



# Diggings



**THE JOURNAL OF THE MARYBOROUGH MIDLANDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
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## SIXTY YEARS OF MARYBOROUGH HISTORY: 1965-2025

In the 1960s, with Maryborough's spectacular and diverse indigenous, gold mining, pastoral and industrial history in mind, local residents encouraged by the Arts Society recognised the need for an official historical society in order to record and preserve that heritage. In 1965 a meeting, hosted by Eric Bucknall, a descendant of one of the district's pastoral pioneers, was convened. A constitution was adopted, and the name Midlands Historical Society chosen. [In later years the word *Maryborough* was added to more closely identify the location].

The newly formed Society aimed to foster an interest in history, collect and preserve documents and items of historical interest and to conduct displays and lectures that furthered the Society's aims.

From its inception the Society involved itself in local historical issues and activities such as the Golden Wattle Festival, public exhibitions and guided walks, the Tilly Aston memorial in Carisbrook and the preservation of the Chinese cemetery. It became a member of the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

One of the first challenges facing the Society was to establish a permanent home suitable for a headquarters and museum. Meetings were held initially at local schools and other "borrowed" venues.

In 1975 a permanent home was found: the old stone cottage at 3 Palmerston Street (built originally by stonemason and contractor Arthur Worsley), purchased with a combination of Society fundraising, council and shire grants, bequests and donations. A naming competition produced the logical result: Worsley Cottage. Society members worked hard to develop the garden and set up the cottage as a museum, and local residents donated artefacts and furniture. Worsley Cottage was officially opened on October 30th 1976.



*Worsley children check out the bean crop circa 1904*



*The cottage in 1975*

In the intervening years and with extensive volunteer involvement, more buildings have been added to the site: a reconstructed squatters' hut, a machinery shed, and a resource centre/museum complex which houses our research facilities and records. The cottage itself underwent extensive renovation in 2023, thanks largely to Central Goldfields Shire Council.

## LIFE MEMBERS

During the Society's sixty years many volunteers have devoted thousands of hours to cataloguing, cleaning, building, restoring, labelling, gardening, paving, writing, researching, preparing exhibits and displays, catering, writing submissions, guiding visitors, applying for grants, preparing reports and organising excursions.

**Over the Society's history these members have been deemed worthy of special recognition: Bette Bilton, Aileen Bucknall, Frank Burkinshaw, Lila Curry, Ellen Greenway, Margaret Harrison, Betty Osborn, Charles Will, Bill Wilson and Tom Wright.**

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Our researchers have compiled an extensive family history and local history archive, including the early records of many local societies and organisations. The museum houses exhibits illuminating the town's mining, industrial, agricultural and domestic history and highlighting prominent local citizens from the past, such as Alec Chisholm, Edmund Herring and Tilly Aston. In 2024 a National Trust exhibition at Como House in Melbourne featured memorabilia from our Tilly Aston collection. Gold Scales and three William Tibbits watercolours are presently on loan to the Central Goldfields Art Gallery. Society members have initiated and been actively involved in the installation and preservation of local monuments such as the Bristol Hill Cemetery, the Gold Commissioner's Camp and the Bristol Hill Pioneers' Tower. Worsley Cottage and its colourful cottage garden attract many visitors.

These days we receive a constant stream of researchers, many of whose ancestors arrived during the gold rushes, and we liaise with the Central Goldfields Shire Council, the Tourist Information Centre and the Art Gallery, providing historical information and material for exhibitions. Society members have frequently been active participants in a number of heritage-related conferences, committees and networks. It's encouraging to note that many of our enquirers are recent arrivals who are purchasing older homes to renovate rather than demolish. Many descendants of pioneers contribute to our collection.

Publishing is another of the Society's achievements. MMHS authors including Betty and Bruce Osborn, Tren DuBourg, Margaret Harrison and latterly Craig Roberts, have published extensively on a variety of local topics. Sponsored by the Council, Betty Osborn and Tren DuBourg researched and wrote the two volumes now regarded as the standard references on Maryborough's history: *Maryborough; a social history 1854-1904* (Osborn & DuBourg) and *Against The Odds: Maryborough 1905-1961* (Osborn)

Our newsletter *Digging* dates from the Society's earliest days.



*The Year of Renovations 2023*



The technology challenge was steered in the early days by Noel Fields, who set up the Society's website. In recent years Tom Woolman and Craig Roberts have generously administered our online presence and provided both historical and technical advice. Our volunteers are busy scanning and digitising photographs and records. The transition from the extensive original paper records is an enormous task.

One unique and outstanding feature of the Society's collection is the Wallace "Wal" Richards wedding photograph archive. Over his lifetime Wal, who found personal communication difficult, photographed hundreds of Maryborough weddings, often riding his bike to outlying towns such as Timor or Avoca to pursue his obsession. An exhibition of Wal's photos that was held in 2018 in the Central Goldfields Art Gallery attracted hundreds of visitors.

In a move to establish the Society's credentials Bruce and Betty Osborn began the enormous task of museum accreditation, achieved for the first time in 2007. We look forward to the challenge of re accreditation with the Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) in 2006.

### IMAGES FROM OUR GLASS SLIDE COLLECTION



*Robinson's Foundry in High Street  
(now the Highland Society)*



*Daniel Taylor's premises in High Street circa 1860s  
Taylor was a member of the first Maryborough Council*

From the earliest days of the Society's existence members have spent untold hours researching and writing grant applications. Their skills have enabled us to renovate and construct buildings and garden areas, restore artefacts in our collection, mount exhibitions, purchase computers and associated technology and provide facilities for volunteers.



***Rosa Outtrim's photograph album was restored via a PROV Local History grant. Its images illustrate life in 19th Century Maryborough and surrounds.***

We're fortunate these days to receive a variety of donations of items relating to Maryborough's history. Photographs, community organisation records, show awards, school magazines, paintings and WW1 certificates are making their way to us rather than the tip, and the stories behind them help us to document and illuminate the town's history. A recent donation, a painting of church memorial windows revealed the story of a local WW1 veteran, a talented art teacher turned soldier, who died shortly after his return home, and a doctor's wife who died tragically early and was commemorated in the windows, but who had collected plant samples for Ferdinand von Mueller. A *carte de visite* image of an aboriginal couple taken by James Weller, a local 19th Century professional photographer, was left under our front door. A descendant of a committee member of the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (Maryborough Branch) donated the Society's paperwork dating from the 1930s, which records the names of many well-known residents who had conscientiously collected penny donations for years, even throughout WW2. The first prize certificate for a fancy tea cosy at the 1915 Maryborough District Agricultural and Horticultural Society Show arrived out of the blue in the post, and an immaculately preserved WW2 Women's Army uniform (including hat!) worn at her wedding in the 1940s by a prominent town businesswoman was donated this year by her family.

We acknowledge the enormous contribution made by past members and thank the volunteers of the present for their commitment to documenting and preserving Maryborough's history and maintaining and upgrading our buildings and gardens.

Our Society looks forward to the next 60 years.



## MARYBOROUGH AND WORLD WAR ONE

Many men and women with Maryborough connections served in World War One. Some were born in Maryborough, or perhaps lived, worked or enlisted in the town. As Maryborough's new hospital opened earlier this year it seems timely to outline the contribution made to the war by the Maryborough Hospital's medical staff and by other nurses born in the town.

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### NURSES BORN IN MARYBOROUGH WHO ENLISTED IN THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE or SERVED WITH THE RED CROSS:

\* *The Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) required those enlisting to have at least three years' training in medical and surgical nursing in a duly recognised hospital, be aged 21 to 45 years and to be either single or a widow.*

#### Harriet Mary Hazel BAIN (1891-1973) AANS

Daughter of John and Winifred, she trained at the Austin Hospital, enlisted on June 28, 1918, embarked in October 1918 and served in No. 34 Welsh General Hospital, Deolali, India.

#### Eileen CLEARY (1888-1959) AANS

Eileen Mary Cleary, daughter of auctioneer Joseph Nicholas Cleary and his wife Leonora of Maryborough. trained at the Warrnambool Hospital. She enlisted in July 1917 at the age of 28, and embarked on the *HMAT Kyarra* two months later. Serving in Bombay, she was promoted to Sister in September 1919 and returned to Australia in January 1920.



*Left:*

#### Mary Ann Ethel GIDDINGS (aka Ethel May) (1876-1968) ("Ethel Mary Anne" on enlistment record)

Sister/Head Sister AANS

Daughter of Arthur James and Susan Giddings.

Trained in Clunes, then nursed in Wangaratta, Daylesford, Deniliquin and the Austin Hospital for Incurables in Melbourne.

Midwifery training at Women's Hospital in Carlton.

Matron positions in Walhalla and Beaconsfield Tas.

Enlisted August 1916.

Embarked July 1917 on the *Mooltan*.

Served in Bombay, Poona, Salonika.

1919 Awarded the Royal Red Cross 2nd class decoration for her service in Salonika

After the war completed the Course in Domestic Economy with the National Training School of Cookery, Buckingham Palace Road, London (March-July 1919).

From 1920 to 1942 operated a private nursing home in Mildura.

Ill health and the pressure of operating expenses led her to apply to the Edith Cavell Trust Fund for financial support.

Marriage to Henry Smith (1879-1962) in 1945.

Buried at Nichols Point Cemetery near Mildura.



*Left: Nameplate of Sister Giddings' private nursing home in Mildura. Kirkee, now known as Khadki, is located in Pune, Maharashtra.*

#### Fanny May HARRIS Known as May (1892-1964). Red Cross Volunteer Nurse

Daughter of Archdeacon Charles Harris and Fanny. One of twenty Red Cross nurses known as "Bluebirds" because of their distinctive blue uniforms. The group received private funding but were transported by the Department of Defence. They were given French lessons on board the *HMAT Kanowna*. She embarked for France in July 1916.

#### Josephine Millicent KENNEDY (1889-1976) AANS

Daughter of James Power and Carol Louisa Kennedy. Trained in Hamilton. Served in Egypt, France, Italy and England.

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## MARYBOROUGH HOSPITAL STAFF IN WORLD WAR ONE

### Edward Wilkinson DEANE (1872-1916) Australian Army Medical Corps

Lancashire born E.W. Deane's family moved to South Australia, where Edward's father, a doctor, set up a practice. Educated at private schools in Adelaide and Geelong, where he shone academically, Deane went on to study medicine at the University of Melbourne, again excelling in every year of his course. After a period as a senior resident surgeon at the Melbourne and Alfred Hospitals, Deane set up private practice in Kaniva and Walhalla before relocating to Carisbrook, where to he and his wife Maud's two sons were born, then to Park Road in Maryborough. He was appointed Maryborough Hospital surgeon in 1905.

Enlisting in April 1915, he embarked on the *RMS Mooltan* in May 1915 and was appointed Captain in June the same year. He was posted to the No. 1 Australian General Hospital in Heliopolis. Due to persistent "bladder problems" he was declared unfit for service in late 1915 and was cleared to return to Australia to recuperate. His war record lists him as "convalescent" in late March 1916. Sadly, his condition worsened rapidly and he died in the 3rd Australian General Hospital in Abbassia (in Cairo) of "acute cystitis" in April 1916 at the age of only 44.

His grave in the Cairo War Memorial Cemetery bears the inscription:

LOVED HUSBAND OF ADA / AND FATHER OF HAYDEN & MASLEN / HIS LIFE FOR OTHERS

After Deane's death Maryborough solicitor E.S. Herring wrote to army records requesting information about a will and personal effects.



### DR. DEANE MEMORIAL GATES: THE OPENING CEREMONY.

*In the presence of a large attendance of the public the memorial gates erected to the honour of the late Dr. E. W. Deane by a number of his admirers were officially opened by the Mayor (Cr. G. Frost) on Wednesday afternoon. Among the spectators were Mrs E.W. Deane, widow of the late doctor and her two sons ... It was about thirteen years ago that he joined the local hospital medical staff as house surgeon, a position which he held till (sic) the outbreak of the war, when he offered his services in a medical capacity and served with the Australian troops in Egypt ... During the onslaught on Gallipoli he served in the hospital, coping with the rush of sick and wounded soldiers ...*

*During, his sojourn in Maryborough he made many friends in the course of his professional duties, and was generally beloved by all who passed through his skilful hands. Apart from his professional capacity he attained a great degree of popularity.*

*The news of his death caused considerable sorrow amongst his friends and acquaintances. and the movement to perpetuate his memory by a lasting memorial was speedily initiated. The gates. which are of iron, and are moulded to a neat design, are situated at the main entrance to the institution. On a tablet are inscribed the following words:*

*Erected by his friends in memory of the late Dr. E. W. Deane. Captain A.M.C. House Surgeon, 1905-1916 Died on active service in Egypt. April 4 2016.*

**Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser, Friday June 7th, 1918**





## JANE THOMAS (MATRON) (1869-1930)

Daughter of William and Ann Thomas, Jane was born in Happy Valley via Ballarat in 1869, and trained for three years at the Ballarat Hospital. In 1911 she responded to a Maryborough Hospital Committee advertisement seeking "applications with testimonials" for the position of Matron at a salary of £70 per annum. In reporting her appointment the Committee noted that she had previously held positions at Maldon and for two years and nine months at Colac. In 1914 her salary was increased to £90 when the Committee agreed that "Miss Thomas was a most competent matron and never spared herself".

In 1917 Matron Thomas enlisted for service in the AANS at the age of 47 years. She was granted leave from the hospital. In a letter to the Committee she wrote: *"I wish to thank you for your kindness in granting me six months leave of absence to do military nursing, and I now resign my position as matron of your hospital for that period"*. She sailed on the SS *Somali* for Bombay, serving at the Hislop (aka Heslop) Hospital in Secunderabad. In January 1918 she wrote from India requesting that her leave be extended. On her return from overseas she was head hunted by the Hospital Committee and recommenced duties as Matron in 1920.

In 1921 she resigned for a second time, requesting a "testimonial with seal attached". Once again the Committee sang her praises. The Rev. Erskine pointed out that she was always present to give treatment in dangerous cases and always gave instructions to be called when any necessity arose. She was "a most valuable officer to the institution. She may have been stern, but nurses who trained under her afterwards had said 'we were all the better for that' ". In order to provide the best testimonial possible the Committee went to some lengths to obtain a special sheet of parchment from the office of E.S. Herring, solicitor.

Maryborough historian Betty Osborn notes that following her resignation Jane Thomas moved on to a position as Matron of "Wandsworth" private hospital in Maryborough, served on charity committees and promoted the establishment of a baby health centre.

She died on January 5th, 1930 and is buried in the Ballarat Old Cemetery. She is commemorated on Plaque 999 in the Ballarat Avenue of Honour.



With regard to the posting of so many Victorian nurses to India, historian Jan Bassett (*"Guns and Brooches: Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War"*) explains that:

*"The Australian nurses sent to India and Salonika became pawns in an imperial game, frustrated by not being allowed to take part in what they saw as real war work. Those in India watched enviously as British nurses were sent to Mesopotamia; those in Salonika longed to join other members of the AANS on the Western Front ... "*

### OTHER REFERENCES

Australian War Memorial

Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser

Maryborough Midlands Historical Society Archives

National Archives of Australia

Osborn, Betty: *Against The Odds: Maryborough 1905-1961*

Scarfe, Janet : *Ethel May Giddings*, East Melbourne Historical Society.

With special thanks to the families of Ethel Giddings and Jane Thomas for their generous response to enquiries.

**A NOTE RE THE FUTURE OF THE DR DEANE MEMORIAL GATES:** *It is hoped that the memorial gates, which have been relocated and reduced once already due to past construction work, and have been removed from their site during the building of the new Maryborough hospital, will be refurbished and reinstalled in recognition of both Dr Deane and the remarkable history of the hospital and its staff.*



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We're also on Facebook/Meta

The Maryborough Midlands Historical Society acknowledges the ancestors and descendants of the Dja Dja Wurrung, traditional owners of the land on which we live and work.