Fri 1:30pm to 4:30pm
Sun 2pm to 4pm

Closed

Until Further Notice

CONTACT US

Phone: 0352315736

Email: secretary@colacfamilyhistory.org.au

KEEP UP TO DATE THROUGH OUR WEBSITE OR FACBOOK PAGES

Website: www.colacfamilyhistory.org.au

Facebook: www.facebook.com/colacdistrctfamilyhistory

Cemetery Project Facebook: www.facebook.com/almostforgotten1900/

New Facebook Page for C&DFHG Group Members

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/colacfamilyhistorygroupmembers/>

We thank these organisations for their ongoing support:

COPACC, Colac Otway Shire, The Colac Herald, Office of Richard Riordan MP.

DISCLAIMER: Contributions to this newsletter are accepted in good faith and the committee does not accept responsibility for the accuracy of information of submitted articles nor opinions expressed