



# Lorne

## A Living History

By Doug Stirling

A Great Collection of Historical Facts and Yarns  
About One of Australia's Favourite Destinations.



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© 2004. First published October 2004 by J.D. Stirling 34 Charles St.  
Lorne, Australia 3232.

ISBN 0-646-44100-0

Printed in Australia by Adams Print, 58 Leather St. Breakwater, Victoria  
3219.

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Extra copies available by mail order from the publisher.  
Telephone 03 5289 1145.

Front cover photograph taken from the authors home in Charles St. Lorne,  
looking North East, illustrates the combined beauty of the eucalypts and  
the ocean.



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## INTRODUCTION



**Lorne** is a small picturesque seaside township set around Louttit Bay on the breathtakingly scenic Great Ocean Road in the State of Victoria in Australia. It is only an hour and three quarters drive from the Melbourne C.B.D and the final 30 minutes or so of the journey is absolutely spectacular. In my opinion the beauty of the Lorne district is unsurpassed and has been an attraction for millions of tourists over the years, many pausing to laze on our sandy beaches or bushwalk through the lush ferny gorges of the hinterland. It's not surprising that the Victorian Government named it '*a place of natural beauty and special significance*' and the widely respected international travel magazine *Conde Nast Traveller* called it '*the journey of a lifetime*' and listed it as number one in their top 20 of the '*world's most inspirational trips*'. The Victorian Government's Tourist Minister called it '*a complete package of great beaches, towns, accommodation, eateries and attractions*'.

With an abundance of wildlife, unique and beautiful plant life and a colourful array of native birds, Lorne is renowned for its sweet sea breezes which carry the calls of warbling magpies and laughing kookaburras. Since the early days of the many local guesthouses, families have bonded closely during exciting active holidays at Lorne and talked about their experiences for years to come. Many return to seek out new waterfalls and caves, take in some fishing from the rocks, or perhaps set up an easel and paint one of countless inspiring views. Wherever one strolls there are glimpses of the sparkling blue sea appearing through the striking blue gums, drawing one back to the shoreline.

Forgive me for sounding like a travel brochure. I'm like an old fish, well and truly hooked by the beauty of our special town.

In November 1856, my grandfather John Stirling, then aged 15, migrated to Point Henry near Geelong from Paisley, Scotland. He was met by his father William Stirling, who had migrated to Australia a couple of years earlier. John was taken to Winchelsea where his parents were already well established. Eventually he married Jessie Lauder the daughter of another pioneering family. John's father died in 1865 at 56 years of age. His mother Janet won the respect of the townspeople and became known as everyone's *Auntie* Stirling. She grew vegetables on a large plot near the present Winchelsea bridge and gave her produce away to the needy. Janet's memory was cherished long after her death at age 99 in 1904.

In 1878 John moved to Lorne and with the help of his son William set about building Lorne's first store and bakehouse with an attached dwelling. The family grew to eleven children and in 1888 my Dad, Johnstone 'Jack' Galloway Stirling, the second youngest, was born next to the store. Jack learned his trade as a carpenter under the watchful eye of his brother-in-law Andrew Sanger, a well known Lorne builder. Jack became the maintenance carpenter at the Erskine Guesthouse and in time married the housekeeper Annie Woods who had come from the tiny Victorian town of Amphitheatre. The marriage was blessed with three children; first my two sisters and then in July 1922, I was born at number four Smith Street Lorne near the old Chalet guesthouse. I was given the name John Douglas Stirling, however I have always been called 'Doug'.

My purpose in writing this small book is to try to convey in a personal way, how our local history unfolded, through stories about the lives and times of those early pioneers who prepared the foundations for today's Lorne.

I grew up hearing fascinating stories about the early days of our small isolated village and had the good fortune to rub shoulders with the many local characters who told me exciting tales, including stories of the ships wrecked along our shores. It may be difficult for the reader who is familiar with modern Lorne to imagine what this area was like in those years long gone. Hopefully this book will provide an interesting and perhaps amusing glimpse into our colourful past.



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Early life in Lorne was a struggle in many ways because of the isolation due to poor overland access. Things changed dramatically when the Otway Coast was finally made very much more accessible by the building of the Great Ocean Road. This remarkable all weather access, built over incredibly difficult terrain, brought much prosperity to small settlements along the coast including Lorne.

We tend to imagine that the comfort of modern motor transport has always been with us, but it is incomparable to the dangers and discomforts of the horse and coach days that the first settlers of Lorne, the Mountjoy family had to contend with. Imagine for example early coaches carrying people and supplies, negotiating rough poorly formed roads and steep inclines or bogged to the axles in sticky mud. Women held on to the sides of the coach until their knuckles turned white as the horses skidded down slippery steep slopes.

The small flat area on Lorne's foreshore was the anvil of the early town where the pioneers forged our history. 'The Flat' as it became known, was the hub, where everyone gathered for the town's events and it often became a soaked quagmire during heavy storms. 'Forest Lake and Plain' was the district's first news magazine to record some of these early events and old issues still exist and are fascinating to read. There are hundreds of documents and photographs on display at the Lorne Historic Society.

Lorne has managed to maintain its unique charm into the 21<sup>st</sup> century because our planning committees have wisely limited the building height in the town to around seven and a half metres to preserve the views and the town's charming character for both locals and visitors to enjoy. Today our town is a friendly blend of traditional values and twenty first century sophistication.

I dedicate this book to Mary, 'my champion English rose', who has lovingly nurtured and assisted me throughout the decades that I have worked as a volunteer in many capacities for the town we love so much.

### **Acknowledgements:**

My special thanks go to the Lorne Historical Society for allowing free access to their outstanding collection of historic photographs and information on early Lorne. In particular I would like to thank Jean Graham and her late husband Malcolm for their many years of investigating, collating and recording Lorne's colourful history. Thanks also to active and innovative L.H.S member Joan Wheal and her late husband Graham and to Keith Cecil for his invaluable photographic contribution to the Society. I would also like to acknowledge the contributions made by Barry Langan (Aboriginal history), Michael Callanan (S.E.S. history), Francis Taylor (Figtree Community Centre history) and Margo Parton and Dorothy Smith.

Finally and from the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank my dear daughter and editor Jill, who spent the past year sifting through hundreds of old photographs and turning my hand written memories and stories into the book you are reading.

### **Quality of the photographs**

The photographs used in this book are up to 100 years and more old and in many cases the original prints have been lost or have deteriorated over time. In some cases only relatively poor copies remain. The quality of the photographs we are accustomed to in modern publishing results from the use of original negatives or colour transparencies but neither were available for any of the pictures in this book. Nevertheless, I strongly believe in the old adage that 'a picture is worth a thousand words' and we have done our best to computer enhance what was available.



## 1798 The Beginning.

In 1798 explorers Bass and Flinders discovered that Australia was not connected to Tasmania and this naturally aroused interest in the new colonies about the potential of the newly discovered shipping channel 'Bass Strait' and the northern coastline of this new sea passage on which the town of Lorne is now situated.

When Lt James Grant R.N followed in December 1800 in the 60ton sloop *Lady Nelson* for further exploration of our coastline, he must have seen many campfires lit by the local Aborigines. The indigenous natives of Australia had been living in the 'Great South Land' for more than 50,000 years and there is much evidence that they inhabited the area around Lorne for a large part of that time. Lt Grant was responsible for naming many of the prominent landmarks along our coastline including Mt. St George. He named Cape Otway after his

Escapees generally either died of privation or returned to the settlement in desperation. An exception was William Buckley, the earliest know European to visit the Lorne area. Buckley from Cheshire, England, was sentenced for stealing a bolt of cloth, but escaped from the Penal Settlement and was presumed dead by the authorities. We now know that he joined the Beangalit - Balug clan of the Aboriginal Wathaurong tribe. He lived an extraordinary life among them for 32 years, mostly at Bream Creek on the Bellarine Peninsula. At 6ft 7in Buckley must have been quite a curiosity for the koorie people who treated him very well. He was given the name *Murrangurk* and taught to speak their language. Buckley married twice and was not heard of by the white settlers again until 1835 when he and his native followers stumbled upon a camp set up at Indented Head by John Batman, one of the founders of Melbourne.

Buckley decided to give himself up and it took him quite some time to comprehend English again after



The first settlers discover William Buckley in 1835

Painting by courtesy La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria

friend William Albany Otway who was one of the Commissioners of the Transport Board and a Captain in the Royal Navy. Later he became Vice-Admiral Otway R.N.

In 1803 Lt Gov. David Collins established an ill-fated Penal Settlement at Sullivans Bay on the site of today's seaside resort town of Sorrento. There were many attempted and some successful escapes by the convicts imprisoned there.

so many years speaking only the aboriginal tongue. Buckley was pardoned in 1835 after co-operating with the white settlers around the Port Phillip district to help keep the aboriginal people in order. Testament to the respect earned by William Buckley at this time, are the streets, falls and landmarks named after him today. He moved to Hobart where he married once more and died from injuries caused in a traffic accident in 1856 when 76 years of age.



During the period of his escape, Buckley travelled southwest as far as Mt Defiance, called *Nooraki* by the Aborigines, where he built a rough hut by a creek. From his later recollections it is almost certain that he had contacts with the Aboriginal people of the Lorne area, the 'Gadubanud' tribe and it is therefore reasonable to assume that this was the first contact the Aborigines of this area had with a European.

There were five clans within the Gadubanud tribe and their traditional land ran from the Painkalac Ck outlet, along the Painkalac through to Bambra and Deans Marsh, connecting to the Barwon River just before Birregurra. Tribal land continued along the foothills of the Otway Ranges to the Gellibrand River, then down to the outlet at Princetown, its most western boundary. (*Please refer to map on page 62*).

The main gathering area was the Cumberland River Gorge and their spiritual and ceremonial area was at The Brothers, near the Gorge. There were three bora rings within this ceremonial area, one of three places in Victoria to have the ceremonial rings intact until the early 1980's, giving it high significance to the tribe and other coastal tribes of this part of Western Victoria.

Lorne sits on the Erskine River, which was also a very significant fishing and ritual area for betrothals of the local Aborigines. Several graves of the Gadubanud people have been un-earthed over the years on the Erskine House guesthouse property and some are apparently quite ancient.

'The Springs' at Cathedral Rock on today's Great Ocean Road near Lorne, were an important summer venue for the local tribe and the area was valued for its fresh water and good fishing from the rock platforms that were exposed at low tides. There are still several shell middens to be seen above the high water mark around our coastline, where ancient feasts have taken place. The canyon at the back of Cathedral Rock was also a burial site and many aboriginal artefacts have been found there. The tribal people walked back to Deans Marsh in winter to hunt eels, swan eggs, emu eggs and other food. Their tribal language was called '*King Parrot*', for it described what they called their short-lipped, quick chortle way of speaking, very similar to the King Parrot. No doubt the Gadubanuds kept a close eye on whalers operating along the coastline during the 1830's.

I believe it is fair to say that the original occupants of

South-Western Victoria were greatly disadvantaged by the arrival and occupation of their traditional lands by white settlers. In some cases their treatment was quite brutal.

As there are many publications devoted to the history of the natives of Victoria during early European settlement I don't intend to cover the subject further, but I would like to add one positive note. It appears from the evidence that the Lorne area has been occupied for many thousands of years and one can only imagine that over eons of time countless people have enjoyed this magnificent district in much the same way we continue to in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Long before the arrival of the white settlers, the rivers and streams of the Lorne area would have yielded rich spoils of fish and wild life. In fact, right up to the early 1930's crayfish, abalone and many other species of fish that are rare today could be caught relatively easily from the deep rock channels around our shoreline.

### Discovery of the Louttit Bay Area



In 1841 Captain James Louttit, Master of the schooner *Will Watch*, reported sheltering from north-westerly winds in our protected

Bay. He carried cargo around the Otway coastline in many different vessels like the schooner *Apollo* and later took the first shipload of wool to England. Subsequently in 1846, surveyor George Smythe had the names of Louttit Bay and nearby Apollo Bay, registered at Superintendent Latrobe's Office in Melbourne. No objections were raised and these names remain today.

In the late 1840s William Lindsay, Master of the cutter *William* was searching for coal along the



Erskine River in 1868

Otway coastline. We are not certain of the results of his endeavours, however he did discover important locations with valuable timber between Apollo and Louttit Bay's. In 1849 he was granted what was known then as a splitters licence to cut timber. He was put ashore from the schooner *Margaret* at Louttit Bay



with his wife and children plus food and tools of his trade. The *Margaret* was purchased specifically for the transportation of the timber to satisfy a growing demand in the newly established colony of Port Phillip, today's Melbourne. Apart from normal timber- split palings, wattle bark and short roof shingles were also loaded for the thirty hour sailing journey back to Corio Bay at present day Geelong.

Lindsay built a dwelling on the hillside at Lorne near the present Swing Bridge and this would have had a very good view of the ocean and of any approaching vessel bringing him fresh supplies. A modern house named '*The Lookout*' was built on the same spot many years later. There is a small stream a few metres north of the Swing Bridge and no doubt Lindsay would have drawn water there.

All went well with the Lindsay's until January 1850 when tragedy struck. Their two small sons had burrowed a tunnel into a sand cutting while playing near the mouth of the river. The tunnel collapsed and smothered them. Their grave can still be seen on the high ground near the Swing Bridge. Its sad inscription reads '*William Firth Lindsay age 8 and Joseph Southwell Lindsay age 4, died 28/1/1850*'.



It incorrectly states '*Drowned in the river Erskine*' but in fact these poor children were smothered by sand. Unable to remain at the site of such a

painful tragedy the Lindsay's moved to Canada where they were blessed with a family of girls.

In 1850, a correspondent from the Geelong Advertiser accompanied a party of explorers around the coast to Louttit Bay. The purpose of the horseback expedition was to seek out waterpower to drive sawmills. They came across the *Osprey*, a three masted schooner at anchor in Louttit Bay waiting to load timber and reported receiving hospitality from a Mr Rennie who had built a hut in the area known today as the Lorne Foreshore. Mr Rennie was apparently employing a considerable number of men, felling and splitting timber in the nearby forest.

### The First Settlers

In 1851 the Port Phillip district was separated from the Colony of New South Wales and Lorne became part of the new 'Colony of Victoria'.

There were several attempts to farm the Louttit Bay area. In 1852 Garrett Brien leased from the new Victorian Government a huge area covering 27 sq.miles (*about 45 sq.kms*) and called it the Louttit Bay Run.



The boundaries of this enormous holding extended from Airey's Inlet and followed the ridge along Mt Sabine and Benwerrin Road to the Cumberland River at Lorne.

Garrett Brien transferred it to another pioneer named John Herd in 1853 who established The Louttit Bay Cattle Station. In 1855 he in turn transferred the lease to Geelong businessman William Asplin, who controlled it until 1862. William grew a fine wheat crop on the Lorne foreshore and he and his trusty team of bullocks carved a niche in the settlement as the years went by. The lease was next transferred to John Short who had remained on the run until 1864.

During that year Thomas, Caleb and Lawrence Mountjoy, three brothers from Kilkhampton-Cornwall who arrived in Melbourne in 1853 and had been farming in the Barrabool hills, decided to take



This photograph taken in 1914 shows a growing and successful Mountjoy family

up the Louttit Bay Run. Although the lease was later reduced to twenty-three square miles it is intriguing to imagine what such a vast holding would be worth today if it was still intact.

Imagine the trip the Mountjoy's would have endured from the Barrabool Hills near Geelong to the coast at Lorne with all of their equipment and belongings on horse drawn drays. It's quite amazing that without any modern navigation equipment and only the sparse maps of the day, they found the right ridges through the Otway ranges to bring them out of the forest at the Erskine River. It would have been unimaginably tough going, trekking over the virgin Angahook and



Otway forests and quite surprising for them to arrive to the unexpected sight of a healthy wheat crop William Asplin had grown on the Foreshore Flat.

The Mountjoy family was destined to become one of the town's most historically important dynasties. They built the first real dwelling in Lorne consisting of just two rooms. During the same year another milestone for the settlement was its addition to the newly formed Winchelsea Roads Board.

In 1865 The Mountjoys were charged £1.4.4. (\$2.45) for the areas first rated land and dwelling. They worked hard growing crops and extended the building to cater for various cattlemen and curious travellers who came overland or by sea. Travellers continually popped in asking for lodgings and food and no doubt this was Lorne's first tentative step towards its present day stature as one of Australia's leading holiday resorts and tourist attractions.

The Mountjoys cultivated the land near their two-roomed dwelling and cleared the slopes of the nearby hills by ringbarking the trees in order to let the grass grow for cattle grazing.

As the area north of Lorne and over the Otway ranges was so heavily covered by forest, it was common practice at the time for some of the property owners on the northern side of the ranges to set fire to the bush on a day with hot northerly winds. This in time gave their cattle fresh winterfeed from the young wiregrass and new herbage that grows in abundance after a bushfire. Such practices seem dangerously negligent by today's standards but illustrate how different times were 150 years ago and what in those days, was necessary for the survival of the fledgling economy and the small communities that depended on it.

When it came time to muster their cattle, the Otway cattlemen followed the trails made by the cattle as far as the coast. Many of them reported being struck by the beauty of Louttit Bay. They in turn told others who followed and some stayed on for weeks. This led to a demand for extra accommodation, prompting the Mountjoys to expand their premises to cater for visitors whose numbers continued to increase as the word spread about the beautiful scenery and abundance of fish and game.

They called their first building The Temperance Hotel as no alcohol was sold. Their first registered guests were Dan and Sam Roberts who told their hosts they were from Hardcastle in England. "*We enjoyed the*

*fishing, shooting and sight seeing by mountain and stream*" they reported back to friends.

Another illustration of how much the community's values have changed is that one of the most popular attractions was the shooting of wallabies, koalas and possums for their fine fur. We should not be too quick to judge however, because it is easy to imagine how



An early photograph of the view from the Kiosk Paddock c.1905

abundant these poor creatures must have seemed at the time and hunting was a way of survival for many.

Eventually the Mountjoy family renamed their hotel Erskine House and that name has continued until today. Since those far away days this venerable old guesthouse has hosted countless thousands of holidaymakers from Australia and around the world for more than one and a half centuries and remains one of Victoria's best known and familiar landmarks.



In 1886 a coach loaded with tourists travels the North bank of the Erskine River. The early Erskine House estate is seen in the background.

One of the early problems the Mountjoy family faced was beach sand encroaching onto their ploughed land. There were several rows of sand dunes between the high tide mark and their farm property on the foreshore with only a few Melaleuca's growing here and there to prevent the sands moving to and fro. This problem was resolved in latter years by planting



This photograph from the early 1900s shows that Erskine House had become a very substantial establishment by then. The original Temperance Hotel is the low building in the foreground with the guesthouse additions to the right.

rows of Marram grass that bound up the sand and to a certain extent stopped it drifting about.

The hill above their farm where Hopetoun Terrace is today, was known for many years as the Company's Paddock. They also cleared another hill that we now know as Richardson's Blvd. It had a kiosk type of shelter near the top for the use of guests and was used for picnics and other recreational activities. Guests were told that if they made the climb they could take in the 'beautiful vistas' facing the direction of the Erskine River. Until the 1930s the locals referred to the area as the Kiosk Paddock.

William Mountjoy and his mates Harry Jebb from Creswick and Fred Straw from Brunswick were top rate bushmen. They chased wild cattle all over Lorne's hills, herding them back to the foreshore



A coach loads passengers outside the Stirling Store (left) next to the original Post Office that was built in 1889.

flat. They often searched for their cattle from a spectacular vantage point known today as *Teddy's Lookout* that overlooks the beautiful St George River inlet immediately south of the town. During these wild and adventurous excursions they discovered and named many beautiful waterfalls such as Mountjoy, Creswick, Brunswick Straw, Zara and Erskine.

In time the Mountjoys were forced to abandon their cattle venture because of serious stock losses from wild dogs (dingoes) that seemed to have no fear and were even known to chase the calves right up to the back door of the house.

In 1869 a resident of the district named Edward Silk established the Louttit Bay sawmill. That same year William Mountjoy built a home of his own near the present site of the Commonwealth Bank. He called his new house *Roslyn*, which in latter years became the Argyle guesthouse. On the northern side, two Erskine House gardener's homes were built. Many years later a Miss Lamont ran a popular business called the Thistle Tea Rooms in one of those homes. The other house later became the home of well-known local photographer Albert Jarratt.

The Mountjoys continued their busy and enterprising life and Lawrence built Lorne's second general store on the site of the present service station.



## The First Store

The first store and bakehouse in Lorne was built and operated by my grandfather John Stirling, a Scotsman who arrived in Lorne in 1878. The store was situated where the Post Office is today. John served the Lorne Riding as Winchelsea Shire Councillor during the 1880's and was the gazetted Magistrate for the Southern Bailiwick.

## The First Overland Transport

The Mountjoys introduced their own horse drawn tourist coaches to service their growing enterprises and these were driven by Frank and Oscar Mountjoy from their stables on old Otway Street near the corner of Grove Road.



Oscar Mountjoy driving coach & leaving the stables on Old Otway St.

The huge building, clad with corrugated iron consisted of ten horse stalls, a large feed loft above and room for several coaches. A four-roomed residence for the caretaker was also incorporated into the complex. A generation later as young kids, my friends and I had tremendous fun playing in those stables and in the winter we squelched barefoot through the hot manure pits to warm our cold feet. Not everyone's idea of a good time but then we were kids growing up in a small town and everything about the town was a great adventure.

In the early days, both Mountjoy's coaches and the famous Cobb & Co coaches collected Lorne bound tourists from the Winchelsea Railway Station. After 1891 passengers were transferred at Birregurra onto a smaller train to travel a branch line to the new Deans Marsh Station. The Mountjoys built more stables at the rear of the new station and before the trip to Lorne the travellers were taken to the Deans Marsh Hotel where they were served huge three course meals for only eight pence (*about 7 cents*). It soon became obvious why they were so generous with the meals when the menfolk discovered that

they were obliged to get out and push the coach on the steep hills to Lorne.

The horses struggled with up to 26 passengers plus luggage. You can imagine how relieved the horses were when all the men got off on the hills to do the pushing. When descending a slippery steep section of the roadway during the wet weather, the driver would sometimes have to drag a large log of wood behind the coach on the way down the hills. On those days it was probably quicker to walk to Lorne. The road was contoured around the hills and during the summer those awaiting the coach could tell how far away it was by the thick columns of dust rising through the distant trees.

For those readers familiar with the town today it may be interesting to contemplate the route taken by this earliest means of transport. Until 1879, as they arrived into town, the coaches entered Lorne via Neade St and then Smithers and Stirling Streets and down to the coast past the present day Lions BBQ area and crossed the mouth of the river to Erskine House, then up old Otway Street past the coach stables and down Grove Road. The ridge coast road posed many difficulties owing mainly to its steepness, also the drivers were aware of the hazard of crossing the river mouth on a rising tide.

The journey from Dean's Marsh was much improved in 1879 from the tortuous old ridge track. The new coach road followed the contours more and made the trip easier on the horse teams, but it still took about 4 hours to negotiate the Otway range. It then entered the town via Howard Street down to the Erskine River and made a right turn up to the ford and over the river beside the present road bridge. For some time even after the first bridge was built, coach drivers still used the ford to wash the dirt from the brake shoes of the coach and to clean the dust and grime from their team of horses.

A very significant improvement to the flow of traffic along the Lorne foreshore and today's main street, took place in late 1879 when the Roads Board Authority of the day offered to fence 24 chains of the Mountjoy's property between Otway Street and Grove Road in exchange for some prime acres of river flat that they could use as a garden and orchard.

The Mountjoys planted an apricot orchard on the bank of the river and it was still producing fruit well over 50 years later in 1930 when I was eight years old. That year Jim Hall, the school headmaster, appealed to the Erskine House management to have



the trees cut out because during the season many kids were sent home complaining of violent bellyaches caused by eating green apricots. The universal cure for anything in those days was a tablespoon of vile tasting castor oil ladled down your throat. The kids were far too impatient to wait for the fruit to ripen.

The Erskine House garden was set out by another early pioneer Mr Jesse Allen, who with the help of William Asplin and his bullocks, cleared his own holding on the St. George River naming the property Allenvale. These gardens and orchards where Kia Ora Caravan Park is today, only ceased operation in the early 1960's. As kids we had methods of accessing this temptation, even though it was surrounded by a high steel sheet fence with two rows of barbed wire on top. Like Houdini, we swore never to reveal how it was done.

### Louttit Bay becomes Lorne

In 1869 the township and surrounding hills were surveyed by A.C.Allan, resulting in a subdivision set out by George Darbyshire in 1871. That same year the small settlement, then known as Louttit Bay was finally renamed Lorne.

Our town was named after The Marquis of Lorne whose full name was *John Douglas Sutherland Campbell*. He had recently had the good fortune to marry Princess Louise, Queen Victoria's Fourth daughter.



The records show that the Marquis himself had virtually nothing to do with our town, however there were many Scots living in the settlement and no doubt they had an influence in putting his name forward in recognition

of the marriage of the Queen's daughter. It may be of interest if I include a little bit about the man our town was named after.

As the eldest son of the Argyll line of Campbells, Lord Lorne held the courtesy title of Marquis of Lorne and was heir to the title of Duke of Argyll from the age of 21 months until he was 54. He received an excellent education at Edinburgh Academy, Eton, St. Andrews and Cambridge. The Duke represented Argyllshire as a Liberal Member of Parliament in the British House of Commons.

At age 33, as Lord Lorne, he was appointed Canada's youngest ever Governor General. It is written that he and Princess Louise made many lasting contributions to Canadian society especially in the arts and sciences.

After returning to England in 1883 he sat as a member of the House of Commons in England from 1895 until the death of his father on April 24, 1900, when he became the 9th Duke of Argyll. He and Princess Louise lived at Kensington Palace until he died from double pneumonia in 1914 at age 69. Princess Louise died in 1939, at the age of 91.

Ours is not the only town of Lorne. There is also a small town named Lorne in Northern Canada (pop.3000) and in this case Lord Lorne did in fact have some connection with its history in his role as the Governor General of Canada.

### The Bishop

In the first subdivision at Lorne there were only 29 allotments. Edward Hall a temperance missionary from Birregurra bought one of the large new lots and erected Lorne's second substantial house on the site of the present Lorne Hotel. The Council valued his property at £200.00 (\$400.00) but because he helped advance the settlement by building another residence, they rewarded him by crediting the council rates of fifteen shillings (\$1.50) for the first year. He named his house *Walton Lodge* and three years later added an observatory and renamed the house *St Peters*.



Early combined church service at The Sanctuary on the Erskine River

Edward, an Englishman, was affectionately called *The Bishop* because he fancied himself as a preacher and often conducted services at Erskine House and The Sanctuary above the Rapids on the Erskine River. It was said that he rarely stopped talking and had a large stock of doubtful stories that some said



were as tall as the surrounding blue gums. He was a natural philosopher and used his communication skills to earn a living as a tourist guide in Lorne. Edward had a close affinity with nature and was often seen standing on top of a hill wearing his red hairpiece, admiring the view and praying to God. An accomplished artist, whose method was to use a twisted cloth on a stick, he left a beautiful collection of his work for future generations to enjoy: The Lorne Historical Society has twenty copies of these important, historical paintings of Lorne c.1880.

The third house in Lorne was built by Sydenham Sabine and was later occupied by Mrs Fanny Dalway the first teacher in the town. By the end of 1872, there were 34 ratepayers in the area. Half-acre (.2hct) lots were selling at £5.10.0 (\$11.00). At that time a Mr Sheehan established a fishing business at Louttit Bay running two boats between Lorne and Queenscliff.

The Deans Marsh-Louttit Bay track was first blazed by William Box, then surveyed and established in 1872, giving another access to the tiny beachside settlement of Lorne other than by sea. Times were very tough with everyone employed on the road works having to provide their own tools, tents and food. You can imagine how important the new overland access track was to the early settlers.

As the town slowly progressed a Post Office was opened at Erskine House in 1874 by Thomas



Marge Jarratt and Bertha Harris operating Lorne manual telephone exchange c1942.

Mountjoy and in January 1876 a telegraph office was opened by connecting a line to the existing telegraph line between Melbourne, Deans Marsh,

Mogg's Creek and Cape Otway. An undersea telegraph cable had been laid from Cape Otway to King Island and Tasmania in 1859 to improve communication and assist with shipping information and safety. It is difficult for us with today's instant communication virtually between any two people on the planet, to imagine what a tremendous improvement the miracle of the telegraph brought to the lives of the people of the day. Until then, all information from the outside world took days, weeks and even months to reach Lorne. Most early settlers were from Europe and waited sometimes up to a year for an answer to a letter from loved ones or a reply to

business communication.

### A Hotel, School and Cemetery

In 1876 Joseph Duncan and Theodore Hancock built the Lorne Hotel and the first licensee was Mr.J.G.Rooke. In Nov 1919 when the hotel was owned by the Bendigo Building Society, it was destroyed by fire and subsequently replaced by the new *Hotel Lorne* that still stands on the site today. The tariff at The Hotel Lorne in those early days was £5.00 per week (\$10) and included the return coach and rail fare. People from all over Victoria and beyond made the popular trip to Lorne for holidays as they learned about the area and of the comfortable accommodation available.



The first Lorne Hotel built in 1876.

There were a number of children in the early town in need of an education and in 1877 Miss Fanny Langdon (later Mrs Dalway) became the first teacher and taught in a rough hut built especially for this first school. Miss Langdon was a kind and competent person with the children's interests at heart and thoughtfully organised many activities for them including a Sunday School.

Another necessity of life, the first town cemetery, was gazetted in March 1878 and Thomas Mountjoy (*Wesleyan*), John Elkington (*Anglican*) and John Stirling (*Presbyterian*) were appointed the first trustees. By 1900 other denominations were represented and in 1922 a *Roman Catholic* trustee was appointed.

### Walking to work.

In the late 1800s when bad weather and deep mud made the coach road almost impassable, my grandfather and early district councillor John Stirling, preferred to walk the 30miles (48kms) to



attend Winchelsea Shire Council meetings, as this was the only way he could guarantee punctuality. He would leave Lorne early on a Tuesday and stay with his in-laws the *Lauders*, at Winchelsea that evening so that he could represent Lorne at Council the next day. He would then walk home to Lorne on the Thursday. John Street in Lorne was named after him and Stirling Street after his family. My Aunt Bell told me many stories about Grandpa and as a child I was amazed that he regularly walked all the way to Winchelsea, but she told me it was common in those days for people to walk long distances.

### The First Pier

In 1879, in response to a pressing need for a safe place for the many small ships visiting the town to dock, an L shaped pier was built at Point Grey. Ships would tie up on the seaward side facing the direction of the lighthouse, but unfortunately this design proved to be very unsatisfactory because the heavy swells and easterly winds bumped the vessels against the structure, sometimes causing substantial damage. This finally forced a complete change to the layout of the pier and it was considerably lengthened to 480 ft (157metres) to allow at least 5metres depth of water at low tide.



The Lorne Pier in the 1930s during a charity diving demonstration by Olympic medalists and local resident Lil Beaurepaire.

The new pier allowed larger vessels to tie up on the leeside thus giving them much more protection. To help prevent further damage to the pier a separate row of piles was driven into the sea bed beside the main pier structure and large leaf springs connected both structures together. In 1940 further alterations were made and the pier took on its present shape. Finally, a motorised crane was installed to lift the fishing boats out of the water and up onto the pier to give them complete protection from bad weather.

### The Grand Pacific Hotel

The pier became a new focal point for the town's people, especially after 1879 when Henry Gwynne

built the impressive three-storey Grand Pacific Hotel on land adjacent to the pier. Architecturally designed in the Gothic style, this magnificent structure had two ornate balconies heavily decorated in iron lace, complete with a bell tower and flagstaff. Naturally the hotel became a magnet for early tourists.

Henry Gwynne suffered a serious budget *blowout* during the construction. His original estimate was £6.000 (\$12.000), however this proved to be nowhere near enough to build an extremely elegant hotel with many expensive features including a billiard room, smoking rooms, a dining room seating 200 and an ornamental park in the three and a half acre grounds. The final cost of £12.000 (\$24.000) was double his original estimate, but nevertheless the hotel was a magnificent asset for the growing town.



The Grand Pacific Hotel in 1890

Anxious to get the construction underway, Henry had thirty thousand bricks shipped in from Melbourne. This was not cost effective so the remaining 300,000 bricks he needed were made in Lorne from good quality clay found in the area.

Richard Anderson established a brickworks business in Lorne after trying his luck on the gold fields at Ballarat. His kiln and puddling hole were in Otway Street above the present sports oval and his large family each contributed to the business in different ways. Richard's son William and his team of workers constructed a road from the main street up to the brickworks and *William Street* was named after him.

A tall pole was erected on Bald Hill above the pier at Pt Grey upon which a flag was raised to alert passing vessels such as the *Manawatu* and the *Moonah* sailing from Warnambool to Melbourne to stop and pick up passengers. Henry Gwynne's daughter Gracie was a regular passenger to Melbourne or Warnambool, apparently mostly for shopping. Gracie was often seen standing at the helm of the *Moonah* in her



sou-wester and was affectionately known as ‘Sailor Gwynne’. The Gwynnes were keen travellers and it was on a trip to California that they were inspired to build their elegant American style Grand Pacific Hotel next to the Lorne pier.

Thomas Anderson who was the first licensee of the Grand Pacific Hotel, helped to make it a great success. At the time it was regarded as the best ‘watering place’ in the Colony. Baths were fitted in each of the corridors with the ladies on the right side of the building and gentlemen on the left. The bedrooms each had running water and guests were provided with a special dressing house for sea beach bathing. Individual electric bells were connected through to the servant’s quarters, dispensing with the disturbance created by the old hand operated bells in the hallways of other hotels. In those early years the weekly rate for all that luxury was 2 guineas (\$4.20).

Opening day was on the first of January 1880 and Cobb & Co Coaches provided a special express service for the early guests. They built stables behind the hotel and their coaches met the train at Winchelsea every morning and drove guests directly to the hotel.

Locally quarried stone was used at the base of the Pacific Hotel and in a freestone structure built in 1879 for the Lorne State School. The stone was found on the southern bank of the Erskine River near the lower reaches of the river rapids. Each stone had to be transported across the river twice, first at a specially constructed ford at the quarry site and then at the old ford near the present Erskine Bridge.

### The Lorne School

The original school building was constructed by builders Martin and Herd and is still in use today. Photos of the school taken in 1879 show only three front windows and a central bell tower, the fourth window seen today was added when the building was extended in 1906. The first Headmaster of the new school was John P. Danaher from Colac. He was headmaster for almost twelve years and appeared in early photographs as a member of the local football team. James Anderson, then 14 years old, was the first of thirty pupils enrolled at the school. James had been working for William Wallis, the local boot maker and tanner, trapping animals for skins. Mr Danaher enlisted him to help teach the younger children their times tables and after a few years he coached James when he studied for his

Teacher’s Certificate. James left Lorne at 20 years of age but returned to the school in 1929 to unveil the new Memorial Gates in memory of deceased pupils. Since the Lorne school began there have been 26 Mountjoy children, all descendents of the original settlers, enrolled as students.

Students sat in rows of desks on three different height levels in the single classroom. Grades one and two at floor level, grades three and four behind them on a higher level and grades five and six on a higher level again. Grades seven and eight at the rear were on the highest level. These levels were called galleries. The amusing consequence of this was that successful scholars went *up* a grade each year literally.



The Lorne School in 1900 (top photo) and in 1990 (below).

The rows of desks were actually on benches about 3ft wide (90cm). The platforms on which the elevated rows of desks stood, provided a small under floor area with an access door for storage. It was also more infamously used to cool off those students who got into real strife. The kids called it the *Black Hole of Calcutta*.

It is said that teachers in those early days were very strict and generally had a pretty short fuse. The Headmaster won every argument by default with the aid of a leather strap thirty inches long by two inches wide (75cm by 5cm) and split into two sections at



The Lorne School Jubilee Celebrations in 1929. I was 7 years old when I joined my class mates and our parents and teachers in this photograph.

the end. This weapon was used for a penalty called '*six of the best*' and the punishment was followed by a very stern and intimidating lecture. We can easily imagine how effective six hard whacks on the palm of an out stretched hand would be at driving the teachers message home.

In my Dad's day, some of the boys decided to alter the balance of power by stealing the head masters strap. They drew straws and young student George Carter chose the short one. The plan was for George to be pushed in through the window while the teacher was absent, grab the strap and escape the same way he entered. Unfortunately the headmaster also entered the room just as George was getting out through the window. He grabbed George with one hand, the strap with the other and there are no prizes for guessing what part of George took the brunt of the punishment. The other students rewarded his bravery by nicknaming him Whacky Carter.

Many of the students in those early days came from the hinterland behind Lorne. They rode their horses to school and tied them to trees in a horse paddock 100metres behind the classrooms. There is a well-known story about one of those lads who was spared from his farm duties to begin his education at the age of thirteen. During his first day at the Lorne school

he had a strong disagreement with his teacher and the teacher decided to give him '*six of the best*'. The strong farm lad decided otherwise and grabbed the strap from the teacher, threw it out of the window, climbed through the window himself, jumped on his horse and rode home, never to return.

School life was unpopular with many of the kids and an annual show of defiance was the tearing up of their exercise books at the end of the school year to make little paper boats to sail down the Erskine River. It almost turned white as hundreds of them bobbed up and down all the way to the river mouth.

While I was a student at the school, the ceilings were at one time taken over by squawking starlings and in frustration the headmaster decided on a quick fix. Thirty starlings were perched on the ridge of the roof of what we called the sloyd (*woodwork*) room and they were making a huge racket. Our headmaster raced up to his nearby house and returned with a 12 gauge shot gun. 'BANG' the birds got a fearful fright and took off, but unfortunately his aim was too low and he blew a big hole in the roof. You can imagine how much pleasure this gave the kids. We were amused and amazed and we all agreed that he should stick to teaching and leave the pest control business to someone else.



## The Town Progresses



1879 was a year of progress for the town. That year Lorne got its first tanner, furrier and boot maker when William Wallis opened a shop near the Erskine River. William made warm rugs from animal skins and sold them to tourists. Mountjoys and Cobb & Co. were providing regular coach services for the six-hour journey from the railway station at Winchelsea to Lorne and the first church services began at Erskine House. Jim Dorman built and operated the first butcher shop on the edge of the forest in Grove Road. Until the butcher shop opened, the locals relied on deliveries of meat by packhorse from Deans Marsh. Settlers used their imagination and made meat pies out of virtually anything that moved.

Lorne's first water system came from a pool at the head of The Rapids via a one and a half inch (37mm) galvanized pipe, but it provided only enough water for Erskine House and its fruit and vegetable gardens. In 1880 Henry Gwynne asked three local businessmen Joseph Duncan, Theodore Hancock and John Stirling, if they would be willing to share the cost of a larger two-inch (50mm) pipe system from the rapids pool to service their businesses. They agreed and the system was installed. The remains of those old pipes can still be seen here and there along the riverbank.

The increasing demand for a town water supply culminated in the first meeting of The Lorne Water Trust in 1887. Mr Charles Beal was appointed the first Commissioner and J.R. Hopkins the Chairman. Unfortunately Charles Beal was killed the following year when returning to Lorne from Winchelsea after a Water Trust meeting. He was thrown from the box seat of a coach after the brakes failed. An enquiry into the accident was held at The Lorne Hotel and the driver of the coach, Mr Mountjoy, was exonerated from blame after a gruelling inquest. Mr Beal, a popular and likeable man, had contributed much to the community who respectfully named a street after him.

By 1890 a much bolder scheme to provide water was underway. A square wooden box flume was laid from a weir in the Erskine River about 10kms upstream from the town, a little below the junction of The Splitters Falls. The flume carried water about 8kms to a holding reservoir of 685.000 litres, 90metres above the town at the top of William Street

near Polwarth Rd. From this elevated reservoir, water was reticulated to all the streets of the early township. Unfortunately frequent bushfires played havoc with the wooden flume and it was eventually replaced with cast iron piping.

A four-inch (100mm) main water pipe from this scheme crossed the saddle below the area known as the '*Rough and Tumble*' on the Erskine Falls Road. Farmers took advantage of the exposed pipe by boring a hole in it and plugging it with a wooden peg. This allowed them to remove the peg to give their horses a drink as they passed along the steep road. As a result this area became known locally as '*The Plug*' and as kids we daringly took a drink from the pipe and were drenched while desperately trying to shove the peg back into the hole against the water pressure.

## All Saints Church

In 1880 the residents decided it was time they had their own church and Henry Gwynne donated half an acre of land and £50.00 (\$100.00) for All Saints-Anglican church to be built on the corner of Albert and Charles Sts. Others also donated generously and a tender of £290.00 (\$580.00) for construction was accepted from William Snowden. The first minister the Rev. Love, conducted the church's first wedding between Charles Watson and Martha Thompson in late 1881.



All Saints Church on the move in 1884

By 1884 it was decided that the steep hill leading to the church was too much for the elderly, so the church was moved down to its present site near the Lorne Hotel. The contractor dragged the building down the hill using a team of bullocks pulling on one corner and a horse team on the other. Children had half a day off school so they could watch the spectacle along with the other town people. A Chancel was added to the building at this time.



## Not in public you don't

In the early 1880s the Council was receiving complaints from Lorne's residents about indiscreet bathing in the Erskine river and as these were times of modesty, the Lorne Sea Bathing Company was formed in 1881 by Thomas Anderson and the Mountjoy brothers. They erected sea baths and bathing boxes on the main beach so that people could 'bathe with dignity'. These baths extended approximately 80metres into the sea and were constructed of timber in the form of a jetty. Each swimmer was partitioned from the other for privacy. Polly Anderson ran the baths and saw to it that men swam only in the morning and women in the afternoon. The structure was destroyed by an easterly gale after only a few seasons, but the remaining stumps can still occasionally be seen on the beach at low tide in front of the Uniting Church.



The sea baths can be seen in this photograph from the 1880s.

At around this time an impressive 27metre long footbridge was built at the Erskine River ford and photographer Mr J. S. Norman would wait on the bridge to take photographs of tourists arriving by coach for their holidays.

Mr Norman processed his photographs in his shop near William Snowden's new general store at the Erskine River. He installed an electric power plant near his premises, generously providing others with electricity. We are all indebted to him and the other early photographers like George Rose, Albert Jarratt, and Toggy



Toggy (William) Anderson.

(William) Anderson for their priceless historic photographs of early Lorne.

We know from these early photographs that four little white donkeys were brought to Lorne in 1884 and they were used for novelty rides around the steep hills. They no doubt featured prominently in many holidaying visitors photos and provided heaps of fun for tourists.

## My Uncle Bill the Larrikin

Hamilton Dorman moved his butcher shop business from the George River to Mountjoy Parade and for many years school children and others would take a short cut through his horse paddock down to the main street where the Catholic Church is today. In the paddock there were a lot of trees and a big wood heap next to a steam boiler he used to drive his sausage machine and refrigeration compressor.

One night my teenage uncle, Bill Stirling, set a kangaroo snare on the track by bending a strong sapling with a rope attached to a loop and trigger mechanism on the ground. It was reported next morning that the whole town could hear a certain man (*name withheld*) bellowing as he apparently dangled from a tree by one leg. Family memories of my Uncle Bill and his brother Bob are of two very mischievous lads and this tended to impress the younger boys. Bob was once chased out of the Erskine House gardens by a very upset Chinese gardener who called him a "lelly bad larrikin".

The tradespeople were an essential and memorable part of town life in those early days. Most of the tradesmen and shop owners had horse drawn delivery carts with the drivers seated on top of a goods compartment. I can clearly remember the butcher as he announced his arrival at our home by yelling "BUTCHER" in an impressively powerful voice.

## No Drinking Allowed

In 1885 the first attempt to establish a retail outlet for alcohol in Lorne was thwarted when several self appointed moral guardians of the town presented an apparently persuasive petition to the Government stating that wine houses were not required in Lorne. Alfred Allen and John Stirling had made an application to the Birregurra Court for a wine licence.

Also in 1885, due to the work of an active ladies committee in the town, the first library was built and



its completion was celebrated with a well-attended ball on New Years Eve. Later a fine hall was attached which became the venue for many of the town's important occasions.

In Nov.1888, the foundation stone for the official Post Office was laid by Mr Charles Lamond Forrest M.L.A. The much-awaited Post Office opened in 1889.

A pyramid shaped timber Pavillion was built in 1890 at Teddy's Lookout. Climbing the *Zig Zag* track was the Sunday afternoon walk at Lorne. No one has verified how the lookout got it's name, but some say it was named after Edward the 'then' Prince of Wales, because the whole reserve surrounding it was named Queens Park in honour of his mother Queen Victoria. During the 1890's an early journalist describe Teddy's Lookout as a '*veritable hill difficulty*' whatever that meant?

It is also said that one of the cattlemen using the Lookout to spot strays was called Teddy, but I much prefer another story of a man who owned a donkey named Teddy that constantly roamed around the area and often came too close to the edge of the steep hill overlooking the St George River. Someone asked the owner if he was worried the animal might fall over the edge whereupon he replied, "*well that would be Teddy's lookout wouldn't it*".



1930s photo of Teddy's Lookout, the Zig Zag track and the St. George River inlet.

### **The Train doesn't arrive**

In 1890 a proposal for a railway link between the Victorian Railway Network and Lorne finally lapsed, much to the disappointment of all who hoped to gain from the project. The engineers reported that the terrain was much too challenging and therefore the cost would be prohibitive.

### **Walking Adventures**

Tourist walking groups were organised by Lorne's

guesthouses. Women were asked to wear simple strong clothing, with dresses tucked in around the ankles. Dress trains were absolutely taboo and 'pull backs' were described as dangerous. Parasols were also not welcomed and were often replaced with a walking stick.



A walking group in 1901 pauses to enjoy the tranquility of Stoney Ck.

In the 1870s, a party of guests staying at Erskine House set off on horseback to the Cumberland River to explore the large tidal cave that had become popular amongst the adventuresome. Stories were told of a large cave entrance with stalactites inside. The entrance is almost blocked over today by debris left from the Ocean Road construction.



Another walking group lunches at Cora-Lynn Cascades in 1895.



On the track to the cave a lady rode *two-up* with her partner on his horse and was quite shaken by the ordeal. On her arrival at the Cumberland River about 8kms from Lorne, she remarked how much she was dreading the return ride back to Mountjoys when one of the riders, a Miss Kelsall, kindly offered the distressed lady her mount, stating that she would enjoy the walk back to Lorne. Forty-eight hours were spent searching for Miss Kelsall as she had failed to arrive as planned. Finally she was found 11kms north of Lorne and in the opposite direction altogether from where the searchers had expected to find her. Apparently she had been following cattle tracks that veered further inland than the original route taken by the horse riders thereby completely bypassing the Lorne settlement.

Before the Great Ocean Road was created, the bridle track wound its way around the back of the large coastal hills and wasn't very clearly defined. When finally found, the poor lady was 'scared stiff' perched up in a tree and terrified of the wild cattle as any city girl would naturally be. Her rescuers were very impressed by the magnificent view from the large rocky outcrop above the Grassy Creek valley and so chose to name it 'Kelsall's Rock'.

Several years ago I was visited in Lorne by Anthony Kelsall from Geelong who was anxious to verify the story about his great Aunt that led to the naming of the prominent Lookout. Kelsalls Rock was listed on pre W.W.2 tourist maps.

In 1893, some Field Naturalists from Geelong visited Lorne and this amusing verse was written by one of them to commemorate their trip.

*Oh, Exquisite joy of retiring, At times to a primitive life  
No bed but a blanket requiring, and eating food with a knife.  
How blissful a tent with a tear is, Where enters the genial fog  
How sweet the Australian Canaries, Mosquitoes that bite like a dog  
Oh rapture of living on damper, Of gnawing the breast of a swan,  
Of searching for food in a hamper, And finding everything gone  
Oh Banquet enjoyable wholly, When sugar and milk there are none  
When dinner is 'Johnny cake' solely, And earwigs can join in the fun.*

In 1892 Andrew Sanger from Bath in England, built St Cuthbert's Presbyterian Church in Mountjoy

Pde. Andrew also built many of Lorne's fine old buildings. St Cuthbert's was lined with Baltic knotty pine boards that came out as ballast in the old sailing ships. Several other country churches and halls were lined with the same timber. Andrew enlarged the church in 1912 by adding the transept. In 1977 the congregation agreed to become part of the Uniting Church of Australia and in 1979 the church was classified by the National Trust as a protected historic building.



St. Cuthbert's Church in 1907

### The Timber Industry

The population of Lorne increased to about 800 by 1900 and in 1904 the Armistead brothers erected a sawmill on the ridge between Henderson Creek and the St. George River and also constructed a 2 ft 3 in wide (675mm) wooden rail tramline from their mill. The bends on the tramline were made of iron and the line ran over the Gentle Annie ridge and down the Cherry Tree Creek to the mouth of the George River, then around the coast to the Lorne pier. Known as The Gentle Annie Line it needed two horse teams to pull the load. This was finally abandoned in favour of re-routing the tramline beside the George River, downstream from Allenvale via bridge crossings to link up with the existing coastal line to the pier. In the 'Forrest' area little steam engines like *whistling kettles*, were also used to pull the heavy timber laden trolleys. The milling continued for decades. Several other operators also built tramlines to cart their timber and many similar tramline leases were granted by the Lands Department during those years.

Hardwood saw millers throughout the hills and gullies of the Otway Ranges and the Lorne Hinterland were major employers and more than 60 mills were established. Bluegum, Mountain Ash, Messmate, Greygum and Myrtle Beech were found in abundance in the Otway and Angahook forests. Blackwood and Satinwood were found growing



Sawmill workers preparing logs for transport to the ships at Lorne.

in the wettest and most sheltered areas. Bluegum (*eucalyptus globulus*), a highly prized tough timber with long lasting qualities, was used for railway sleepers, piles and decking timber for wharves and jetties.

Some of the well-known milling family names from the district's past are Silk, Marriage, Sharp, Babington and Mahoney. In 1936 Sid Armistead, Cecil Clissold and Jim Allen formed the A.C.A. Mill on the Little Erskine River about a kilometre in from the Deans Marsh Road. As kids, it was great seeing the flying fox snigging large logs over the deep gully and up to the winch on the ridge, where two lovely draught horses pulled the logs on a double bogey trolley down to the mill.

The last of the bush mills, Babington's sawmill at Benwerrin, closed in 1989. Ted Babington senior operated the mill from 1936 and after his death his sons Ted and Erwin continued the business. Sawmills are no longer permitted to operate in the bush because of the high risk of bushfires and are now usually situated in townships..



Tom Smith's bullock team entering the main street in 1890.

The early mills were driven by waterpower but eventually they were mostly steam driven. John Sharp & Sons was the last company to use one of the old tramlines to extract timber from their She-

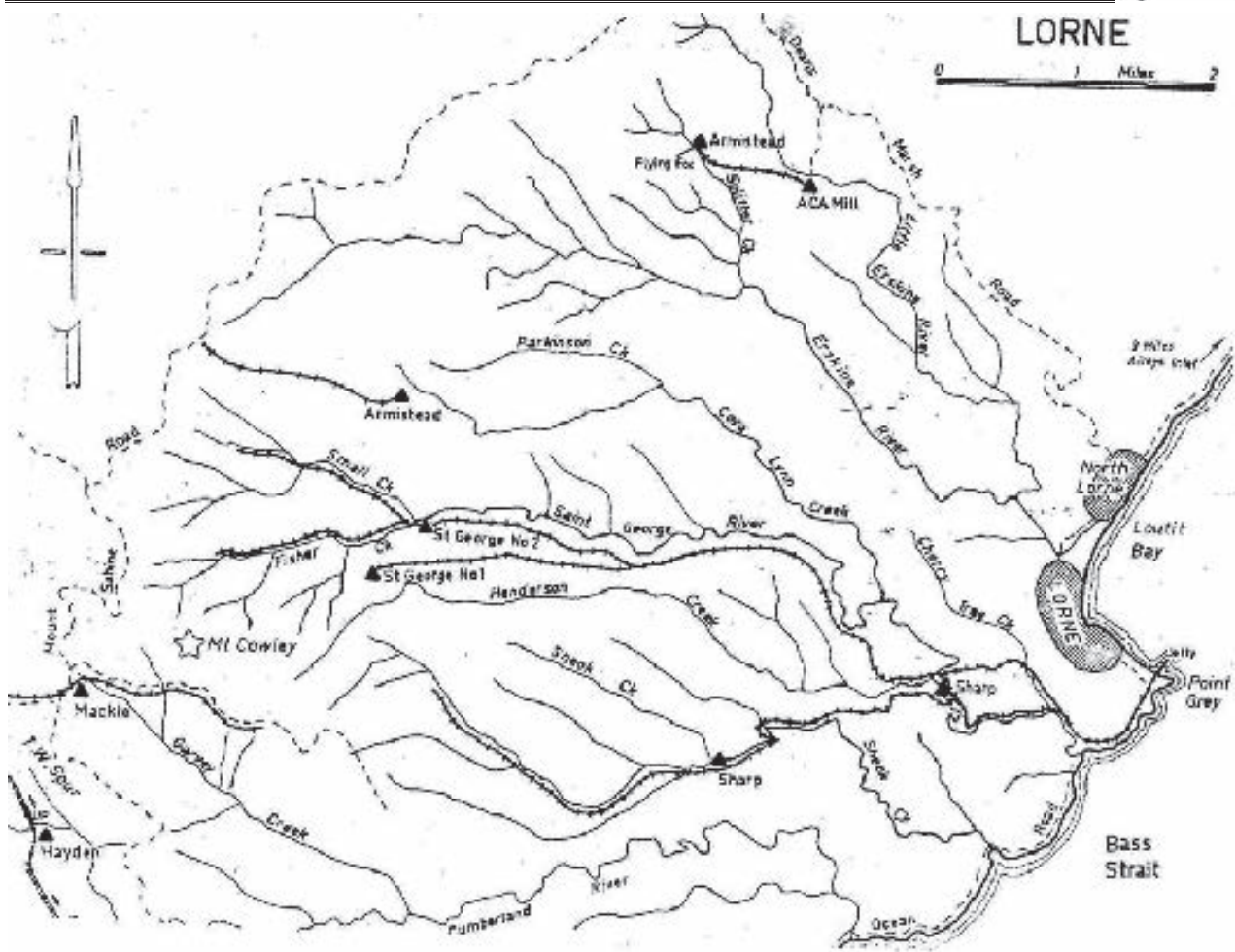
Oak River mill near the Lower Kalimna Falls and their lease expired in 1935. A roadway connected the A.C.A mill to the Deans Marsh Rd. Timber lorries transported sawn timber to either Deans Marsh Railway Station or directly to construction sites at Lorne. By the 1930's it was illegal for road transport to operate in direct competition with the government owned railways, so millers were forced to deliver their timber to railway stations for long distance transportation.



One of the many tramways built to transport timber to Lorne.

Long before tractors and bulldozers came into use, bullock teams were also used for transporting timber logs from the more inaccessible areas. Modern transport brought many benefits, but sadly we lost the romantic charm of the old bush days when a driver's gentle commands to his horse team could be heard as the animals sweated, snorted and clomped their hooves along the wooden sleepers, pulling the timber trolleys along the tram track. In those long lost and slower times many young couples took advantage of this romantic setting by hitching a ride on top of a trolley to the many beautiful waterfalls, often mimicking shrill bird calls in the fern gullies as they made their way back to the pier.

John Sharp's ship the *Erskine* under the command of Captain Jeffrey, along with many other vessels, sailed into Louttit Bay to load up timber stacked on the pier and shoreline. Occasionally during big storms and high tides, timber on the pier was washed off into the sea. Before the pier was built in 1879, small ships had to discharge their cargo on to the Lorne beach. They came in on the rising tide, putting down kedge anchors to haul themselves back out to sea. Sometimes light boats carrying three quarters of a ton of timber each, would venture out to meet the ships in the bay because many Captains were fearful of getting stranded on the beach. *Apollo* was one of the first transport boats and was initially loaded from a tiny jetty at the Erskine river mouth. Heavy logs were often pushed out through the surf and floated to the ships.



An old map showing the location of some of the timber mills and tramways of the era.

Another hazardous method used later required the ship to drop a kedge anchor attached to a rope outside the breakers. The vessel was then floated ashore on the high tide until it struck the bottom and the crew would leap overboard to prop the ship upright with the aid of wooden props until the tide receded. When the unloading of provisions for the small settlement was completed and the tide was still low, the exhausted crew would begin reloading the ship with timber and wattlebark, which was used as ballast. When the tide returned and the ship began to float, the props were removed and the ship winched out to the broad *flake* kedge anchor now in deep water and sails were set for the return journey.

Most of the time all went well, but plaques placed by the Lorne Historical Society along the back of the main beach, depict the location of the ships wrecked by heavy surf during loading sessions and are a testament to the ever present risks these pioneers faced. Big seas could rock the ships off their props and once on their side they would take in water and often the unfortunate crew could not keep up the pumping and bailing to stay afloat. Once sand entered the hull it became hopeless.

The *Osprey*, a three masted 24metre schooner, was reported to have met its demise during a heavy storm when it went ashore at the mouth of the Erskine River, but another version of the story had the crew deliberately running her aground in June 1854 so that they could take off to make their fortune on the newly discovered goldfields. During the 1850's, up to one hundred ships a day, mainly lured to our shores by gold fever, passed Louttit Bay en route to Corio and Hobson's Bays. The Mountjoy family told their descendants that the *Osprey* was still laying on the beach, pretty much in tact when they arrived in 1864.

There were far too many maritime tragedies along the coastline near Lorne in those pioneering years. William Anderson (*elder brother of James the first student enrolled in the Lorne school*) his brother in-law Joseph Gay, William Collins and a young passenger named Harris, were all drowned when a storm overturned William's father's small thirty ton ketch the *Foam* in 1880. They were on a journey to Port Phillip Heads with a load of timber when they were hit by a typical easterly gale.



## The Wreck of the W.B. Godfrey



Beyond Mt. Defiance near the Jamieson Creek, is the remainder of the wreckage of the barque *W.B. Godfrey* that ran on to a reef in 1891. She was bound from San Francisco to Melbourne loaded with timber. Visibility was very poor on that day due to dense bushfire smoke and this caused much confusion on board. She was a total loss, although some of her timber cargo was salvaged. Unusually, no one on board was lost, but five seafarers were drowned during salvage operations. Three from the salvage ship *Chittor* and two from the *Clara*. One seaman disappeared and the other bodies were recovered, but by that time the sea was too rough to transport them away. The following day a small party of Lorne residents including the Rev. Love, conducted a funeral service in pouring rain, after John Stirling and his son William made coffins with salvaged timber from the wreck. Captain Gortley and seaman Victor Godfrey were then buried on the low cliff overlooking the wreck where they lie undisturbed to this day. The bodies of the two other lost seamen were eventually transported to relatives in Geelong and Melbourne for burial.

About 30 years later, a party surveying The Great Ocean Road came upon a weather worn peg indicating the gravesite, but rather than attempting to exhume the remains, the road was constructed over the graves and the workers made a false grave adjacent to the original burial site that is now marked with a memorial plaque. By strange coincidence, at the time of the wreck of the *W.B. Godfrey*, a family also named Godfrey had farmed at what is now Godfrey Creek near the site of the wreck and the name of one of the seaman drowned in the rescue and subsequently buried there was Frenchman Victor Godfrey, apparently unrelated.



The *Hinemoa*, a four masted barque, ran aground among the rocks between Pt. Grey and Shelly Beach in 1908. The crew saw lights all over the hills and thought they were approaching Melbourne. The lights were burning logs from a bushfire and the smoke haze confused them. The *Hinemoa* was

not badly damaged and was towed off by the tug *Eagle* the next day. Local resident Jack Anderson booked the tug hoping for salvage rights. It took a day of heated argument before the Captain came to a satisfactory arrangement with Anderson and the shipping Company. From 1895 the *Hinemoa* was used to transport frozen mutton, wool tallow and wheat but she met her demise in 1917 when torpedoed in the English Channel.



The *Hinemoa* stranded in 1908.

Shipping traffic was constant and mishaps and incidents were common. The many comings and goings of ships, particularly at the time of the gold rush in the 1850s, caused great interest and an exciting spectacle for the local residents, especially the children.



The ship 'Rodney' was commanded by Capt. Louttit after whom our bay was named.

Other ships wrecked along the Lorne coastline are the 104ton schooner *Rebel* in 1855, the 33ton schooner *Otway* in 1862, the 35ton schooner *Anne* in 1863, the American clipper *Paul Jones* (1258 tons)



in 1886, the 32ton ketch *Henry* in 1878 and the 45ton topsail schooner *Trader* in 1889. The *Trader* broke up after becoming jammed between rocks 6kms east of Lorne. There were so many wrecks that Cobb & Co coaches advertised organised tourist trips along the coast to view some of them.



Passengers waiting at the pier for their ship the *Manawatu* in 1910.

My Aunt Bell Sanger lived in William Street in a house built by Bill Doble in the late 1800's. Bill built the home from the wreckage of the ship called the *Trader*. The bearers supporting the floor were made from the mast of the ship ripped into four. The floors were made from the ships decking. Without 'tongue and groove' in the boards I remember how they squeaked loudly as you walked on them.



Sawmill workers and their typical rough sawn timber slab hut.

The pioneering mill workers life was hard and comforts few. They camped in rough sawn timber huts near to their work place, many miles from the town. It is recorded that one worker accidentally split his hand almost in two with a paling knife and had the presence of mind to stuff his mouth full of chewing tobacco, then use it to plug the gaping wound. He walked 10kms to the bush nurse at Lorne and asked her to sew up his hand. As the nurse hadn't

any anaesthetic he was advised to travel further to a doctor. He insisted she sew it together so he could get back to work the next day. I assume she removed the tobacco.

Some mill workers preferred to board with a family in the town, even if it meant sleeping in a tent on their front lawn. They enjoyed the hospitality offered, particularly the good meals. Some of them eventually married local girls and raised large families helping to bolster the growing population.

### **Coal is discovered**

Fine quality coal was discovered about 16kms inland from Lorne and in 1898 The Benwerrin Coal Mining Company began transporting 25tons per week of high grade black coal between Benwerrin and Deans Marsh on a 1.5 metre gauge railway, but after several years it became too costly to operate and the company disbanded. The mine reopened during W.W.2 and for several years later the coal was taken to Deans Marsh Railway Station by road transport. The coal was mainly used for the electric power station at Geelong. After the mine was worked out, a large open cut mine began working the brown coal deposit at South Winchelsea.

Other deposits were discovered but by the late 1940s no mines were left after nearly all of the accessible coal was mined out. No doubt there is still a great deal of coal in the district and today at nearby Anglesea, a major coalmine provides a large amount of power for the aluminium industry.

### **And electricity comes to town**

In 1910 photographer Albert Jarratt bought an oil engine and installed an electric light generating plant for his business in Lorne. Soon the Winchelsea Shire Council commissioned him to install streetlights throughout the town, so he bought a larger oil engine generator and a set of batteries and ran wires from the bridge to the Pacific Hotel with poles carrying Lorne's first electric streetlights. (*The first gas lamplights were erected in the streets of Lorne in 1888*). Albert also supplied power to the pier for a navigation light, using a water pipe into the sea as an earth return. It was normal in those days to save money by feeding power through only a single wire and the circuit was complete through the earth. After several years the pipe under the pier almost rusted away and the light would only burn when waves lapped against the remaining length of pipe to complete the circuit through the water to the earth.



Seafarers were baffled by the strange, intermittent light as they tried to figure out what the 'code' meant.

This early electricity supply was also connected to Erskine House and most other guesthouses and hotels, but several of the guesthouses supplemented it by installing their own auxiliary power plants. Homes were also connected to his system. Albert's company's prospects were eventually diminished however, as the major guesthouses began providing most of their power from their own generators.



Albert Jarratt.

Around 1920 a larger generating plant powered by crude oil engines, generated 230 volt D.C. (direct current) for the town and was used mostly for lighting. The plant was situated on the bank of the Erskine River directly opposite the Cora-Lynn guesthouse. The first engineer was Bob Reid who planted an oak tree (*still standing*) beside the old powerhouse site, which was the property of the Winchelsea Shire Council. Bob started the plant up just as it was getting dark and gauged the fuel in the tank to run out at about midnight, so he wouldn't have to get out of bed to turn it off. The plant also operated on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons so that the ladies could do their ironing. Most households had only one or two power points in those days. The system closed down in 1936 when the State Electricity Commission connected the town to its abundant supply of electrical power at today's standard 240 and 415 volts of the much safer and more efficient A.C. (alternating current).



Lorne in 1920. Electricity poles and telephone wires begin appearing



It is claimed that Rudyard Kipling visited Lorne in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and wrote this lovely poem called 'The Flowers'.

*Buy my english posies,  
you that will not turn*

*Buy my hot clematis, buy a  
frond of fern*

*Gathered where the erskine  
leaps, down the road to Lorne*

*Buy my christmas creeper, and i'll say where  
you were born.*

*West away from melbourne dust, holidays  
begin*

*They that mock at paradise, woo at cora-  
lynn*

*Through the great south otway gums, sings  
the great south main*

*Take the flower and kiss the hour and kiss  
your love again.*

In 1917 my father Jack Stirling, purchased blocks 1 and 2 Smith St. from the Mountjoy Lorne Estate, for £54.4.6 (\$109.00). As a builder he erected many homes in the town as well as some of the larger buildings. So safe was the town that he would often leave his tools on the job over the holidays and of course they were still where he had left them on his return. Today we might be worried that the partly built home would not still be there. How times change!

### The Movie Business



Lorne has seen many interesting and some quite unusual commercial ventures come and go over the years. For example in 1914 Cecil Clissold was a partner in a business that distilled eucalyptus leaves at a plant situated on Henderson Ck nearly a kilometre from the Allenvale Tearooms. Four large 455litre tanks of bluegum leaves were steamed each day and the process took until 10 pm each night to complete.

In 1917 an itinerant projectionist of early silent movies found himself stranded in Lorne without funds and was forced to sell his equipment to some



of the residents, namely my father Jack Stirling, Bill and Jim Dorman, Albert Jarratt and Jack Anderson. These enterprising gentlemen formed *The Lorne Picture Company* and the following year began showing silent movies in a small hall they built on land purchased from Erskine House. Patrons sat on 'forms' while my Dad, the projectionist, manually operated the projector by turning a handle and my mother Annie provided the music by peddling a Pianola. Film distributors like Paramount suggested suitable Pianola rolls to accompany their movies.



The original movie theatre, beach hall and skating complex.

A bigger theatre with two levels was built in 1923, providing seating for three hundred patrons. Until 1932 we were still showing silent movies on a hand wound projector and my Dad would let his personality show through by winding the projector faster during what he called the sloppy love scenes and winding it much slower during his beloved cowboy movies such as 'Tom Mix'. I remember as a seven year old, standing on a box turning the handle to give Dad a break.

We started to get talkie films around 1933 and it was odd hearing our 'Fat and Skin', *Laurel and Hardy*, actually speak. The original picture theatre building became known as The Beach Hall, where dances and concerts were held regularly. We started a skating rink there in 1935 and it was so slippery that some of the lads lost control and knocked holes in the 3ply timber walls.



Another view of the original complex showing its proximity to the beach. Notice the band stand and bell tower c.1937.

In 1936 the company built a new concrete floored skating rink with a high metal fence on the northern side of the picture theatre. Jim Dorman left the company in the same year. Without a roof conditions became very slippery when it rained, so a roof and a spectator's gallery were added. Lorne had a strong roller hockey team and 'cleaned up' most of its rivals in the Geelong and Colac districts during the 1930's.

A colourful character known as professor Kingston leased and operated the skating business for a few seasons and introduced many innovations- fancy dress balls on skates, figure skating, dancing competitions, skate racing and so on. Our company eventually sold both buildings including the skating rink to Mr Steve Waterhouse who used the theatre as a dance hall and the old original hall as a Fun Parlour with slot machines etc. Steve also installed electric dodgem cars in a separate building that was almost washed into the sea in 1958 during extremely high tides and stormy seas

### Easterlies

The town has suffered the effects of many strong easterly gales over the years and one of them destroyed the Pacific Hotel's ornate bell tower in 1946.



The destroyed seawall after the big blows of 1958.

Adverse weather conditions during 1958 continued for many months causing the town's rock seawall, that had by then been extended as far as Grove road, to be undermined and finally to collapse. This caused concern in the town, so the Ports and Harbours Department decided to remove the wrecked seawall and replace it with a much more substantial sloping wall six metres deep. This modern design allows the waves to expend their energy more gently as well as causing sand to be deposited on the upper slope as the waves recede.



The Department also installed several wooden groynes to help stop the northerly drift of sand. Three metres depth of sand had disappeared from the beach along with one or two major sand dunes. Erskine House was considered to be in a perilous situation, so the owner approached the Department to ask that they construct a rock groyne to protect the area from further erosion. This was done and has proved to be quite a success resulting in a large amount of sand building up on the southern side of the groyne.

All of this work has made our beach area much more



The Erskine River in flood in early 1922.

resistant to destructive weather but inevitably nothing will stop nature and as with any coastal community we must expect serious storm damage from time to time. The entire eastern seaboard of Australia is similarly affected, particularly Queensland's Gold Coast region where major engineering works have been undertaken in recent years to limit the sometimes disastrous erosion.

There can be serious dangers for bathers at Lorne's main beach after easterly storms, especially where the breakers have made deep potholes in the seabed. These hazards can be a trap, especially for children who suddenly find themselves out of their depth. After easterly storms at Lorne we often get a sandbar about 50metres offshore and huge amounts of seaweed and kelp on the beach. The powerful storms rip hundreds of tons of seaweed from the offshore rocks and drive it ashore. The Lorne Foreshore Committee is often approached to remove this seaweed nuisance, but has always referred the complaint to mother nature who always does the job for us in a day or two.

It is almost forty years since Lorne has been subjected to a ten to fourteen day easterly storm and the seasons have been much dryer and milder since then. During these thankfully infrequent long easterly blows, I can remember most residents became quite 'fed up' and irritated, with many of them complaining

about sinus problems. It's easy to understand people getting fed up after two weeks of howling winds but it was always fun discovering things washed up on the beach, like one of my daughter's long lost sandals.

### The pressures of 'Show Business'

We built the present cinema on the bottom corner of Dorman's paddock and opened it in November 1937. Construction took nine months. In those days movies did not come ready to show on 600metre reels as they do today, instead, a service car delivered a large metal trunk with up to thirty-five cans of nitrate film. Leaders and tails had to be removed from each reel of film and all the reels had to be glued carefully end to end in the right order and then wound onto large 600metre reels ready for showing.



Sometimes other cinema operators had damaged some of the film and so a few centimetres here and there had to be cut out and re joined so that the film would run smoothly through the projectors. All this preparation took a few hours. Once or twice I can remember some previous operator had inadvertently marked the wrong leaders and tails. If this wasn't picked up during the making up of the show reel, there would be a terrible stamping of feet and 'booing' from the audience as the movie's story went completely out of sequence and did not make sense, or worse still, if the film broke. Mind you some movies didn't make sense no matter which order you played the reels in, but this is very much a matter of opinion.

Occasionally only half of the movie reels arrived on the 2 pm bus from Geelong for the evening screening. More than once this meant a wild trip to the Geelong railway station on a motorbike to retrieve the rest of the show. Patrons don't appreciate seeing only half of a movie especially if it's the first half and they never find out what happens in the end. Panic! Panic!

In the early days, movies were made of nitrate celluloid that was highly inflammable and every cinema was subjected to a high fire risk and consequently health and safety inspectors visited often. Special attention was given to the safety regulations that applied to the projection room or the 'Bio Box' as we called it. Later, much to the relief of everyone in the movie industry, non-flammable acetate film came into use.

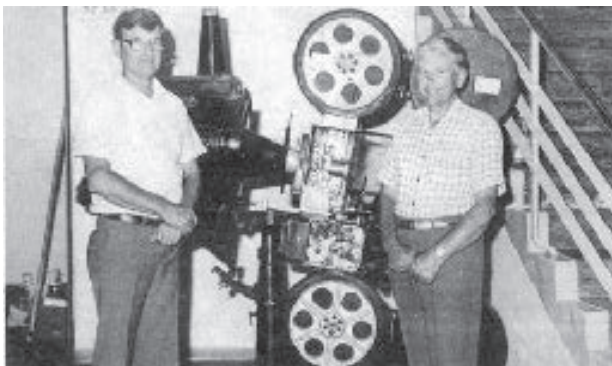


In those days inspectors tended to take themselves a bit too seriously and one night one arrived at the top of the dress circle during the show and in the dark he handed the ticket collector his official identification card. Believing it to be a theatre ticket she tore it in half then handed a bit of it back to him. He entered the projection room red faced with anger and we had to be very tactful with him for quite some time until he calmed down. In latter years he saw the funny side of it and we all got a lot of laughs from that memorable event.

For several years after the theatre was built there were three large coloured floodlights illuminating the front of the building and it looked quite spectacular we thought.

One of my father's partners in the cinema, Jack Anderson, died in 1940 and the business became a Jarratt and Stirling family partnership. When my dad Jack Stirling died in 1949 the partnership continued on between the sons of the Jarratt and Stirling families, the Stirling son being myself. Lyn Jarratt and I worked as projectionists and Merv Jarratt managed the theatre.

In 1956 we built a steam laundry on our vacant land next to the cinema. The laundry was operated by Geoff Jarratt and as well as laundering linen etc. for the guesthouses, our steam generator heated the theatre very effectively.



Lorne Theatre's new owner Ken Todd (left) with Doug Stirling in 1983

Finally in 1983, the business that had been in our family for so many decades passed out of our hands due to our approaching retirement. We sold the cinema to Ken Todd and the laundry building to Malcolm Hand who converted it into *Reif's* Restaurant.

### **The guesthouses go upmarket.**

As tourism increased over the years many former boarding houses expanded into guesthouses and there were quite a few. There was a lot of competition

and as expected this improved the quality of these establishments. They were publicly rated for their hospitality and *table* and usually provided tennis, croquet, table tennis, quoits and other attractions. The Chalet guesthouse installed a swimming pool, as did Erskine House, which also added a bowling green. Guests were provided with bathing boxes on the beach, surfboards and other beach equipment. Lounge rooms, dining rooms and ballrooms brought guests together, often romantically. Many returned for their honeymoon, as did Robert and Pattie Menzies, later Sir Robert Menzies, Australia's longest serving Prime Minister and Dame Pattie.



Guests having fun in the Erskine House swimming pool in the 1930s

There was also keen competition among Lorne's commercial photographers and people were posed in front of waterfalls, caves, the beach or their guesthouse and the proofs were distributed at the evening dinner tables with orders taken for prints to be delivered the following morning. Many of these old photographs have survived in remarkably good condition and are a rich source of historical information about the early days of Lorne. Fortunately some of these early photographers also took landscapes and pictures of the town's early buildings and structures

Kitchen staff at the guesthouses provided cut lunches and often chops and sausages for those hiking to the falls or caves and other beauty spots. A large gridiron and billy for tea making were often carried to the site and a fire lit to prepare lunch. This was an enjoyable respite for the exhausted hikers, some of whom carved their initials into the rocks as they rested under the lacy spray of the waterfalls exchanging stories of their adventures. Many of their inscriptions can still be found.

Guest's suitcases bulged with costumes, sporting, hiking, and eveningwear. Dance Halls were often well decorated with colourful streamers and balloons for big events such as fancy dress balls. After the Great Ocean Road was opened, guests were met at the Geelong Railway Station by special guesthouse



Erskine House was looking quite stylish in 1906. Notice how formal the clothing is compared to today's casual resort wear.

service buses. Sanderson's began a sight seeing business in the 1930s. Here is a sample of their advertising.

*"During the periods of moonlight, we arrange parties to travel to the Cumberland Caves, where singing, dancing and general frivolity is done on the golden sands of Bass Strait. Our moonlight sausage parties are only 3/-. You can't afford to miss this!" Daily trips to Erskine Falls 4/-, Stoney Falls 3/6,*

*Cumberland Caves 4/-, Apollo Bay 20/- (luncheon included)*

Lorne had three hotels and many guesthouses in its heyday. The Hotels were The Lorne, The Quamby (private hotel) and The Pacific. The guesthouses were Argyle House, Ben My Chree, Bonnie Doon, Carinya, The Chalet, Clovelly, Cora Lynn, The Cumberland, Erskine House, Gracedale, Kalimna, Kia-Ora, Glenora, Minapre, Nenthorne, Ozone



Carinya guesthouse was also a stylish up market resort by the standards of the day, as shown in this photograph from the 1920s



guesthouses once stood.



Dining Rooms at Carinya (left) and Erskine House (right) were considered to be the height of fashionable dining. Seen here in the 1940s.

House, Riverview, Santoy, Yendalloch, Rivernook and Erskine Cottage, (one of the earliest and later changed its name to Bridge Cottage). Imagine the calamity of their dinner bells chiming out at the same time each day.

### Old Bill

Before the road was built to Apollo Bay, packhorses loaded with provisions were taken to Wye River and beyond via the Bridle track. The beginning of this well-used track was at Moggs Creek and it followed the coastline along the electric telegraph line all the way to Cape Otway.



The Bridle Track where it crossed the George River around 1900.

The very mobile touring public of the late 1950s and early 60's, began embracing caravanning and camping, but they also wanted the comforts and amenities of their homes during stopovers and that meant private bathrooms. This spelt the end to the romantic guesthouse era. As they passed into history many private homes were built where the proud old

During the school holidays of 1916, two local lads hiking to the Cape Otway Lighthouse along the track, were surprised to find the imprint of a vehicle that seemed to have only one wheel. They followed the track up and down the hills for about 24kms until finally they met up with Bill Hollingworth who had built a hut above the beach at Kennett River. Bill solved the mystery when he told them he had pushed his wheelbarrow loaded with a fire stove and two-dozen bricks all the way from Lorne. He invited them to stay the night and made a damper on his new stove. It was reported that Bill offered hospitality to all who came his way.



The Lorne Hotel (above) and The Cumberland Guesthouse both photographed in 1945



Bill was a fisherman who netted on the main beach (which was legal in those days) and as kids we helped old Bill haul the net. As he rowed out over the breakers he would play the net out behind his small boat as it moved through the swell. His net was about 100ms long with a lengthy rope at each end and it was always very exciting to see what mysteries the retrieved net would reveal. There were always a lot of puffer fish (toadies) and other species we could not name as kids, but the catches like garfish, salmon, mullet and even flounder, Bill hawked around town to private homes and hotels.

Bill fascinated us by steaming wood into shapes to replace the ribs of his clinker built boat. He would take a long piece of galvanised steel downpipe, block it off at one end and half fill it with water. Then he placed it on a fire until the water boiled, he then inserted a long piece of wood about 25mm square into the pipe and put a cap over the slightly elevated end. After some time the steam softened the wood so it could be easily bent into the right shape. He used copper nails to fix the planks onto the newly formed rib.

Before *W.W.I* Bill lived in a hut among the native scrub on the foreshore between the rock groyne and the river. Later, he lived in a cosy cottage at the bottom of Minapre Street where he mended shoes to supplement his income when the fish weren't biting. The underside of the corrugated iron roof was insulated with bundles of river reeds that kept the cottage cool during the summer months. Bill had a quaint way of speaking and entertained his visitors with his expressions. Once someone asked who owned a fine pair of dainty shoes he was mending. Bills reply was, "*Don't you know whose them's is? Them's your Mumses them's is*".

When I was six years old, my friends and I played around Bob Sanderson's tourist bus depot opposite today's Commonwealth bank and the service bus drivers enjoyed playing tricks on us whenever they could. I clearly remember one occasion after they had greased the joints under the bus, they asked us to crawl under to check if they had done the job properly. Once we were deep under the bus, in what to a six year old was a dark and dangerous place, they blew the extremely loud bus horn and laughed hysterically as we emerged absolutely terrified.

Bob Sanderson had floodlights shining into the low pillars in front of his office. One day when I was about six years old I noticed a threepenny bit stuck in the lamp holder where the light globe normally was.

It was an unusual place to find money and I have no idea how it got there but perhaps someone had used it to unscrew the lamp cover. Anyway, threepence was an absolute fortune to a child in those days, so climbing on the shoulders of a friend, I carefully inserted my little fingers into the fitting to extract the fortune when suddenly '*bang*', I had discovered the power of electricity. I did a somersault off the shoulders of my friend and we were thrown about 3metres landing in front of the door of the office. Bob and one of the bus drivers had set us up with a 230volt lesson and we limped away as they stood there laughing their heads off.

Jack Anderson had an electric shock machine on the counter in his store. The idea was to put a penny in the slot at the top, hang onto a knob with one hand and turn the handle with the other. A voltage meter registered the amount of charge you absorbed and the local lads competed with each other to see how much they could withstand. The shock was pretty severe if the handle was turned at speed. I hated it and gave the place a wide berth after the one and only time I tried it. After such awful first encounters with electricity, it is curious that I eventually became the town's electrician.

### Lorne Electrics



I served my electrical apprenticeship with a contractor in Ormond in 1940 and was involved in the Army from January 1942 until August 1945 serving as an electrician in Brigade workshops and later in a huge advanced workshop on Bougainville and in the Solomon Islands. All of my life I've had the greatest respect for electricity and as an electrical contractor I trained apprentice electrical mechanics over the years and taught each of them to treat electricity with the utmost respect. It's a wonderful slave but a terrible master!

In the 1950s I ventured into business on my own as *Lorne Electrics* and I became one of the regions electrical contractors. For the next 40 years I had the



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good fortune to visit almost every home and business in the area to carry out electrical work for a diverse and interesting range of locals and visitors. My three daughters often joke about ‘*how many miles Dad gets to the cup of tea*’ and it is true that I enjoyed countless cups of tea and a good chat with nearly every home or business owner in the town at one time or another including many notable citizens of Victoria who made Lorne their summer home over the years and came to love it as we do.

One interesting group well worthy of a mention are the wealthy farming families, mostly from Victoria’s western district, who from the 1890s, built some of Lorne’s most substantial homes along what was called the ‘*golden mile*’. Many of these homes had associated bathing boxes on the main beach. My mother called them the “*well to do*” and certainly most of them were that. Some called them the ‘*squattocracy*’ as a reference to the fact that many of them, or their ancestors, may have obtained their large farmland holdings by simply squatting on the land and claiming it. Whether this is true or not and how it applies to any of these families that made Lorne their summer home is debatable, but my memories are of decent, responsible and interesting people who contributed a great deal to our town. Here are some interesting points about just a few of these notable families.

#### Armytage Family

The Armytage family’s pastoral empire was known as Ingleby, west of Winchelsea and was established in 1837 after discovered by Tom Armytage while searching for his missing friend J.T Gellibrand. After his death in 1842, Ingleby passed into the hands of his brother George Jnr. Five years later his Belgian-born father, George Armytage, who had been living on a large property in Tasmania and had built the first flourmill there, came to live at Ingleby for 4 years. George Snr, an engineer, moved to Geelong and built The Hermitage Girls Grammar School. Elizabeth and Virginia Streets in Geelong are named after his daughters. *Luprena* was their home in Lorne.

#### Beal Family

Charles Beal was born in Sandwich in 1821 and sailed to Australia at the age of 16. At the age of 25 he was one of the founders of Winchelsea and one of two enterprising young men (the other being Prosper Trebeck) who in 1842 built the Barwon Inn, the first building in the future Winchelsea. It was destroyed by fire but was rebuilt in 1843 and ultimately

became the Barwon Hotel of today. Charles, Prosper and Thomas Austin arranged the building of the first church in Winchelsea. In 1853 the firm of Beal and Trebeck sold their hotel and rented Mt Gellibrand Station from Charles Airey. Mt Gellibrand was subdivided and Beal purchased 6,563 acres (approx 3627 *hec*) of the station and built a new home on his new holding. Miss Airey, a daughter of the original owner became a ward of the Beal’s after the death of her parents. She named her new home *Bleak House*. Charles Beal constructed a home at 101 to 103 Smith Street Lorne in 1881. He called the home *Varna*.

#### Buick Family

James Buick sold Crown allotments 2 and part of Crown allotments 1 and 3 on extremely generous terms to the Lorne Presbyterian Church in 1908. The sale price of £164.00 (\$328.00) was apparently well below the true value of the land. This enabled the Church site to be continued through to Smith Street. The family continued to make generous donations to the Church over the years. My Uncle Andrew Sanger built the Buick’s home called *Ravenswood* on 3 acres of land at 70 Smith Street in 1895. It was named after the town of Ravenswood near Bendigo where the family came from.

#### Manifold family

Thomas Manifold was a pioneer grazier in the Western District of Victoria. The Geelong suburb of Manifold Heights was occupied by Thomas and Peter Manifold in 1836 as pastoral squatters. Although the Manifolds went further west a few years later for pastoral expansion, the 1850 rate book records Manifold Height’s as being occupied by the Manifold family’s vineyard. The Manifold family lived in a house called *Wareen* in Mountjoy Parade Lorne. The Lorne Hospital is on the site of another Manifold family home, *Pentlands* at 230 Mountjoy Parade.

#### Russell Family

The Russell Family built a home at 236 Mountjoy Parade in 1905 and called it *Lower Kincaig*. They also built a home for their staff in 1927 at the rear of their home and it was named *Upper Kincaig*. George Russell was a wealthy western district grazier from Barunah Plains. At the turn of the century (1900) the family owned 51,000 acres of grazing land at The Barunah Plains Estate and they carried up to 50,000 sheep. James took first prize for his wool at the International Exhibition in London in 1899. James’



wife Annie played a major part in the summer social life of Lorne.

#### Lascelles family

Edward Lascelles was a prominent Geelong wool broker who founded the famous wool broking and pastoral company Dennys Lascelles. He purchased *Waverley House* overlooking the Erskine River in Waverley Avenue in 1908 from the Staughton family of pioneering pastoralists who built it in the 1880s. The Lascelles were notable enough to host the Governor General of Australia and Lady Ferguson as weekend guests at their home in Lorne in the early 1920s. In 1922 Lascelles' wife and daughter Cecily, were the first two women to make the trip from Geelong to Lorne along the newly formed Great Ocean Rd. track. The ladies drove their own car.

#### Campbell family

Western district grazier Clive Campbell built a home in 1919 in Mountjoy Parade on the corner of Francis Street and named it *Jura*. All the material for the structure was transported to Lorne by sea. It is one of the largest remaining examples in Australia of

### The Great Depression years

One of my best childhood memories growing up in Lorne during the depression when almost no one had any money to spare is of the simple pleasure we got from birthday parties with slices of bread and butter sprinkled with hundreds and thousands, home made toffee or square pieces of coloured jelly covered in castor sugar, usually washed down with raspberry vinegar. Mums had to make everything themselves from the few inexpensive ingredients they could come by and yet the memory of it is magical. Our mum had a ginger beer plant and it was very popular. We also fried bread in dripping on the top of the stove until it was crisp and golden brown. It is a credit to many parents of the era that we kids were mostly unaware of the terrible shortages and lack of jobs and money during those dark years. Somehow they found a way to make life seem normal.

There were several old gentlemen known as 'remittance men' living in Lorne during my childhood. A remittance man was called that because most received a scheduled remittance or allowance from their families. These payments were often made in order to keep the man away from Britain where



Lorne in 1929 at the beginning of The Great Depression

the knitlock concrete block type of construction that was developed by Walter Burley Griffin the designer of Canberra.

it was thought he would cause problems for his family. It was rumoured in the town that some were the 'black sheep' of good English families unable to conform to their family's traditional way of life back in England. In Erskine Avenue not far from our house, lived old Charles Peach and in keeping with



Lorne from the air in 1936. Photo taken by the Melbourne Argus newspaper.

his name he had quite a large orchard. He was very kind and would let us pick fruit if we asked him first, but he would get really fired up if any of the lads raided his orchard without permission. I remember feeling very sad when told by the local policeman that Mr. Peach had died. My mate and I had our first visit to a court for the inquest because we were the last to see him alive.

I remember another elderly remittance man telling us that in his younger days he was quite a larrikin yet in spite of that he had recently discovered that he was still in the family will and now late in his life he had inherited several fine British properties. Eventually he refused to accept them because of the way he had been cast out by his family, he wanted nothing more from them. Most of these chaps were quiet, reserved types, well educated and refined. I wish I had learned more about these remarkable old characters while I had the chance, they must have had fascinating stories to tell.

There were lots of swagmen about the town at the time of the depression in 1928-30 and many of them were also well educated. We kids had many a friendly chat with them. They had a real struggle to get work and

they would be forced to dig gardens or split wood for a shilling or two (*10-20 cents*) or even for just a good meal. It was really tough for most people in those days and to just make a 'bob' or two by any means was the norm. None of them could have imagined in their wildest dreams today's unemployment benefits and general welfare support.

It was a common sight to see unemployed lads carrying a standard woven sugar bag and these had many uses. For example if it rained a corner could be poked in the bag so it could be worn over the head and down the back as a cape, but its main use was to carry bottles. Beer bottles fetched sixpence (*5 cents*) a dozen and if you were lucky enough to find soft drink bottles then you could get the princely sum of eight pence (*about 10 cents*), providing you collected twelve.

#### **My first set of wheels. Free at last.**

I remember that at eleven years old I saved for my first bike by collecting and selling bottles and proudly I was able to buy a 'Comet', costing





£6.11.0 (\$13.10). My boyhood dream machine was manufactured in Geelong.

My bike was the pride of my life and really expanded my horizons. The limit to my roaming was now only as far as I could ride and return home in a day. My mates and I rode to Airey's Inlet and Wye River over pot holed rough roads and covered the Ocean Road and Benwerrin and Erskine Falls roads regularly. I clearly remember riding to Cape Patton and down a steep track to see the fascinating Ramsden's Cave. We entered the number one chamber through a narrow opening leading to the second chamber where there was a big pool known as the lake. There was a stagnant green pool outside the cave with good reflections on a calm day. This was all a great adventure for the daring, but the steep climb back up the 70metre cliff to our bikes was a real 'puffer'.

In the days before refrigeration, ice cream was delivered in tall cans packed with ice and saltpetre (*potassium nitrate*) inside a canvas bag. Sometimes when the ice cream became soft and unsaleable it was given to us free. Those missing out on the ice cream could suck pieces of ice but had to lick the salt taste off first. The butcher shop had an ammonia type refrigerator with horizontal pipes forming the evaporator. Local kids scraped the ice from the pipes and sucked it on a hot day. Lorne's population had increased to 1400 by this time because of large families, staff and workers living in the town. Buildings were constructed with weatherboard cladding and businesses in the main street were numerous.

## The Grocery Business

My grandfather had a popular general store in Lorne. His store and the others of the era were very similar. One was a grocery shop where I worked during the school holidays. There were five of these shops in the town in the 1930s. Inside the shop was a 'u' shaped counter with biscuit tins on the customer's side. Behind the counter there were big bins of flour, sugar, wheat, bran pollard etc, which was ladled out into strong paper bags at the request of the customers. A delightful aroma came from spices, tobacco, cured hams and bacon hung on hooks from the ceiling and this helped to lure customers into the store. Kerosene lanterns, frying pans, saucepans, gridirons, billycans, children's beach buckets, you name it hung from the ceiling hooks.

We learned many useful lessons as kids working in those shops and were grateful for the opportunity to earn pocket money. When a customer paid a grocery bill of £2.00 (\$4.00) or more, the storekeeper dressed in his white apron, gave them a bag of chocolates from a wooden box under the counter. We sometimes played tricks on other young staff members by pushing a pea sized lump of citric acid into a piece of chocolate on the top layer, because lads working behind the counter often helped themselves to chocolates when passing. You could always tell when someone took the bait but sometimes we would forget and the joke backfired. *Yuk!*

We were asked to get orders from customers as early as 7am in order to beat the opposition's boys. We were often told to go away (*putting it politely*) which was quite a blow to a young lad's ego at that



Jack Anderson's General Store was one of many in the early years. Photograph c.1922.



hour. After filling our order book we would return to the store and make up the orders for delivery. It was hard work in the summer pushing our load up the steep hills of Lorne. Our bicycles had a big wicker basket fitted neatly between the handlebars. Sometimes during the jam making season we had to deliver 27kg bags of sugar on our bikes. For all this, we were paid ten shillings (\$1.00) per week.

### The Great Ocean Road

The Great Ocean Road was constructed as a memorial to the fallen who served in *W.W.I* by 2,300 repatriated ex servicemen and 700 sustenance workers. In November 1932 it was officially opened at a ceremony in Lorne by Lt.Gov. Sir William Irvine who said his first glimpse of Australia 53 years ago from the deck of a sailing ship, had been the lofty cliffs the road now traversed. The weather was kind that day and the exciting weekend long celebrations were a great success. Each settlement along the road supplied fireworks and lit bonfires forming a line from Scotchman's Hill at Anglesea through to Apollo Bay. I was ten years old at the time and I stood in the crowd watching Sir William use a pair of gold scissors to cut the purple ribbon barring the road in front of the Grand Pacific Hotel. Within minutes the ribbon bearing the date of the event was cut into 9inch (230mm) sections and sold for 5/- (50 cents) each.

The official cavalcade of cars wound their way around the cliffs to Wye River and people marvelled at the resplendent beauty and the breathtaking scenery presented at each new bend in the road and some said each view was better than the one before.

It was William Calder who first proposed the idea of building a roadway around the Otway coastline to give all weather access to the settlements and towns along the coast that had long been partly isolated, but



The work begins on the Great Ocean Road at Big Hill Creek in 1919

it was the Mayor of Geelong the Hon Mr Howard Hitchcock CMG.OBE.J.P, who enthusiastically pushed the scheme to success.



The scale of the work was a big attraction for holiday makers.

In May 1918 The Great Ocean Road Trust was formed and Howard Hitchcock was voted Chairman. No funds were available at the time and the estimated cost of £150.000 (\$300.000) was to come from donations. Most of the funds finally raised were spent on wages for the road workers as the road was almost entirely built by hand tools. There were many gifts of financial assistance and the Government contributed £75.000 (\$150.000) and supplied a surveyor, chainmen and cook.

The surveyor, Warrant Officer John Hassett, completed the very challenging job of marking out the road in eight months under extremely difficult conditions. Men in the small work gangs were paid only 10/- (\$1.00) per day. Morale was not helped by the rough, slippery terrain slow payments and unreliable cooks. The first surveyors peg was driven in at Lorne in front of The Grand Pacific Hotel.



The first motorists to try out the newly made sections of the road.

There were almost insurmountable difficulties ahead for the surveyor and chainmen as they worked their way along the first line of steep escarpments. Hassett was paid £4.00 (\$8.00) a week and had to meet many trying challenges such as swimming swollen rivers to get provisions, using inferior tools, keeping track of his equipment while replacing workers who left the



job and drawing up plans at night under the light of a hurricane oil lamp. After the work was completed, Hasset moved to Leongatha.



A magnificent feat of engineering for the time and a credit to all who were involved

The first sod was turned in 1919 and a worker's camp established at Big Hill Creek. Initially, workmen were lowered down the steep cliffs by ropes attached to tree trunks. This must have been scary for them as they shaved the undergrowth away and dug a foothold to stand on. The men then worked towards each other until they formed a rough track as they struggled to keep to the surveyed route. They drilled holes into large boulders and rock seams using a long chisel and hammer and filled the holes with explosives. The explosions blew debris over the side of the cliffs taking everything in their path right down to the sea. The shoreline is still strewn with rocks from these explosions. Two and four horse scoops were used to clear away debris from the road and the backbreaking toil of the workman with their picks, shovels and wheelbarrows working in rain, heat and cold weather did the rest.

Desperately needed funds were raised, by offering saleable land on The Great Ocean Road between Eastern View and Lorne. One hundred and forty blocks of land were offered at the Big Hill subdivision and the average price paid was £50.00 (\$100.00). Howard Hitchcock paid the highest price of £85.00 (\$170.00) and the blocks varied in size from one to

one and a half acres.

The first road was a rough carriageway about 9 or 10 feet wide (*3 metres*) and was officially opened through to Lorne in 1922. A traffic timetable was erected at both ends of the Lorne to Eastern View section because much of the road was one-way only, with passing points created on some of the wide



The 1932 opening celebrations cavalcade arrives in Lorne.

bends and a flagpole indicating the passing positions. The narrow clay and dirt road with only a post and rail fence on the ocean side had an uninterrupted view over the many cliff faces and down to the rocks below. This was all a little too much of a thrill for some. Motorists were asked to keep their speed down to 12mph (*20km*) however restrictions were eased in 1923 and motorists could then scorch along at an exhilarating 30mph (*48kms*) on the straight sections.



Early improvements to the first rugged track at Mt Defiance.

Howard Hitchcock spent much of his own money keeping the road works going when funds became low, but in December 1922 a tollgate was installed at Grassy Ck to help with the expenses.

Motorists were charged 2/6d (*25 cents*) and passengers 1/- (*10 cents*) each. Other charges varied according to the nature of the vehicles. Mr Mackay, a returned soldier who had been working on the road since its commencement, moved into the tollhouse with his



The Toll Gate and the Wright family.

family and stayed on for six years as caretaker until October 1929 when the toll gate was relocated to The Springs, approximately 1km on the Lorne side of Cathedral Rock and was then taken over by Mrs Wright. My family often spent time fishing off the nearby rocks with the Wrights, sometimes catching crayfish by luring them out into the open with bait on a long bamboo stick.

When the Wrights' children played on the beach they had the responsibility to run up the hill and report any 'toll dodgers' who would often try to sneak along the beach with their suitcases in hand to try to avoid paying the toll. On hearing the news,



Mrs Wright would lock the tollgate and run down the old worn track to the beach to apprehend and lecture the guilty passenger. After being shamed into paying the one-shilling (10 cents) toll, the poor humiliated passenger then had to walk another kilometre to the Lorne side of the gate to be picked up.

The motorist, their partner in crime, would be given an 'ear bashing' by Mrs Wright when she returned to open the gate and was asked to pay an extra shilling penalty for trying to cheat the poor war diggers out of a 'bob'. The Wrights did a great job as caretakers and stayed until the Premier

Mr A.A. Dunstan ceremonially unlocked the gate in October 1936.

Workers on the road were paid ten shillings per day (\$1.00) plus keep. They ate very well with at least one hot meal every day and usually slept just two to a tent. The cooks were paid 12/6d per day (\$1.25).

People who gave a £5.00 (\$10.00) donation were

given free toll passes and in some cases passing points would be named after those who gave generously. The tollhouse building was moved to number 4 Minapre St Lorne in 1937 and is still there today. The Country Roads Board took control of The Great Ocean Road when the toll was abolished in 1936 and have continued to carry out maintenance and to upgrade the road to the very high standard we all enjoy today. The road had a huge positive impact



Blasting work on Big Hill in 1919. Dangerous work, no lives were lost.

on Lorne and the town has prospered ever since from the improved access.

No lives were lost during the construction of The Great Ocean Road which is an amazing achievement considering the dangers involved. Travelling over today's wide sealed surface, protected by continuous steel safety rails, most of the 2,000,000 motorists who now drive along the road each year would find it difficult to imagine how dangerous this modern highway once was.



The workers camp at Grassy Creek was a small tent city.

Howard Hitchcock died in August 1932 just before the road was officially opened. In November of that year, as a tribute to his great contribution, his car was driven behind the Governor's official vehicle in the cavalcade on the official opening day. In 1982 there was another festive Jubilee celebration enjoyed by



residents and visitors to mark the first 50 years of this great road.

The Great Ocean Road has since been widened and upgraded several times. In the early years, but before 1950, the Erskine River and Painkalac Ck. at Airey's Inlet were the only streams that were bridged. The other crossings were simple causeways. During very wet weather the Cumberland River and Spout and Stoney Creeks were impassable with a raging torrent of water 60cm or more flowing over them. Much to the delight of their passengers, school buses could not get through.

In one short period in 1954, 11" (275mm) of rain was recorded in the district and at Hut Gully between Airey's Inlet and Angelsea, the road was completely washed away leaving a deep gorge. The Country Roads Board erected a temporary army style Bailey Bridge to span the chasm and it looked pretty flimsy, however even school bus drivers were game enough to use it with a little encouragement (*not from the kids of course*). The Country Roads Board replaced the roadway over some very large diameter concrete pipes and there have been no problems since. The only testament to this dramatic washout is a dip in the road at the site and a sign at Hut Gully.

A lot of interesting information about The Great Ocean Road and its attractions is available at [www.greatoceanrd.org.au](http://www.greatoceanrd.org.au)

### The Flat

Before Lorne's central car park was constructed on the foreshore flat, most of the town's sporting activities took place there, as it was the largest level area in the township. The local butcher grazed sheep to keep the grass down and a warning bell housed in a wooden tower on the beach side of *The Flat* was rung if anyone was in trouble in the surf. The area was also popular for Joy Flights in biplanes in 1915, but during the 1930's they were conducted on the beach near the river. Old photos at the Historical Society depict many of these events from that exciting and romantic bygone era. *The Flat* remains the central focal point of the town today.

Lil Beaurepaire ran the Carinya guesthouse, behind the present day Cumberland Time Share resort and in her '*hey day*' was a renowned Olympic swimming medallist. It is said that she wore a swimming costume beneath her dress on hot days and on hearing the emergency bell ringing on the foreshore, like a comic book super hero, she would run down

the hill and remove her dress while pounding out into the surf to save whoever was in distress. Lil was credited with saving many people from drowning and in the early 1930's she attracted large crowds with her diving exhibitions from a board erected on the Lorne pier.



Typical Lorne beach scene around 1950 before the Surf Club was built. The old Cumberland guesthouse is in the top right of the picture.

Lorne's first Surf Life Saving Club was formed in the 1930's and a few of the local swimmers formed the first committee and held their meetings in the lounge room of the old Gracedale guesthouse. It was the second Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC) in Australia after the famous Bondi club in Sydney. Before the Lorne SLSC was formed, volunteers who were strong swimmers provided a limited service and often rescued visitors in difficulty in a style rather different to the one used today. The strongest volunteer would swim to the person in distress with a life jacket and harness attached to a long rope and reel. Several other volunteers would hold the rope above head height and play it out as needed. When the swimmer in distress was reached and taken in tow, the rope was reeled in and the rescuers continued giving assistance until all were safely back on the beach.

Before 1930 volunteers stored rescue equipment in several small huts erected at various strategic points along the main beach almost as far as the Erskine River. After enduring an old bathing box in the sand dunes as a clubhouse for many years, in November 1954 the Lorne SLSC laid the foundation stone for their modern clubhouse. The building was completed the following year. The club was extended and upgraded in 1986 to provide facilities for women.

In 2002 a new architecturally designed Surf Club building with world-class first aid facilities was opened. Today, members have available to them the very latest rescue equipment and expensive



motorised rescue craft and provide the public with a first class volunteer service. Regular beach patrols give holidaymakers a sense of security as they swim between the safety flags. The club enters competitively into Surf Club carnivals all around Australia and proudly display the many trophies and banners they have won over the years.

The Club has a large membership and the members have a permanent roll assisting the four thousand swimmers competing in Lorne's famous annual Pier to Pub surf swimming race, which draws huge crowds in January each year. Today the SLSC is paid by The Lorne Foreshore Committee and The Surf Coast Shire to provide safety patrols on the main beach during peak holiday period and the club supplies volunteer lifeguards on weekends and public holidays.

### Sharky

Victor Marshall was one of the clubs most popular characters. Vic was an orphan and had a tough time of it during his formative years while he impatiently waited to become an independent adult. He worked at many jobs to support himself and eventually found work on a sheep station. In the rough and tough conditions of the shearing sheds Vic became a man, rubbing shoulders with the hard drinking and wild living shearers. After several years working in outback N.S.W, he succumbed to the bottle and was really caught by the *grip of the grape*.

For a while Vic kept company mainly with alcoholics like himself, but he had strength to his character and could see that he had no future if he continued with his destructive drinking, so finally he was able to get his addiction under control. He knew he would become the subject of ridicule from the other shearers if he stopped drinking, but so determined was he to kick the habit he became perhaps the greatest actor the outback has seen. After filling an empty wine bottle with cold tea, he would hang onto it by the neck and lean over the side of his bunk feigning a drunken state and when necessary he would continue the charade with much singing, swaggering, and backslapping of the other no hoppers in the bunkhouse.

Vic kept this up for several weeks and remained well accepted as one of the boys. Strangely though, he was even more admired by many of them when he finally decided to leave the shearers life behind and admitted to the charade. Vic moved south and found himself a job in Lorne working for Lil Beaurepaire (by then Mrs Clarke) as a boiler attendant and

handyman at the old Cumberland guesthouse.

Vic had learned to swim in the Darling River and was pretty good at it, so much so that he'd stoke the boiler up to the hilt with fuel so that he could get some time to nick down to the beach and plough out through the breakers near the surf club. With a slow steady pace he'd swim along to the mouth of the Erskine River and back. He became a regular feature on the Lorne beach, much to the consternation of some who enjoyed telling him "*a shark will get yer one day out there in that deep water*". Undaunted, this feat became his daily routine and he affectionately became known as 'Sharky' or 'Sharkbait' to the thousands who knew and loved him over the years he spent in Lorne.

Sharky was an unofficial lifeguard for many years and a particularly good friend to hundreds of kids, to whom he gave sound beach safety advice. For several years he operated a one man business on the beach spraying customers and especially pretty young women with suntan oil, often not



charging the local girls and refusing all applications for an apprenticeship from the lads. He also did a brisk business hiring out rubber surfboards.

A retired doctor holidaying in Lorne offered him work in Queensland as a handyman during the winter months, Sharky bought himself a tiny red motorbike which he intended to ride all the way up to North Queensland during Lorne's off season. However, he was such a congenial type that truckies loved his company and gave him and his motorbike a much more comfortable way of getting from Lorne to Queensland. Over the years the truckies looked out for this suntanned old bloke on his tiny motorbike, so that they could take him on board and enjoy the endless yarns about his colourful life, some true, others...well! Many holidaying graziers he'd befriended, as one of Lorne's great characters, encouraged him to spend a night or two at their homes along the route, adding sometimes many days to his journey.



Sharky died in his sleep in the winter of 1986. His service was held on the balcony of the SLSC and his ashes scattered from a surfboat into Louttit Bay. Fifteen hundred people attended his tribute and the public had a plaque fixed to a seat overlooking the beach where incidentally, no shark ever did get him.

The plaque reads....

*Sharky: Victor Marshall 1918 - 14/7/86*

*He entered his life as a foundling unnamed  
and departed as a man named Sharky- loved by  
thousands. Life member Lorne Surf Club. Ashes  
scattered in the surf at Lorne 27/12/86*

### Bathing Boxes

Bathing boxes were always a controversial part of the beach landscape, however they did provide an amenity and a certain beachside charm for almost a century. There were approximately fifty boxes in all on the Lorne beach, but they finally moved into history in 1970 mainly because vandalism and unregulated sub leasing made them untenable.

### The Circus comes to town

During the early 1930s, Perry Bros. Circus visited Lorne on a regular basis and set up their show at several different sites over those years. One site, called Beaurepaire's Paddock, was a vacant area bounded by the then Marine Parade, William and Smith Streets. The area was almost covered in scrub except near the main street where the 'Big Top' would be erected roughly where Lorne Real Estate is today. Another popular site for the circus tents was at the bottom of a paddock where the Anchorage Motel and shops stand today. They were relatively small circuses but drew large crowds who were always pleased with the entertainment.

In spite of the Great Depression, the 1930s were great years for kids in Lorne and there were lots of hair-raising escapades that would have made our parents frantic if they had known, yet somehow we all survived. I remember as young boys we would crawl through caves by torch and candlelight on our elbows and stomachs, sometimes up to fifteen metres underground for what seemed like half a kilometre. There were heaps of wondrous adventures and in

hindsight, dangerous places for kids to explore in the hills and along the coast and many wise and wonderful local characters to learn from.

### Adventures with 'Nash' the butcher

One of my favourite characters was Nash Challis who was born at Winchelsea where his family had a butcher shop. They owned a property at Yendon near Ballarat where they killed their own animals and took the carcasses to the nearby settlements in what was called a cutting cart. They cut chops, steak or other meat cuts on the cart at their customer's request and were true home delivery butchers.

Nash rode his horse to Lorne in the summer of 1912 to visit his sister and loving the mild climate he stayed on. Two years later he married local girl, Sylvia Clissold. Nash worked for Sharp's Milling Company driving and caring for their mill horses. He would bring in loads of sawn timber on the horse drawn trolleys or trams and unload it at the pier ready for Sharp's ship the *Erskine*, to sail for their depot in South Melbourne. At the end of the day he would stable the horses either behind the tram tracks near Shelly Beach or down by the slaughterhouse on the southern side of Lorne.



Nash is seen here on the right at the slaughterhouse with some mates.

After work on Saturdays, he would wander up to the slaughterhouse about 250 metres beyond Hird



Street above the Ocean road and give the butcher, a Scotsman named Muir, a hand. Eventually Muir offered him the job of slaughterman. Nash was great to us kids, giving us rides on the butcher's cart and allowing us to sit on top of the slaughter yard fence with our eyes as big as saucers watching him at work. As gruesome as it seems, we learned valuable lessons about the anatomy of animals from Nash. After slaughtering and preparing up to two or three bullocks a day in holiday season and a sheep and pig or two, he transported them by horse and cart to the butcher shop in Marine Parade.



Some of Lorne's happy butchers from the era.

It was also Nash's job to drive cattle down to Lorne from Birregurra. He would set off from Lorne at 3am returning by 5pm if all went smoothly. He would ride his horse up through the bush track via Wynbooliel, a small predominately Scottish settlement above Erskine Falls, down along Norman's Track to Pennyroyal where he would wait at a pre arranged rendezvous spot for a local character named Windy Rose who drove the beasts from Birregurra to the pickup point. Nash and his dogs had quite a task keeping the mob intact down through the rough terrain until they were safely locked up in Floyer's paddock half a kilometre up stream on the George River.

Around 1930 when I was 8 years old, Nash took me on the butcher's delivery cart to the Ocean Road construction camp at Wye River. As well as meat, we carried mail and bread for the workman at the road site. No charge was made for this honorary service and it meant a lot to the men. Nash stopped along the way to show me the remains of the *Godfrey* shipwreck and we found bits and pieces of wreckage strewn all along the beach in front of the wreck. Of course every last scrap of the *Godfrey* has been scrounged from the beach since then. The cook at the camp always served us a meal when we made a

delivery and I have wonderful memories of his huge hot scones with butter and jam.

We made our way back to the road construction site at Mt. Defiance, which had recently been swept away into the sea 50metres below by a huge landslide. The men had reformed a section about 2.5metres wide and 60metres long. As I waited alone on the cart for Nash to deliver the mail, a large stone from way up above the slip area came tumbling down and the horse caught sight of it and bolted off down the dangerous narrow track. I vividly remember thinking my end had come as I saw only a rough slippery and narrow clay track ahead and the breaking waves way down below. But it wasn't my time and by a small miracle a workman just happened to be standing



The Great Ocean Road could be extremely dangerous in those days.

nearby in exactly the right spot and on realising that a potential disaster was unfolding he courageously leapt in front of the horse just in time, grabbed the bridle and somehow stopped the cart before it went over the edge. When Nash saw what happened I think he was shaking even more than I was. I've had 75 more years since then and I probably owe that to an unknown Great Ocean Road pioneer.

### Cows in the main street

Dairy products have always been an integral part of the Australian diet and before household refrigerators became widespread after the 1940s, cows were a part of everyone's daily life because there was no effective way to keep milk fresh. Before *W.W.2*, cows roamed about the town at will, creating quite a few problems and every property had to be completely fenced with self-closing gates. The main beach was also fenced off at both ends with fences constructed right along the back of the beach. I remember one cow named Cherry that belonged to a small guesthouse and was very adept at opening any gate with its horns. Some people reckoned Cherry could even pick a padlock. I once heard my Mum call out



to my Father that Cherry was in our veggie garden. By the time she was hunted out she had done a fair bit of damage. Next day it happened again so Dad milked her. Cherry, or her owners, got the message and she didn't return.



For more than a century cows were common in the streets.

In those days young couples looking for a dry warm spot would not have to go far to find a cow to hunt off its resting place. Cows generate a lot of heat and really warm the ground they rest on. It's the next best thing to an electric blanket. A favourite place cows liked to sleep was at the bottom of Gaynor Lane, just in front of the footpath where the old R.S.L and now the Lorne School stands. My Mum was an enthusiastic reader and one dark night she was on her way to the library where the State Emergency Services building is today, to see the librarian Miss Amy Gaynor. Unfortunately along the way Mum fell on top of a cow lying on the footpath. My Dad, who was known for his keen sense of humour, loved



My Mum loved to walk

to tell the story of how the cow got an awful fright and took off with Mum spread across its back. He would say, "Mum got off at the library because it was important for her to exchange her books, but the cow didn't stop until it ran out of puff at the George River".

Some of the successful early western district graziers would bring their families and staff to Lorne and stay for most of the summer season at their seaside homes. They usually purchased a cow from a farm on their way to Lorne and employed one of the locals to milk her morning and night.

## The Fishing Industry

By the end of the 1930s there were twenty-five Cousta fishing boats working from the pier and each boat usually had a two-man crew. All were busy during the peak of the fishing era and the port of Lorne was recognised as one of the country's major suppliers of Barracouta and Crayfish. This was when the pier was redesigned to cater for the on deck storage of the craft during rough weather conditions. If markets were favourable, large catches of Cousta were packed in ice and trucked off to the Footscray fish markets. The annual catch of Cousta was around a thousand tons.

The fishermen were always at the mercy of the wholesalers and prices were manipulated according to quantity. If there was a glut of fish on the market the fishermen received a pittance for their hard toil, battling through rough seas and dangerous conditions in order to eke out a living. This situation continued until 1948 when the Lorne Fisherman's Co-operative was formed. Their new freezing chambers allowed the precious catch to be stored for short periods to ensure bigger prices by going to market only at the right times.

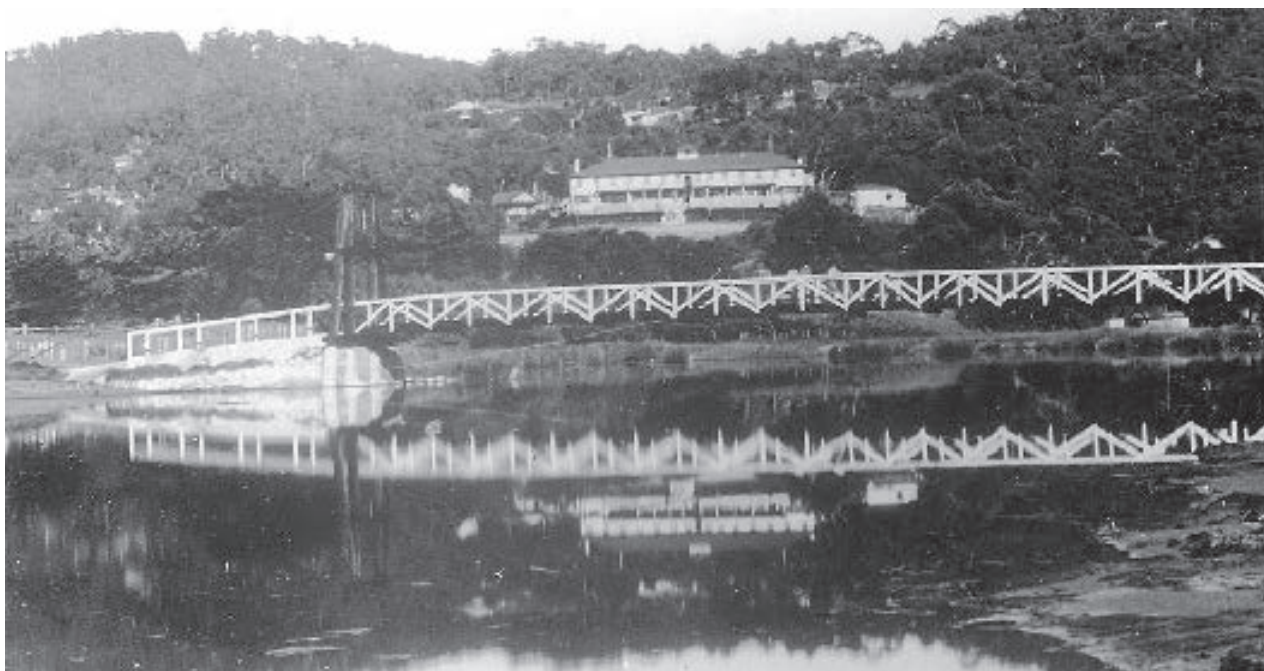


The old original pier seen in 1890 from above of the Grand Pacific and the Cobb & Co stables.

There were two motorised cranes in use in those days to lift the boats in and out of the water. Several systems were employed to convey the catch from the boat to the pier deck. Initially cranes lifted large baskets from the boats, but that method was replaced by an elevator which conveyed the fish from the lower landing to the upper deck of the pier.

While the Cousta were running, the fishermen and their families brought much prosperity to the town and this booming industry lasted for nearly forty-five years. For some still unexplained reason, around 1981, the Barracouta suddenly left Bass Strait. The fisherman's Co-op. survived largely by diversifying and they built a processing factory that has since been sold to private operators.

A breakwater and protective harbour was proposed



The Chalet guesthouse and Swing Bridge from the river mouth in the 1940s. I was born and grew up in the white house to the right of the Chalet.

in 1956 that would use part of the Point Grey rock platform and encompass the existing pier area. This would have ensured all year round protection for both the fishing fleet and pleasure craft. The proposal appeared to have enormous potential and plans were drawn up. Melbourne University created a model of the proposed structure and many tests were undertaken to see if there would be any detrimental effects on sand movement that might degrade the Lorne surf beach.

Sceptics made a big issue about the possibility of sand build up and to be fair, it had happened in other ports along the coast. In spite of enormous support, the negative argument won the day. The local fishermen said that the alternative of closer piling of the pier could create quieter water and a safer anchorage.

The Public Works Department constructed the swing bridge in 1937 and the Winchelsea Shire paid the cost along with voluntary contributions from Lorne residents. Many locals learned to swim under the bridge and had the pleasure of jumping from it when they succeeded. This is now discouraged because a sand build up under the bridge has made it dangerous and we are all aware today that jumping from bridges is never a good idea.

I remember that there was a piece of a shipwreck on the south bank of the Erskine about 20 metres beyond the bridge. As kids we often dived from this 2 by 3 metre chunk that was said to be part of the bow section of the ketch *Henry*, wrecked on the

main beach in 1878 and dragged into the river.

### **The Chalet Guesthouse**

The Chalet guesthouse was built in 1937 for Bob Sanderson and my father Jack Stirling whose properties it occupied. John McGregor of Colac was awarded the building contract and after the site was cleared and the old Mountjoy coach stables demolished, building work began in September. It was near the end of the Great Depression and labour was readily available. 26 carpenters using only hand tools really got into the work in earnest. Working conditions were very strict and Mc Gregor wouldn't even allow the men to roll their cigarettes on his time so they had to bring thin tobacco tins crammed with pre-rolled fags to work. Not even tea breaks were allowed during a forty-four hour week. The Chalet opened for business on Christmas Eve 1937.

Recently the Development Company Mirvac paid \$5.2 million for the Chalet, a landmark building in the town for almost 7 decades. It has now been torn down and will be replaced with 50 luxury apartments built over the 4069 sq.metre site in Smith Street.

### **World War Two**

During W.W.2, the town carried on much as before except for the official Government austerity restrictions that were universal. The severe rationing of fuel naturally had an effect on transport. To get around the shortage, some motor vehicles were fitted with gas producers that burned charcoal in a



furnace bolted onto the rear and every now and then the driver had to get out and poke the fire to let the air draught through the burner. Guards were fitted over headlights to safeguard against enemy aircraft spotting the vehicles and using the information to navigate at night along roads. Only a hooded slit was allowed for the light to shine through onto the road.

Many American troops as well as members of the Australian Armed Forces came to Lorne while on leave. The local Volunteer Defence Corp. was trained for a variety of duties to protect the town in case of enemy action. Following a secret military plan they drilled deep holes into the cliffs at strategic locations along the Great Ocean Road to be filled with explosives. In the event that an enemy force attempted a coastal landing, the charges were to be detonated to bring the road down and delay any overland transport towards Geelong and Melbourne until regular armed forces could be brought in.



Many people today do not realise just how active the enemy was around Australia's coastline. A Japanese submarine under the control of Commander Tagami with a reconnaissance *Clip* plane on board was active off Apollo Bay and the plane flew freely around Melbourne for a few days in 1942. It was in the air about 2 hours before dawn on



Japanese Yokosuka E14Y Clip Plane

Thursday 26th February 1942. Pilot Nobuo Fujita flew north across Bass Strait headed for Cape Otway where he banked to the north east and followed the coastline to the Point Lonsdale lighthouse near the narrow entrance to Port Phillip Bay. He then headed northeast towards the city of Melbourne. Fujita struck a few heavy banks of



Japanese submarine photographed in Australian waters during WW2

cloud. He flew across the Bellarine Peninsula towards Portarlington. The city of Geelong was 16kms away to the left of his aircraft

He then flew another 24kms along the western edge of Port Phillip Bay. He continued to encounter heavy cloud and exited the clouds directly above the RAAF's Laverton airfield. There were about 12 Wirraways based at Laverton along with some Lockheed Hudsons and Avro Ansons. RAAF personnel at Laverton reported sighting the Japanese

plane and aircraft were scrambled to try to locate the intruder. Fujita continued his charmed journey across Melbourne at a height of 300 metres obtaining a birds eye view of the Yarra River, the central business district of Melbourne and the docks at the mouth of the Yarra River before flying back over Cape Otway to rendezvous with his submarine.

The American freighter *City of Rayville* became the first U.S vessel lost in W.W.2 when it was blown up by a German mine about 10kms off Cape Otway in November 1940. It was bound from Adelaide to Melbourne with 1500 tons of lead loaded at Port Pirie. All survived, with the exception of an engineer who went back to the ship to retrieve personal belongings. Local fisherman ventured out into rough seas at night when alerted by the Cape Otway lighthouse keeper that he had seen a bright flash followed by the rumble of an explosion about 32km's off the coast. After a long search in the rain soaked darkness the fisherman saw flares and eventually found two lifeboats and the grateful survivors. The nine fishermen towed them into Apollo Bay and the local towns people lavished the American survivors with hospitality by accommodating them in a hotel and clothing them from the Red Cross supplies. Lorne and Anglesea residents also showed generous hospitality when the seamen were taken to Melbourne along the Great Ocean Road. Lorne resident George Clissold proudly displayed the *City of Rayvilles* wooden nameplate on the verandah of his home in Grand Parade.

Lorne citizens manned an official spotting station in the recreation hall at the Queens Park Caravan site. A telephone system reported all shipping and aircraft movements to headquarters in Melbourne and to assist the operation the walls were lined with shipping and aircraft identification posters. The volunteers, both men and women, kept this vital service going 24 hours a day right through the war years and they were known affectionately as 'The Spotters'.

### The boys come home

When the local servicemen returned home after the war they were anxious to put the years of loneliness and hardship behind them. Their first difficulty was to reintegrate back into normal society. Some found it very hard to settle down and in spite of the horrors they had experienced in wartime they missed the comradeship and mutual dependence they shared with their mates in times of extreme danger. The majority were what might be called today 'nervous wrecks' and some took time to come to terms with a



normal way of life that was such an extreme contrast to their wartime experiences. But settle down they did and most married and raised families. Many joined clubs and became involved in sports.

A lot more jobs were becoming available and a building boom of sorts began. Cheap housing loans were offered by the Government as well as tool allowances and other incentives. In a surprisingly short time life got pretty much back to normal.

## R.S.L

The Lorne R.S.L. Sub Branch was formed in 1940 with Captain Jack Nichols as its first President. When the 'boys' were all finally 'demobbed' the branch had 96 members. Before W.W.2 our local diggers were members of the Winchelsea sub branch.

During the 1950s, ballroom dancing became very popular again, so the R.S.L. members decided to build a dance hall. The large hall was to have a big kitchen, separate supper room, toilet block and a huge foyer entrance. Members and their wives worked very hard to raise funds to pay for tradesmen and materials. Many volunteers donated their labour but unfortunately, a few short years after the RSL hall was built, the dancing craze faded and sadly, one doesn't hear much about dancing in Lorne these days.

For many years the hall provided a venue for badminton and other indoor sports, but by the mid 1990s high maintenance and looming capital works costs forced the Committee to sell the building to the Education Department and after extensive alterations and additions it is now part of the Lorne School complex. The R.S.L. Sub Branch is still soldiering on with a membership down to just twenty-four.

A freestone Cenotaph was first erected in the old library paddock in 1923 and when the Stribling Sports Reserve was constructed on that site it was moved to the Erskine riverbank diagonally opposite Cora Lynn. A few years later the Country Roads Board had a grandiose plan for a curved bridge across the river at the new site, so up came the Cenotaph again and it was reconstructed on the northern end of what was then a car park beside the swimming pool. In 2003 it was moved yet again when the Foreshore Committee decided that the whole area including the car park would become a recreational complex. The Cenotaph is now finally at peace in Mountjoy Pde opposite a shopping area and surrounded by a neat lawn. It can now be seen from every angle.

## Lorne's Mr Fixit

Les Barker who was a very keen member of the R.S.L., came with his wife Jean to live in Lorne not long after W.W.2. His parents had preceded him several years earlier and his father, a retired Sergeant of police, was a no-nonsense type who didn't suffer fools gladly. His mother Mum Barker, was a wonderful little lady, and full of fun. She raised quite a large family and lived to 104 years of age.



Mr Fixit in his 'office'

Les worked for Kodak before the war and was highly thought of as a skilled artificer. After serving in the Middle East and other army postings he was finally 'demobbed', but like many others, found settling down to work in the city very difficult. He decided to try his luck working for himself at Lorne and rented a room that was part of the Lorne Cinema building. He ran his business from there for the rest of his working life. Les and Jean started a family in 1950 and were blessed with two daughters.

Because he was so adept at repairing virtually anything, he became affectionately known as *Mr Fixit* and fix it, he could. People sent cameras to him from all over Australia to be repaired, apparently after being told to throw them away as irreparable by others. Les would make and repair the most intricate shutters or similar broken parts. The cameras would be sent back in full working order much to the delight and satisfaction of his admiring customers. He was



also a highly skilled watchmaker and he could rivet a tiny piece of sheet brass onto a damaged watch cog and then cut and match incredibly small new teeth with the keenest precision. The watches he repaired generally continued to work efficiently for many years and speaking of teeth, he often mended broken false teeth for locals and visitors.

Les invented and manufactured several vending machines requested by his customers. He was also a talented artist and a first class sign writer. One of his most appreciated inventions was for an unfortunate chap who had lost his right hand in a work accident some years earlier. Les made him a stout, stiff glove that fitted onto the man's right wrist. On the end of the glove was a chuck like arrangement into which a specially made knife, spoon and pen could be clamped. This device worked extremely well and gave great joy to the poor man who had been fumbling around for years trying to do everything with his left hand.

I had heard that Les could open almost any house lock or car door in a flash and he was often called out at night to let people into their homes when they had forgotten their keys. I remember once seeing him open a car in which the key's had been locked and it really did take him only twenty seconds. I was astonished when the owner refused to pay him saying "*but it only took you a few seconds*". Les had a short fuse in such circumstances and he immediately blew



his stack and stormed off after relocking the car with the keys still inside, leaving the owner to ponder his own stupidity.

When *Mr Fixit* died in his mid eighties he was truly a hard act to follow. We miss Les and he'll be long remembered, especially when a banjo is heard playing. Yes, you guessed, he was very good at that too.

## The Lorne Fire Brigade

The Lorne Fire Brigade was formed in 1936. Brigade members were handicapped because of limited equipment, but nevertheless the devoted members

gave the town the very best security they could. The members must have looked resplendent in their uniforms because one resident returning to Lorne after a long absence commented, "*The Captain looks more like an Arch Duke in his uniform*". Lorne's Fire Brigade is now a part of The Country and Rural Fire Brigade and is part of a large State-wide network. Their equipment has been substantially upgraded and is now modern and sophisticated.

A modern communication system ensures immediate response from other brigades, spotter aircraft or aerial water bombers if needed. Bushfires in the densely forested Otway Ranges have long been a cause for concern and are an immense challenge for everyone, but when we hear the shrill haunting sound of the siren these days we residents can feel a lot safer.

Lorne has had its share of tragedy due to fire. *Black Thursday* of 1919, *Black Friday* on January 13<sup>th</sup> 1939 and no one will forget February 17<sup>th</sup> 1983 when *Ash Wednesday* brought indescribable devastation and a tragic loss of life. Large tracts of our local forests have been burned many times and given the right or '*wrong*' conditions it is extremely difficult to fight a raging bushfire driven by a scorching hot wind and it can be very dangerous, even today, for all those trying to control it.

Most of the rural fire fighters are volunteers who can ill afford the time they often have to give freely to defend their community. The residents of Lorne and the surrounding areas owe a huge debt to all the members of the brigade, past and present who have risked their lives to benefit others. Even with all our modern knowledge, equipment and training, the risk is still very real.

## Please Call the Doctor

In 1904, a First-aid kit and two ambulance stretchers were kept at the Anglican Church for public use. There was also a large locked chest with supplies for the exclusive use of doctors only. Helpful first aid lectures were given to the Lorne public by a doctor in Birregurra enabling citizens to assist one another when the town was without a resident doctor.

At the beginning of the 20th century the township was fortunate to have the services of Dr Barker who lived at north Lorne and visited his patients by horse and buggy. Since the early 1920s, the Bush Nurses organisation had been serving Lorne, firstly from their residence in Moorhouse St. then later in Smith St. Sometimes the nurse would visit patients at night



Members of the Lorne Fire Brigade turn out in their uniformed splendour in the 1940s , justifiably proud of their service to the community

on a pony with the aid of just a map and a torch.

There have been many times when Lorne did not have a resident doctor and usually the bush nurse could make it in time to assist women giving birth. Some mothers had to manage alone as mine did when I came into the world. Dad was working at Erskine House at the time and as our house was within sight of his work he had an arrangement with Mum to wave a towel over the house verandah when it was time for him to get the nurse. By the time Dad located the nurse on his bicycle (*long story*), Mum had already given birth and was found sitting up in bed happily eating an apple.



Dr. Barker does his rounds on horse and buggy around 1900.

A doctor briefly operated a practice from 1938, but the only medical doctor in the 1940's was an elderly retired heart specialist Dr Percy Oldham. Dr Jim Byers operated a practice in the 1950's-60's and was very popular in the town, but the need for a hospital was becoming urgent.

After many years of fund raising to provide a local hospital the town's people purchased a site on the Deans Marsh Rd. Unfortunately the Hospital and Charities Commission deemed the area unsuitable, so the land had to be sold and an approved property in Smith Street named *Pentlands* was purchased from Mrs E. Manifold. The house had been given to her as a wedding present by her husband around 1900.

A rough track down from Smith St. was used as the entrance until a carriageway was bulldozed from Albert St. to the rear of the house. Builders Cook and Fawcett won the contract to convert the building into a hospital with nurse's quarters on a lower level. There were two nurses and a matron at first and the hospital consisted of two single and two double wards, an operating theatre, sterilizing room, delivery and nursery rooms, outpatients area, plus kitchen and staff dining room.

The Lorne Hospital was officially opened in March 1959, much to the delight of the proud Lorne residents. On going fundraising by the Ladies Hospital Auxiliary mainly through their Opportunity Shop, has funded the purchase of much needed equipment for the Hospital. There have been several additions and alterations since and now in 2004 Lorne is about to get a large new Hospital Complex.

Patients can see from the ward windows the magnificent big blue gums *eucalyptus globulus* growing right down to the shoreline between the two hotels. These beautiful eucalypts are native to Victoria and Tasmania and we are often asked



why this variety only grows in limited areas along the coastline. It appears to be because the species cannot tolerate salt laden winds and here in the main part of Lorne they are protected by the hill from the prevailing south-westerly winds, but around the corner past the Pacific Hotel and on the northern side of Lorne only a salt tolerant stunted type of eucalyptus can survive. These blue gums give Lorne a unique tranquil appearance.



'Pentlands' build in the late 1890s became Lorne's new hospital in 1959

### Acknowledging the Beginning and the End, Lorne Style

For the past 50 years, when a local person dies, a

Lorne tradition is to fly a flag at half-mast on the foreshore opposite the newsagency. When a local baby is born a pink or blue pennant is flown from the flagpole. Our definition of a local is anyone who has a permanent address in Lorne, whether they have lived in the town for a week or a century.



The old joke of having to be born here to be accepted as a local is complete rubbish and shouldn't be believed by anyone. Everyone is welcome in Lorne!

### Water and Waste

When a sewerage system was installed in the town in the late 1950s a much bigger supply of water had to be found. Hector Stribling took a government engineer to show him what he considered to be the most suitable place to construct a large dam on the St George River at a place known locally as the 'Duck Holes'. After hiking a long distance to up above the Phantom Falls the exhausted engineer suddenly stopped some distance beyond the falls when puffing and spluttering he asked, "*how much further are these (expletive deleted) duck holes*"? Hector answered "*Oh about another mile or so*". The engineer looked around and replied, "*I've had enough, what's wrong with right here*". The Allen dam was constructed on that site and has a capacity of 220megalitres. The original Erskine River system is no longer in use

because of maintenance problems.

The Lorne Sewerage Authority together with the Lorne Water Board now has a very sophisticated system serving the needs of the town. Sewer lines from households and business premises are connected to a mains system via pumping stations and then to a treatment plant up along the Deans Marsh road. Treated and purified effluent is then discharged into the sea far beyond the town's boundary.

The Lorne Water Board petitioned the government to assist in providing grant money to establish a purification plant and administration offices at a cost of \$1.86 million. The completed project is situated in Polwarth Road adjacent to the first reservoir and it began operating in 1989. Lorne citizens now enjoy a reliable water supply of a very high standard. In addition to the plant and offices, a pumping system and new mains were established at about the same time. Additional holding basins were created and the old ones upgraded so that Lorne is now far better served with good reserves. Fire fighters and householders should be comforted by these advancements.

My grandfather and I shared a common interest in and commitment to, the Lorne foreshore and each of us served for many years on the boards of both the Lorne Foreshore Committee and the Lorne Progress Association. The L.P.A played a major role in the town's improvement over many years and eventually disbanded around 1970.

Because the annual Government grant for the maintenance of all existing tourist walking tracks and river crossings around Lorne's hinterland is completely inadequate, we can no longer provide safe access to many lovely falls and beauty spots. So here is a challenge for a group of enthusiastic bushwalkers to make a worthwhile contribution to the community. Volunteers are needed to reopen and maintain these tracks for local families and visitors to discover or rediscover. Pop into the Historical Society and take a look at photos of these wondrous locations; you will surely be inspired.

The tracks needing your help are to Stoney Ck Falls, Grassy Ck Falls, Kyles Falls, Margaret and Melba Falls, Upper Cumberland Falls, and the magnificent 'Kelsall's Rock' lookout at Grassy Creek. The Policeman's track and the Bridle track, once the only access to Cape Otway, would provide scenic and safe walking paths if they were restored to their former glory.



People have always loved just walking around the town and today the shops, cafes and restaurants cater for every taste. But even in the early days strollers could stop to enjoy simple local pleasures such as a cool 'spider drink at the Ozone café or a dusty road' at Maudie Croft's Log Cabin in George Street on the way to Teddy's Lookout.

I remember seeing W.P. Carr Real Estate signs on the way to Teddy's Lookout just before the war that announced, "George Street Land Sale, £15.00) per block or £100.00 for ten blocks". It's amazing isn't it? \$30.00 would not buy a decent letterbox in George St. today. Today's land prices would be incomprehensible to past generations. The latest surveys show that the average price of a home in Lorne is now more than \$600,000 with many sales over \$1 million. This is due partly to the limited supply of land and of course mainly to the perpetual popularity of this unique oasis. It is not a good thing in some respects, especially as it means young families now find it difficult to become homeowners in the town. Many workers commute into Lorne to work as they can't afford to live here. Houses are mainly constructed of brick and some, wooded cladding. On the positive side there is still a wide range of affordable accommodation available for visiting families.

### The History of the Police in Lorne

It's rather unfortunate that very little is known about early law enforcement in the Lorne area. The first policeman stationed here was Constable Alexander Shields. The police historical records have been able to supply an article that appeared in the Camperdown Chronicle in October 1881. It was addressed to Mr. William Robertson M.L.A. obviously in answer to a push



Lorne's first Policeman Alexander Shields in 1880

for a police station to be established. This report reads as follows.

*Police Department*

*Melbourne, 28<sup>th</sup> September 1881.*

*Sir,*

*With reference to the petition which you left with me recently from the inhabitants of Lorne, requesting that a police station may be formed there, I do myself the honour to inform you that taking into consideration the population of the place, and the absence of any report of crime from there, I would not be justified in forming a police station in the locality. As however, during the summer months, Lorne appears to be a favourite watering place, arrangements are under consideration with a view to placing a Constable there during that period. In the meantime the telegraph master at Lorne has agreed should anything occur requiring early police attention, to telegraph at once to the police station at Winchelsea or Birregurra, when a Constable could reach Lorne in a few hours.*

*I have the honour to be, Sir*

*Your most obedient servant,*

*H.W. Chomley*

*Acting Chief Commissioner of Police*

It was in fact not until the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1887 that summertime patrols actually began and lasted until 1891 when Constable Canavan was the last policeman in Lorne in this role. It was the same year the W.B. Godfrey sank off the Wye River. The police station did not open again until 1921.

The original station was in *Varna House* on the corner of Beal and Mountjoy Parade, owned then by Charles Beal's estate. In the late 1920s Constable Walker was the local 'bobby' and to us, as eight year olds, seemed at least eight feet tall. As kids we sometimes saw a bleary-eyed old bloke splitting wood for the policeman's fire in return for free board and lodgings. He slept in the gaol just inside the gate of the property today called *Weem*. When the gaol was transported to a new site on a horse drawn wagon my youngest sister Betty and her friend Joan climbed inside it and rode all the way to the new police station in William Street, almost opposite where the new police station is today.

An extract from the 1930 Victoria Police Gazette indicates that the strength of the law in Lorne was "one



*Constable, a motorcycle, five-roomed W.B. dwelling with 10ft by 10ft office and portable lockup with one cell in good order*". Not long after this, Constable Harry Mills replaced Constable Walker and we kids gave Harry a wide berth when we saw him coming. Constable Mills was followed by a succession of at least twenty others over many years, each bringing their own personality and expertise and providing an invaluable service to our community.

Policing in the Lorne area has changed dramatically since those humble beginnings. Since then Lorne has become one of the most popular tourist towns in Victoria, attracting people from all over the world. All year round, tourists flock to the area and up to twenty police are now stationed at Lorne over the Christmas and holiday periods and the police station operates on a twenty-four hour basis during these times. The new police complex in Smith Street replaced the previous one in Charles Street and is a far cry from the small offices they operated from in all three earlier stations. The only thing that hasn't changed I suppose is Mr Chomley's comment in 1881 that "*Lorne appears to be a favourite watering place*".

### **Our Swimming Pool**

The swimming pool on the foreshore was opened by Melbourne City Councillor Ian De Beaurepaire CMG in December 1967. The pool was respectfully named after his Aunt Lillian Beaurepaire. In his address the councillor reminded all in attendance that his Aunt Lil was Lorne's only lifesaver for many years.



Lil Beaurepaire breaking ground for the Lorne Pool in 1967.

The Winchelsea Shire president Mr George Bennett noted that a Government subsidy of \$20,000 had enabled the pool to be in operation in advance of the pool committee's proposal date. Geoff Jarratt the committee secretary, representing his fellow committee members, pushed hard the case for a swimming pool and the great benefits it would bring to the community.

### **Erskine House the Town's Historic Landmark**

Erskine House is of significant historical importance as the oldest guesthouse in Victoria and has been in continuous operation for 136 years.

In 1929, the Stribling family purchased the Pacific Hotel. They sold it to Mr Ron Todd after W.W.2, but for a time Hector Stribling also owned the Lorne Hotel. He often used his influential connections in both Government and legal circles to gain benefits for the town. Lorne was often benefited from his influence while he served as a Winchelsea Shire Councillor, a member of The Lorne Progress association and the Foreshore Committee, the Recreation Reserve Committee and the R.S.L. He played a major role in many of the town's activities.



Erskine House in 1914.

In March 1973 Hector Stribling and his family decided to sell Erskine House and its land, totalling thirteen acres, to the Winchelsea Shire Council, however the family expressed a desire that the whole area be retained for public use. After a meeting on site between Hector, members of the Council and the Premier of Victoria Mr Rupert Hamer, it was finally resolved that the Premier's Department would purchase the site for the sum of \$470,000. A committee was formed to manage the estate with a team drawn from representatives of The Public Works Department, The Education Department, The Council of Education, The Lorne Foreshore Committee, the Shire of Winchelsea and a local representative from the Lorne community.

The Committee met regularly after the purchase, with few changes made to the operation of the estate and the guesthouse business continued to function and was managed by the former manager Mr Tom Mullins. The buildings were also used for conferences and functions.

In the year 2000, a fifty-year lease was granted by the Victorian Government to investment company



B.C.R Asset Management on the basis that they would spend \$30 million building and developing most of the Erskine House site. At the time of writing the company has embarked on the \$6.5 million third of four stages of the renamed '*Erskine on the Beach*' apartment project. The project includes the construction of four three-storey apartment buildings. Much more information about Erskine House today is available at [www.erskinehouse.com.au](http://www.erskinehouse.com.au)

### Local Politics. Every town has them

For most of its history Lorne was part of the Winchelsea Shire. The Shire was separated into Ridings and Lorne was part of the Coast Riding. The town was represented by three '*Coast Riding*' councillor's who also played a major role in the functions of the Winchelsea Shire Council in general.

The Winchelsea Shire was predominantly rural, with quite different priorities to Lorne. As Victoria's most popular tourist resort, Lorne contributed a large and disproportionate amount of the Shires income. This naturally made many town ratepayers unhappy especially with the way the Shire's revenue was apportioned. In August 1973 dissatisfaction with the Winchelsea Council's administration of the Coast Riding came to a head. A committee was formed by a group of disgruntled local ratepayers and similar groups from other seaside resorts including Anglesea, to raise awareness of the problem. A survey of the coastal population was conducted to gauge community support for the creation of a new coastal shire encompassing communities with tourism as their primary base.

A majority of the ratepayers voted against the proposal although not by a large margin and eventually, twenty-one years later, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 1994, The Surf Coast Shire was born. The new Shire replaces both the Winchelsea and Barrabool Shires but as the saying goes, '*you can't please everyone*' and many Lorne ratepayers are still very unhappy about our lack of proportional representation. Lorne has only had one representative on the new Shire Council, while other Ridings have more to represent their interests. Today there is no council works depot in Lorne and Shire workers are rarely seen. The headquarters of the new Council are situated at the opposite end of the shire from Lorne at Torquay, although this is reasonable because it is where the population is concentrated.

### Lorne becomes 'Cool'

In 1957 Lorne residents and tourists got their first taste of what has become the town's modern cosmopolitan character. Alistair and Robin Smith rented the 'dance hall' and ran a spectacularly successful club they called *The Wild Colonial* and did they pack them in. The Smith family infused a lot of character into the town and their style really caught the imagination of the public. *The Arab*, their bohemian style coffee



shop, was a refuge for beatniks (the coolest thing a teenager could be called in those days) and many others who were lured in by the

aroma of Italian coffee wafting into the street. Patrons often sat on large cushions on the floor at low tables. When getting nostalgic about this era, people always remember the Smith's advertisement at the Lorne theatre that announced "*Spaghetti, Spaghetti, Spaghetti Ah, The ARAB*"! This was all new and revolutionary in those days and it added to the growing popularity of the town with younger visitors who had become much more mobile by the late 1950s.

### Managed development.

The town has largely escaped the ravages of uncontrolled development and this has been extremely fortunate as Lorne has entered the modern era with its unique beauty intact and yet it has all the amenities for a modern lifestyle without the drawbacks of over development. An early threat to the character of the town came in 1962 when a developer made an offer to Mrs Waterhouse for her prime beachfront property, proposing to erect high-rise apartments. This caused such a stir that eventually The Victorian Government was persuaded to purchase the property and turned it into a ground level car park now controlled by the Lorne Foreshore Committee.

### The Lorne Community

I must admit to being unashamedly proud and a bit biased about this wonderful part of the world and I know many of the residents and frequent visitors share my enthusiasm, because Lorne is that kind of place. The town and it's surroundings have been blessed with a unique blend of natural beauty, breathtaking scenery, soaring cliffs, nature walks, waterfalls, sandy white beaches and some of Australia's rarest



and most beautiful sub tropical rain forest and one of the most stunning scenic coastal drives in the world. These are the things nature has provided in abundance for us, but it took people to build on this natural bounty and to make the town the jewel of an oasis that it is today.

Over more than a century, countless residents and many visitors have contributed in endless ways to the success of Lorne. Today, they not only provide the vibrant cafes, great restaurants, art galleries, trendy little shops and a wonderfully varied range of high quality accommodation, but also the less visible essential services that ensure the well being (*spiritual and physical*), safety and security of residents and holidaymakers.

Most of what we have today in Lorne is due to the dedication and sacrifice of a large number of residents both past and present who have given their time to many valuable community projects stretching back over the decades and we pay tribute to all of those noble citizens, too numerous to mention individually, for their innovative ideas, physical work and excellent planning. Over the years most members of the community have contributed to fund raising in some way, even children who happily placed pennies on the main street footpath '*the mile of pennies*' to help the hospital or scouts etc.

Many readers may not be aware of the impressive range of activities and services that the local community provides for both residents and visitors, so here is a brief summary that I hope will help you to get a little more from your encounters with Lorne.

### **The Lorne Nursing Home**

The Lorne Nursing Home with fifteen beds was opened in February 1985 and has served the community well.

### **The Senior Citizens Club**

The *Senior Citizens Club* first met in July 1965 with a membership of 40 and has grown considerably over the years. The club now has a permanent home at the old Gracedale site. The hall and clubrooms were financed by the State Government and officially opened by the Hon. Ian Smith in June 1988. Club members play a major part in the affairs of Lorne's aged community and their hall is often hired out to others for functions. Members regularly travel by coach, *the Greyhound type these days*, to exciting places, including interstate destinations.

### **Lorne State Emergency Service**

In 1977 The *Lorne State Emergency Service* was formed as a sub unit of the Winchelsea State Emergency unit. Thirteen members operated from the rear of the local Ampol Garage in Mountjoy Pde. Their very basic equipment included a trailer towed by private vehicles and out of date army supplies.



Raging fires driven by hot winds threaten the town in the 1950s

After the Ash Wednesday fires, the S.E.S volunteers worked more than 2000 man hours cleaning up burnt out house sites and the combined Rotary Clubs of Geelong donated a Toyota 4W.D to the local organization. Other suitable four-wheel drive vehicles have been purchased since for rescue use, along with the '*Jaws of Life*'. The current membership is 15, four of whom were awarded the National Medal for 15 years of service. There have been about 5 leading Controllers over the years. The S.E.S unit's main activities today are road accident rescues and searches. Their headquarters are now located in the new Essential Services Building.

### **The Ambulance Service**

In the late 1920's an Ambulance vehicle with revolutionary rubber tyres was permanently stationed inside the Mountjoys stables in case of need, but the official Ambulance Service was not founded until 1951. With unpaid volunteers to begin, it has now grown to become a very professional service, providing the community with a high standard of care and expertise. Prior to the official opening of the Ambulance Station in William St. in 1959, the 14 members of the service trained in the fire station. Today they operate from the new Essential Services complex, where two qualified Ambulance officers live on a permanent basis.



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## Foreshore Committee of Management



The Lorne Foreshore Committee of Management (L.F.C) was formed in 1896 and replaced the old Foreshore Improvement Organisation and the Marram Grass Committee. The Committee of Management has been responsible for improving and maintaining the areas under its control from Stoney Creek to the Cumberland River. It wasn't until camping became popular that the L.F.C was given an extra roll to play. The Victorian Government encouraged the committee to establish extra camping grounds and provided a proportion of the income to be used to assist the committee to maintain the foreshore under its control.

The Tourist Development Authority gave financial assistance to the L.F.C at times by supplying grant money and reasonably cheap loans. The Winchelsea Shire Council also arranged money on behalf of the L.F.C. From the collection of camping fees and other sources, several million dollars have been spent on foreshore maintenance, beach cleaning, rubbish disposal, toilet and shower blocks, car parks, barbeques and the list goes on. This spending has been paralleled by the large amounts spent on the caravan parks under the control of the L.F.C. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are required to build one large amenity block to serve a camping area.

The land now occupied by Kia-Ora and The Ocean Road Caravan Park was purchased during the 1950s and 1960s by the L.F.C from the Babington Brothers and Hector Stribling respectively. The bulk of the costs were paid off, before, after much lobbying, the Government of Victoria agreed to pay out the remainder of the loan and give control of the two parks to the L.F.C.

## Baby Health Centre

In 1953 residents decided to build a Baby Health Centre in Lorne and a kindergarten began in the Anglican Church Hall. After five years of hectic fundraising a new building was erected in Smith St. and opened in June 1961. The Pre-school is still very active at the Smith St. centre. After many years the establishment debts of \$32,000 were paid off and in 1999 the Health Centre was moved to the Fig Tree Community House next to the Senior Citizens Club.

## The Lorne Planning and Preservation League

The Lorne Planning and Preservation League was formed in 1966 under president Mrs Beverley Orr O.B.E. There were 79 founding members and grew to many hundreds over time. The League's constitution provided for a very wide cross section of the community and even outsiders join its committee. In the nineteen years it existed, the League was very active following through major matters affecting Lorne. It gave strong support and encouragement to many projects by seeking help through its large and influential membership.

In 1974 the charming Erskine River pedestrian Swing Bridge was under threat of demolition because it was suggested that it should be replaced with a concrete structure. We have the League to thank for intervening and raising public awareness of the looming crisis, resulting in our delightful old 1937 landmark being preserved for posterity.

The Planning and Preservation League's important projects have been numerous over the years, but it has since been succeeded by a similar group called the *Friends of Lorne*. This active new group is keeping its members and the public well informed about current affairs in Lorne. A welcome announcement came from the State Government in 1975 when they declared Lorne to be officially '*a place of special significance and natural beauty*'. This will help to preserve the natural beauty of the area.

## The Lorne Golf Club

The *Lorne Golf Club* was formed in May 1954 on a site 3kms from the town at Allenvale. The very hilly 9-hole course was a challenge for all its patrons. A new golf course was opened in North Lorne in March 1969. Shire President J.V.Guye, when performing the official opening ceremony, remarked on the magnificent views from the clubhouse, which was unfortunately completely destroyed during the *Ash Wednesday* bushfire in 1983.

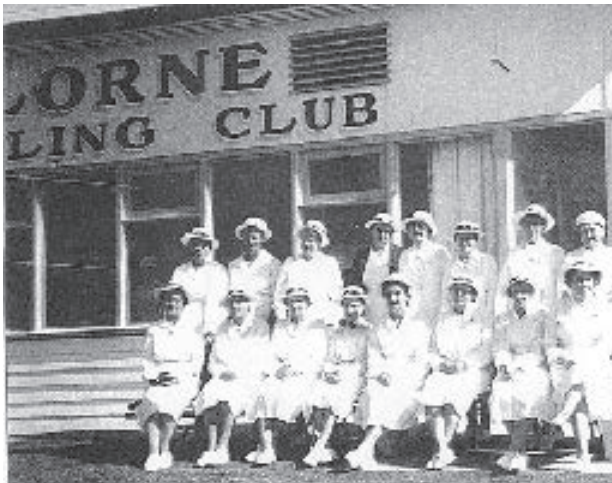
Members built a new clubhouse and made it non-exclusive, thereby generously providing an excellent venue for the general public to dine and conduct their celebrations. The club has quite a large membership that grew considerably after the *Lorne Tennis Club* was built adjacent to the golf club facilities. The entire complex is now operated as '*The Lorne Country Club*'.



## Lorne Bowls Clubs

The first Bowling Club was formed in 1954 on the foreshore near the Surf Club Building. There were two Bowling Greens before the *Lorne Bowls Club*. The first was built at Erskine House in 1920 and the second on the southern side of Gay Street, a single rink built by Len Allen on part of his property.

The *Lorne Bowls Club* on *The Flat* was closed in 2002 when the L.F.C needed to create a car park on the site. The L.F.C financed the bulk of the construction of a new club on the Erskine House croquet lawn. The home club enters two teams in the Corangamite District Bowls Association competitions.



Lorne ladies bowling club members in 1955.

## Tennis

For many years tennis was played on courts built on the foreshore and many fundraising competitions were held between locals and visitors to help local churches and organisations. New courts have since been added to the *Country Club Complex* and the old courts demolished.



Lorne's first tennis courts on the 'Flat'.

## The Lorne Angling and Aquatic Club

*The Lorne Angling and Aquatic Club* began in 1961

with a very healthy membership. Part of the old Gracedale guesthouse was transferred to its present site to be used as a clubroom and along with its facilities is now situated beside the pier. The members built a boat ramp in 1962 and a public boat ramp was added in 1971. In the 1970's an angling division was formed to cater for the many enthusiastic amateur fishermen. With all that our coastline has to offer I cannot think of a better place to belong to a fishing club.

## Lorne's Freemason's Lodge

In 1954 the *Lorne Freemason's Lodge* received its warrant and with 56 founding members held meetings in the R.S.L hall until a Masonic Temple was built with volunteer labour on a site next to the Uniting Church manse in Smith St. In the very early days this was the site of part of the butchers shop complex.

The temple was consecrated in 1967 and as membership increased the Lodge flourished harmoniously right up until the 1990s. Unfortunately membership numbers fell after 1990 and the *Lorne Lodge* finally handed back its warrant to the *Grand Lodge* at the end of the twentieth century. However, the Lorne Masonic centre is still very active with two Lodges, one a *Craft Lodge* and the other a *Mark Degree Lodge* still meeting there on a regular basis.

## Churches

Lorne's churches are mentioned earlier in the book except for *Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church* built in 1955 on a site in Smith Street (*on the old horse paddock belonging to the butcher*) opposite the Lorne School. It opened for services on January 15th 1956. Built by Peter McBride of Colac, its unique design allows for the outer walls to be raised so extra members of the congregation can be seated on the side balconies. There is a flat below for the use of the officiating priest who normally resides at the Presbytery at Apollo Bay.

## The Lorne Lions Club

The local *Lions Club* was formed in March 1970 with 31 members and although they have been very active in community projects for more than 30 years, their 'crowning achievement' was their sponsorship of the *Lorne Elderly People's Homes* known as *The Lions Village* in Clissold Street. The Club enlisted the help of the council who generously donated land for the site. The *Lions* worked hard to contribute finance



to the project and other major funding came from the Government. Eight units were built and opened on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1978 by the Hon. Tony Street MHR for Corangamite. Six more flats were built and opened in June 1982 completing the second stage of the plan but several more have been added since.

### Lorne's Historical Society

*Lorne's Historical Society* began in 1968 with sixteen members. There was an earlier society that had a large display of artefacts and memorabilia in the old Library Hall on the corner of Smith and William Streets. Unfortunately it disbanded in the 1950s and everything vanished without a trace. The new Society concentrated on collecting accounts, documents and photographs of Lorne's history. Several members were allotted research tasks covering all aspects of the town's development and the history of the pioneering families. Their findings are found in the Society's written history and are included in the vast body of information published by Kieth Cecil, Jean Graham and her late husband Malcolm.

*Lorne's Historical Society* is fortunate to have had some very active members over the years. Newcomers are most welcome to join the Society and we hope to attract more young people to this fascinating pastime. The society has staged many displays of enlarged historic photographs at various venues and almost two thousand photographs were exhibited in the R.S.L hall at one time. The Society now has a permanent photographic display in a building incorporated into The Community Centre on the old Gracedale guesthouse site.

### The Fig Tree Community House

The town's people have always had a strong community spirit and over the decades have met at various locations to discuss fund raising, planning and many other matters. Lorne residents now have a permanent venue for town meetings. *The Fig Tree Community House* opened on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1999. Some of the many services offered include *adult workshops, childcare play group, an employment agency, internet services* and a meeting place for backpackers. It is a very important asset to the Lorne community.

### Red Cross and C.W.A

There are many other clubs and organizations in Lorne, although some, like the *Red Cross* and *C.W.A* have now disbanded, but the nucleus is still there as

the ladies still rally in times of need.



Lorne Red Cross volunteers in 1918.

### Cricket

Cricket has always been very popular in Lorne. In the early days the locals took on the guesthouse teams and the matches were held down on *The Flat*. Football, cricket and netball are now played at the Stribling Reserve off William Street. Lorne has sometimes had Girl Guides, Girls Friendly Society, Cub and Scout troupes. These are dependent on the enthusiasm and availability of leaders. The district offers great opportunities for young people to practice arts and bushcraft and of course there is a challenging choice of campsites available.



Lorne scouts troupe c.1960

### Lorne's Football Club

Football was played in Lorne on *The Flat* during the 1880s and the local boys matched it with teams from the sawmills and later, guesthouses. The bandstand was used as a dressing room. It was not unusual for the match to be delayed while someone (usually the umpire), swam into the surf to retrieve the ball. Until a sea wall was erected in the 1930s creeping sand dunes posed almost as big a problem to players as the droppings from the Alsops cattle and sheep.



The Lorne football club in the early 1960s

*Lorne's Football Club* was formed in 1896 and the first game was played against Deans Marsh in May 1897. Lorne 4.2, lost badly to the 'Marsh' on 8.10. The Shire of Winchelsea Football Association comprising Birregurra, Deans Marsh, Lorne, Wensleydale and Winchelsea was formed in 1919. The Lorne team colours were red and blue with a star featured on the chest of their jumpers. Horses and coaches were used until the 1920's to attend matches.

Lorne joined the Junior Polwarth Association in 1927. The Polwarth Association teams were Apollo Bay, Birregurra, Deans Marsh, Forrest, Lorne and Winchelsea. As the road was still incomplete, a coastal steamer was the mode of transport to the games at Apollo Bay. The Association became the Polwarth League between 1946 and 1949 with Coragulac, Beeac, and later Queenscliff joining the Association. Lorne's team was known as the *Seasider's* at this time, but in the 1960s became known as the *Magpies*.

In June 1955, the 'opening' of our new oval was celebrated by Lorne and Birregurra playing the first match. The entry fee was 2/6d (25 cents).

The Polwarth League became the Colac and District Football League in 1971. The Lorne reserves have now won ten premierships and our under 18's have won two. The Lorne Seniors have really triumphed, winning a total of seventeen League Premierships and The Marjorie Lawrence Cup. Now with black and white horizontal striped jumpers, they are called the *Dolphins* and continue to battle on after last winning the Premiership in 2001.

*We are the premiers down by the sea,  
We can't be beaten as you will see*

*At the end of the season, You'll know  
the reason*

*Why we are ... the premiership team*

### Surfing

Surfing has always been synonymous with Lorne and being so close to the world famous Bell's Beach most keen surfers make the short trip along the Great Ocean Rd. to Lorne to try out our famous surf. Lorne has produced some successful surfing champions including Gail Couper and Wayne Lynch. Of the many titles Gail won over the years her first Women's National Title in 1966 on the Gold Coast was most exciting for me. Wayne won the Australian junior title four years running between 1967 and 1970. He is a remarkable surfing talent and is said to have drawn an entirely new set of lines on the waves. Wayne remained a highly rated surfer for many years.

According to Wayne, Lorne has clean beach breaks because it is more sheltered from weather than nearby Bell's Beach and doesn't see quite as much swell, although its sand and rock bottom point break can produce some magical moments.

Countless enthusiastic and talented surfers, young and old, have had many a thrill in the surf at Lorne over perhaps a hundred years. The beach and the surf go on forever and no doubt will always be enjoyed by new generations as they discover our beautiful coast.



## Entertainment

It's difficult to imagine a world without television movies and radio, very few magazines and unreliable newspaper deliveries from the big cities, but that's exactly the world inhabited by the early settlers and visitors at Lorne.

People of the day probably could not even imagine the wonderful inventions that have filled our lives with news and entertainment, but there are those today who question whether we have really made progress in the real purpose of entertainment, to bring the community together to have fun and forget their problems for a while.

If that is the test, then those who came to visit and those who made their home here over the past 150 years have undoubtedly succeeded, because they instinctively knew how to provide simple and joyful fun for all.

The many inventive ways they amused themselves in those long passed times in isolated communities, was only limited by their collective imagination and looking back at the historic records and from my own memory I can definitely say that they had plenty of imagination.

By today's standards some of the activities may seem trivial and outdated but it would be a mistake to believe that. To give due credit, providing your own entertainment is far more creative and involving than simply turning on the TV as we tend to today, to watch another amazing program from around the world, the creation of which we had nothing to do with.

People were much more connected to one another and used their considerable initiative to provide their own entertainment and distractions and to elevate their spirits. They were much simpler times and yet in their own way the people achieved a lot against what many today would consider unimaginable odds and hardships.

Entertainment in Lorne has run the full spectrum over the past 150 or more years from singing and

This montage is made up of 3 photos taken on Armistice day 1919 to celebrate the end of the terrible carnage of W.W.I. Most of the town gathered on the 'Flat' under the Peace Flag and the Union Jack. Notice that there is no Australian flag. Although the Australian flag was introduced when The Commonwealth of Australia was declared in 1901, people of the era still considered themselves to be patriotic British subjects.





One of many memorable shows put on by the town's people in the Beach Hall over the years.

story telling huddled around a campfire, poetry reading and piano recitals at Mountjoy's early hotel and through an amazing procession of changing fashions and fads and the technology that made them possible.

In the days before television, people loved to get out and mix with the community and they took

every opportunity to make it fun and enjoyable. Of course there were also times of hardship, tragedy and sadness that were made more bearable by the spirit of belonging to a tight knit community that also shared their happy times.

A big highlight for visitors and locals has always been the exciting and widely publicised



Sport has always been a major part of local entertainment. This photo is of the Lorne School Mother's Club gym team in the 1950s



Lorne New Years Eve celebrations that over more than 100 years, have been a magnet to all those looking to lose themselves among friends and well wishers in the unique end of year atmosphere at Lorne. Entertainment on New Years Eve has stretched from a magic concert played by Lorne's Brass Band in 1919, to 'Rock above the Falls' where 15,000 young people camp for several days enjoying some of the country's top bands, belting out their favourite numbers. Exhilarating brass bands like the Colac Salvation Army Band, played on a bandstand built on *The Flat* in the early 1920s but contemporary (and loud) rock bands have been a regular feature since the 1950s. Lorne has been a magic venue by the sea for all of the music that has delighted us over the years.

The locals were never too shy to come forward with their own brand of fun. Many musical groups have been formed since the earliest days. A small example was the 1940s Hillbilly Band formed by locals Toby and Bert Alsop and others. Everyone loved their mixture of country music and comedy.

In the early 1960s our school recorder bands won the renowned 'South Street' musical competitions at Ballarat. They were trained by Lorne headmaster Harold Huthnance and he made them the pride of the district.

Many holiday makers stretched their imagination trying to win first prize at the many fancy dress balls; none more so than one character who showed up at a Carinya guesthouse ball draped with chamber pots, calling himself the 'King of Po-land'.

Dancing has always been very popular but in the days before modern recorded music when a pianist was not available, out would come a new fangled Phonograph. You can imagine it hissing and scratching away in halls and lounges as it provided the music of the day and because there was no other form of recorded music it didn't sound all that bad.

In the days of the foxtrot, quickstep and the waltz, excited revellers often spilled out of the dance halls and snaked their way along the main street dancing what was known as 'the conga'. It all seems so light hearted and simple now, but believe me everyone had a really great time and frequently made new friendships that often lasted a lifetime. This sort of fun was a great social leveller and politicians, doctors, lawyers and clergymen were able to forget themselves and just have fun along with the humblest of workers. This was a typical reaction during most of the organised entertainment in those early days.



The kids of Lorne put on a fancy dress parade in 1925.



The guesthouses and hotels have always organised plenty of daytime activities for visitors and as mentioned earlier, walking and taking lunch in some of Lorne's magnificent scenic locations has always been a favourite activity that I am pleased to see still continues today.

In the 1960s nudist sunbaking became popular among some visitors and even a few locals on the more isolated beaches near the town. There are quite a few amusing stories of startled older ladies and more conservative walking parties coming across all that flesh quite by accident. I don't think any harm was done and on the positive side they were able to expand their knowledge of human anatomy.

During the 1950s the R.S.L ran their 'lucky spinning wheel' in the main street for charity, with local crayfish as prizes. Local's Cec Penny and Billy Green provided a not so discreet S.P Bookie service for those who had a financial preoccupation with the ponies. Kids of all ages loved the 'Fun Parlour' with its up to date pinball and slot machines and for many decades the movies were a highlight of everyone's week with two feature films, cartoons and a newsreels. Also in the 50's, Gordon Avery and Maurice Selles dressed in their diving gear, tried to break the world under water record submerged in a water tank on *The Flat*. They drew a good crowd but none to equal the 'Pier to Pub' charity swim that has now become a famous international event held every year in January.

Charity concerts have always been popular and kids gave singing and dance recitals to the delight of their beaming parents who came not only to see the kids, but to support many charities. For many years local Maudie Croft taught Lorne's kids how to dance and perform; she is well remembered by them.

For many years during the lead up to Guy Fawkes day, or cracker night as the kids often called it, many of the town's families worked feverishly gathering materials for their large bonfires, hoping no killjoy would torch their pride and joy before dark on November 5<sup>th</sup>. I

recall many local family names when I think of these times, Norton, Harris, Schram, Clissold, Scoble, Ridgeway, Hunt and many more too numerous to mention but who all contributed equally enthusiastically,

An effigy of Guy Fawkes was often placed on top of the fire and the night air buzzed with rockets, penny bangers and catherine wheels, all wizzing and popping and lighting up the night sky high above the town. It really was an exciting event anticipated by the kids of the town for weeks beforehand. Now fireworks are banned except in the hands of licensed professionals. Guy Fawkes of course, was the chap who tried to blow up the British Parliament in 1605. I've never understood why we celebrated that, but I guess the point is it's human nature to find any excuse to have fun and that is what Lorne has always been about, a great diversity of entertainment and enjoyment.

Over the course of more than 150 years there are so many great stories about entertainment and special events in the town, it is beyond the scope of this book to do them justice, but if you close your eyes for a moment and try to imagine the town as it was from the stories I have taken you through in this book you may begin to understand the magic of a real community, bound together by isolation and yet making the most of everything country and seaside life offered back then and still does today.



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### **Nothing is Lost It Just Gets Better.**

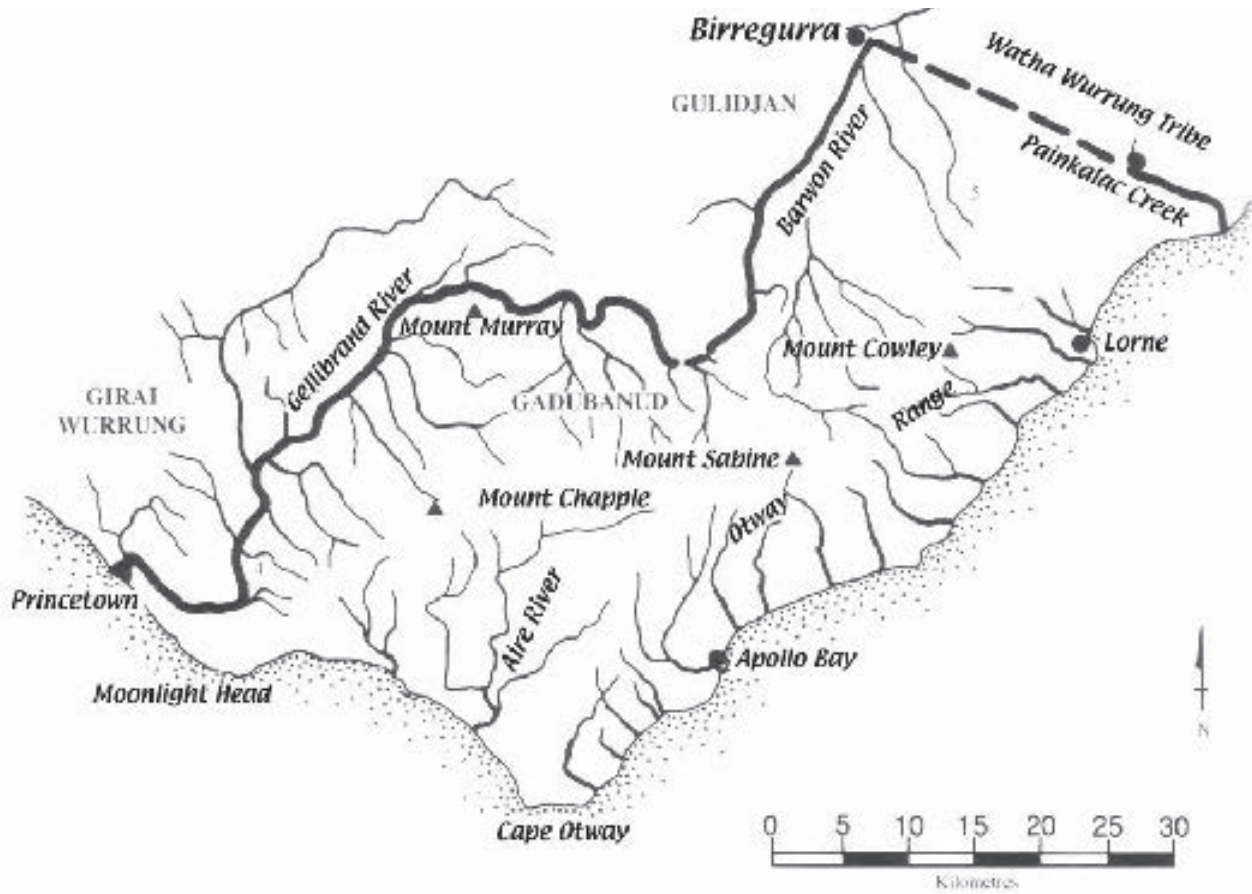
For over 150 years, generations of holidaymakers have come down to this unique seashore where the bluegums meet the ocean, to enjoy all that this special place offers. Some are happy just to visit while others have stayed on. Historic guesthouses like The Cumberland have been pulled down drawing a lot of comment from both locals and visitors alike. Constructed in 1986-7 its replacement the Cumberland Timeshare, was the beginning of a new trend towards larger scale developments in Lorne. Like it or hate it, I must admit it has changed the main street from the old one we had become used to.

I believe we can embrace change for the greater good, providing that the planning authorities govern and control development along sensible and sensitive guidelines to ensure that the uniqueness that is Lorne is not lost. Our town is a very popular destination and it needs the facilities to properly cater for the ever increasing numbers of visitors who enthusiastically embrace our lifestyle, the charm of the town and the natural beauty of the region.

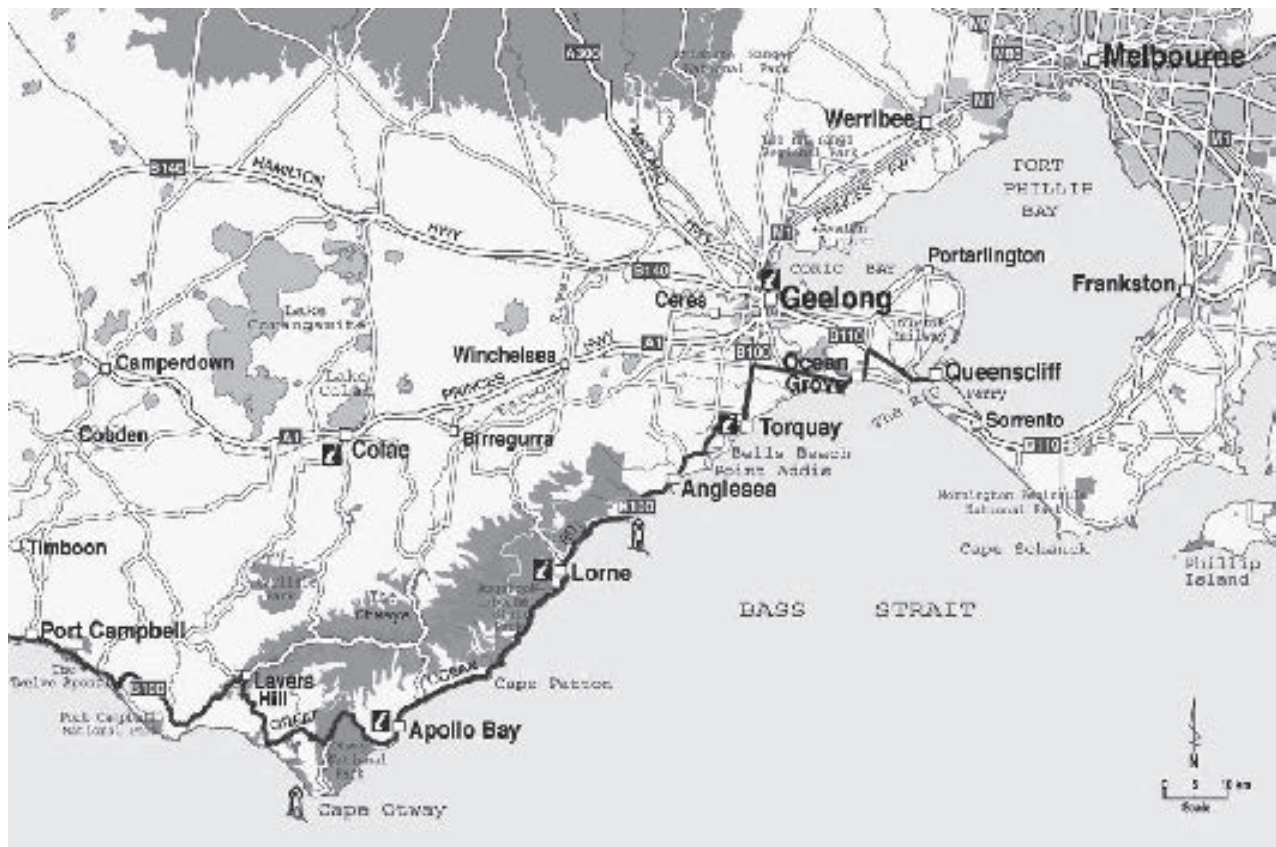
Now, at the beginning of another new century, I feel that we have many good reasons to be happy with what our town has become. True, some of the charm of the old days is behind us and it's difficult to get a park in the main street, the buildings and services are much more contemporary, cosmopolitan and upbeat, yet the essential Lorne is just the same to me. The kookaburras still fly to our balcony each day and the wallabies nibble our roses. Possums raid our fruit trees, strong winds strip the bark from the gums and the sea goes on forever.

Daily, I marvel at the beauty as I move around the town, always energised by this incredible gift of nature. Thank you for reading my book, I hope in some small way it has added to your appreciation of our town and the many characters who contributed to its success.

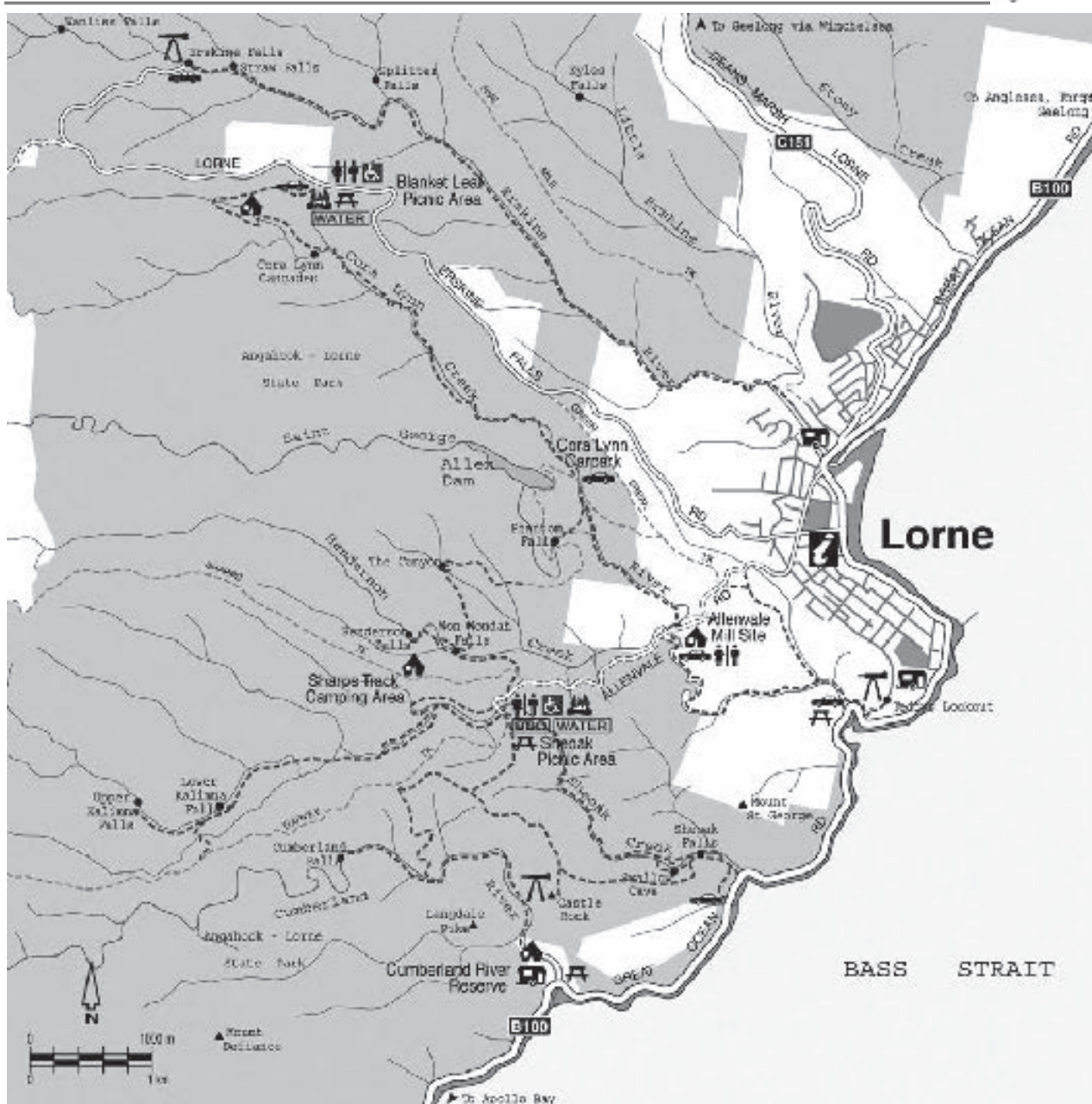
Doug Stirling  
34 Charles Street  
Lorne.



Map detailing the areas of the Otway district inhabited by Australian Aborigines at the beginning of European settlement.



Map showing the relationship of Lorne to other coastal towns, its position on the Great Ocean Road and proximity to the major centres of Melbourne and Geelong.



|  |                                |  |                            |  |                      |
|--|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|----------------------|
|  | Great Ocean Road               |  | Visitor Information Centre |  | Picnic Table         |
|  | Major Road, State Route Number |  | Place of Interest          |  | Barbeque             |
|  | Minor Road - Sealed            |  | Caravan Park               |  | Fireplace            |
|  | Minor Road - Unsealed          |  | Camping Area               |  | Drinking Water       |
|  | Other Road                     |  | Car Parking                |  | Toilets              |
|  | Track - Seasonally Closed      |  | Scenic View, Lookout       |  | Toilets for Disabled |
|  | Walking Track                  |  |                            |  |                      |

Map showing recreation and sightseeing highlights in and around Lorne and the location of some of the places mentioned in this book.

# Lorne

## A Living History

A Great Collection of Historical Facts and Yarns About One of Australia's Favourite Destinations.



Doug Stirling has lived in Lorne for 82 years, in fact from the day he was born, but he has been fortunate enough to have travelled widely, which has reinforced his belief that the Great Ocean Road district and Lorne in particular is right up there among the world's most special places.

His life in Lorne has been long and happy, but like most other families there have also been times of sadness. After growing up in the town and serving in WW2 he married a farmer's daughter from Beech Forest, who blessed him with three daughters. He served an apprenticeship in electrical engineering and with the help of his father, who was a respected builder in the town, built a house on a large block of land with a beautiful view over the gums and the ocean and started his own electrical contracting business, Lorne Electrics.

Just when life seemed about as good as it could get in the town he loved, tragedy struck when his young wife Lola passed away suddenly from a rare heart condition and left him alone with three very young daughters.

Fortunately that time of great sadness eventually eased when Doug met his "special English rose", Mary, a pleasant and caring young nurse who had taken a position at the new Lorne hospital after recently migrating to Australia.

Eventually Doug and Mary married and have shared an inspiring and happy 42 years together as very active and generous participants in the community they both love so much.

Over his 80 plus years, Doug has collected a wealth of stories and yarns about the town and district and has seen a large part of its history personally. Known as a great yarn spinner and in recent years seen as the authority on local history, having been interviewed on TV and for newspaper and magazine articles numerous times, he has been asked by many people to collect and publish his stories.

This book is that collection, a very entertaining and informative personal history of Lorne and the Great Ocean Road district.



ISBN 0-646-44100-0



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