



Diggings



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PROGRESS AT THE COTTAGE

These “Before and After” images of the Sitting Room in Worsley Cottage demonstrate the enormous amount of restoration work that has already been completed. Despite interruptions due to the unusually wet winter the specialist workmen have repaired cracks in the walls and returned the picture rails and skirting boards, installed a new floor and restored the overmantel to its original position.



All work on the external walls has been completed, but some interior tasks such as painting and minor repairs to the kitchen are still under way. We’re hoping to be able to open our Research Centre and Records Collection (at the rear of the property) in early October. Until that happens, we still don’t have access to our landline, but we’re contactable via our email address mmhs@outlook.com.au our webpage mmhs.net.au or Facebook.

Our cottage garden (large sections of which were removed to enable repairs to the walls) will take many months to restore, and we expect that the huge task of setting up the displays, furniture and labelling inside Worsley Cottage won’t be completed until late summer.



THE REMARKABLE MISS BORLAND

The article below, first printed in *Diggings* in 2011, is presented as a tribute to Lorna Purser, (Martha's great-great niece), who died earlier this year at the age of 98. Her daughter Judith, who is carrying on her father (Jack) and her mother's research, has given us permission, and has supplied more details about Martha Borland's life. Lorna was a member of several historical societies in Victoria (including ours) and was newsletter editor of the Avoca and District Historical Society for about 17 years. Judith tells us that Lorna's collection of family history research is large, and her attention to detail in order to portray a person's life was second to none.



Martha Borland was born in 1846 in Dalry, Ayrshire, Scotland, She and her twin brother John were the youngest of ten children born to Hugh Borland, a shoemaker, and his wife Sarah née Wilson.

*On December 8, 1862 Martha sailed from Liverpool on the **Great Tasmania** with her parents and John, arriving in Melbourne on March 27, 1863. Travelling with them was Miss Helen McKenzie, who was betrothed to Martha's brother Hugh jnr. The family group were to join Martha's older siblings Alexander, Sarah, Janet, Mary, Hugh jnr and Robert, who had migrated in small groups between 1853 and 1858 and were then well settled in Maryborough.*

Young Hugh travelled down to Melbourne to meet the ship, anticipating a joyful reunion, and was surprised to be called on board and escorted to the captain's cabin where the family had gathered. Joy quickly turned to deep sorrow when Hugh was told that his beloved Helen had died of typhoid fever just three weeks before and had been buried at sea. It was then that 16-year-old Martha went to her brother in his grief and declared that she would look after him – and she did!

She kept house for him in the residence behind his boot and shoe shop on High Street (now Steve's fish shop) and in later years, in retirement, at "The White House" at Newtown, just outside Maryborough.

Martha has been described as being slight, short, precise and determined. She was also noted for wearing her hair in shoulder length curls, a style she achieved by means of a curling stick, which is still in the family.

*She became a taxidermist of note, and the following snippet from the **Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser** of July 13, 1885, indicates that she was indeed well known in this regard, and also answers the question as to how a genteel Victorian lady came by her specimens.*

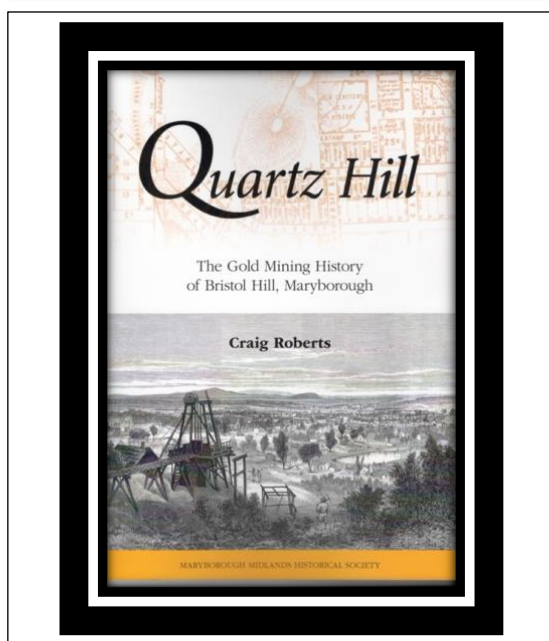
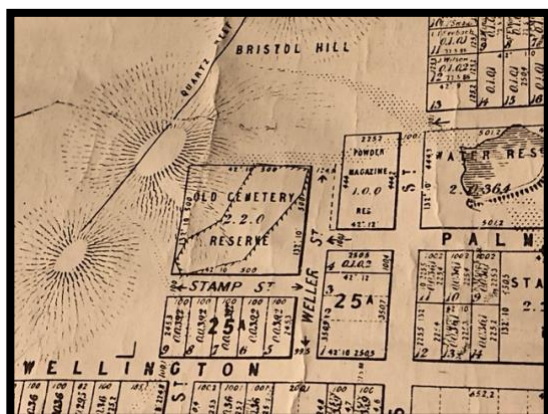
"WHITE ROSELLA – A white rosella and a native owl, shot by the son of Mr Fitzgerald, well known farmer and pastor of Wareek are displayed in the window of Mr Borland, bootmaker of Maryborough. In Miss Borland's private rooms are displayed a very pale green rosella, also an owl. In display cases are native bears, two mongoose [sic] several native cats, water beavers (or rats) and opossums. One mongoose case came from one mile along the Carisbrook road from Maryborough, and the other from White Hills, close to town."

About 1901 Hugh and Martha retired from the boot and shoe shop and moved to Newtown. Hugh busied himself as an orchardist and Martha set aside a room in the house in which to display her many stuffed exhibits. The room came to be known as "the museum", and great was the delight of young family visitors, when they called on Sunday afternoons, to be allowed into this room to gaze at the collection. There was also a large cabinet in which butterflies, moths, beetles and other insects were displayed in glass topped drawers. Martha was also an expert in manufacturing leather picture frames, and she is reported as having received prizes for this craft in many parts of the state, whilst her collection of stuffed birds was said to be one of the finest in Victoria.

*Martha was a good Christian lady, worshipping regularly at the Presbyterian Church in Neill Street after walking the mile or so from "the White House". She died on October 29, 1920, after a lingering illness, aged 75 years, and rests in the Borland family grave with her mother and brother Hugh in the Maryborough cemetery. A stained glass window in the church (now St Andrew's Uniting Church) is dedicated to her memory. **Lorna Purser 2011***

EDITOR'S NOTE Martha and her brother Hugh were great friends of the Chisholm family (also Scots), and Alec Chisholm, who went on to become a distinguished journalist and naturalist, shared their love of nature. In his autobiography *The Joy of The Earth* he recalls taking student groups to visit their collections.

FRIENDS OF BRISTOL HILL



Inspired by local businessman and Rotarian Gary Higgins, an informal group of local residents, both interested individuals and service club members, have been meeting to share their interest in preserving and documenting the Bristol Hill heritage area. Several working bees have been held to tidy the area around the Pioneers' Memorial Tower and to remove declared weeds.

Before any detailed plans to beautify the area can be made, one of the first tasks has been to establish which official bodies are responsible for the administration and maintenance of the Tower, the original Pioneer cemetery grounds and the former mining areas.

The hill's mining history has recently been thoroughly documented in Craig Roberts' new book "Quartz Hill", published by our Society.

Two issues are causing great concern to the Friends group. Firstly the damage being caused to the heritage area by trail bikes and even cars that are being driven recklessly over the precinct, destroying the old mining profile, and secondly the dumping of household rubbish, which is occurring on a weekly basis.

Bristol Hill also has an important World War Two connection. During the war, a Volunteer Air Observers Corps established a base adjacent to the Tower. The volunteer observers worked in shifts of two hours, watching out for, and recording any aircraft that flew over. *see p.5 for details.*

BRISTOL HILL PIONEER CEMETERY: RUIN & REVIVAL

Maryborough Historian Betty Osborn described the "state of utter neglect" into which Maryborough's first cemetery had fallen by 1876 in *Maryborough: A Social History 1854-1904* (Osborn & DuBourg). Burials had ceased in 1859.

Less than an acre in area, it was a picture of desolation – the unpainted gate, broken and hanging on rusted hinges, the old paling fence being robbed of its timber, some railings axed away by thieves. Hundreds of graves lay in the cemetery, lying around irregularly, with not more than a fifth enclosed. Some had headstones and some masses of quartz head and foot. The wooden headstones and crosses could not be read. Nowhere was there a flower or shrub to be seen. Some headstones lay prone on the ground, some shattered to pieces... The earliest inscription was 1854 but most of the deaths recorded occurred in 1856-7.

In the intervening years a fence has been erected to mark the cemetery's approximate boundaries, and a memorial cairn records some of the burials known to have taken place. Our Society has been involved in both these projects.

UNDER THE CARPET

When the Worsley Cottage carpets were removed a few months ago to allow repairs to the floors, workmen discovered a layer of newspapers from the early 1950s used as insulation. This was common practice in that era.



BRISTOL HILL AND THE VOLUNTEER AIR OBSERVERS CORPS



The Volunteer Air Observers Corps (VAOC) was formed in December 1941 to support the Royal Australian Air Force (R.A.A.F.) by sighting and observing aircraft over Australia. The VAOC was one of three main civil defence organisations. The others were the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) groups and the Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC). Observation posts were established across Australia, staffed 24 hours per day by volunteers.

At its peak in 1944 there were about 25,000 VAOC volunteers spread across 2,656 posts and 39 control zones. They reported an average of 120,000 aircraft sightings each month.

VAOC observers were provided with basic training in aircraft identification. Observation posts were established on existing buildings, such as hotels, church towers, or fire spotting towers, or natural features such as hilltops or coastal promontories.

As the threat of invasion passed, the need for the VAOC lessened and it was disbanded progressively from January 1945.

Information courtesy of Old Treasury Building Museum, Melbourne

**LEFT : VAOC Certificate presented to Mr A. Williams
(Collection of Maryborough Midlands Historical Society)**

Within five days of the well attended public meeting held in the Council Chambers on Friday February 14, 1942, the Air Observers Post on Bristol Hill was fully manned. Chief Observer A.A. Rankine reported that "The Post [a hut, built with Council permission] is established at the base of Bristol Hill Tower, and the quarters available to the observers are almost comfort de luxe, with a cosy coke fire, electric radiator, well appointed hut furnishings and facilities for preparing the proverbial cup of tea." The contents of the hut, including heaters, blankets, pillows, cushions, brooms and binoculars were lent to the Corps by "patriotic townspeople." Interestingly, members of the public were still able to access the tower itself, but running on the lawn surrounds was frowned upon.

Rosters were published each Friday in the *Maryborough Advertiser*, women rostered during daylight hours, secondary school boys in the early evening, and men timetabled for night duty. Volunteers were required to undertake a rudimentary vision and hearing test. "The acuteness of hearing in each ear must be not less than the whispered voice at 20 feet".



Although the principal role of the VAOC was to identify enemy aircraft, the network of posts assisted many hundreds of friendly air crews and planes. This included location information provided to lost pilots, aircrew rescued from crashes and emergency landings made possible. The Department of Air issued regular press releases describing some of the most dramatic incidents. The U.S. entertainer Bob Hope and his touring party were aboard a Catalina flying boat in 1944 en route from Brisbane to Sydney when their aircraft was forced to land on the Camden Haven River. (The pilot had never flown in Australia before). Thanks to VAOC volunteers all passengers were ferried ashore, later giving an impromptu thank you concert for the local residents.

Pictured left is "Miss Weickhardt," who was rostered on duty at Bristol Hill on Sunday June 14 1942, along with "Miss Mearns and Miss Tobler". The uniform is not official (only armbands were provided) and has been cobbled together (badges removed) from other uniform items. Thanks to her family for the photograph.

VALE DOROTHY WHITMORE

One of our Society's most valuable supporters and advisors, Dorothy "Dot" Whitmore, died earlier this year. The image opposite is a still from "*Shoulders to the Wheel*" a project funded by a Public Records Office Local History Grant, that incorporated interviews with a number of Maryborough "locals" who had worked in industries during Maryborough's post-World War Two "industrial revolution". Dorothy spoke about the work of her late husband David, a



carpenter, who played an important role in the factory assembly line that produced prefabricated "Phelan Homes" which were distributed throughout Victoria and even interstate.

Dorothy meticulously compiled her own family history, in particular the life of her father, Les Küffer, a prominent Maryborough citizen involved in many community groups and activities. "Dot", as she was known, described her time at the Maryborough Knitting Mills making singlets for the army when she was drafted by Manpower during World War Two.

She always responded enthusiastically to requests for information about Maryborough's past, retaining her sense of humour and sharp mind into her nineties.

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We're also on Facebook



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.

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