



The Society and its Members acknowledge the traditional landowners, the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nations and their Elders Past and Present.

Plenty News & Views

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President: Kerry Fitzmaurice

Vice President: Helen Zull

Secretary: Annemarie Webb

Treasurer: Leanne Hindley

**Committee Member—Newsletter:
Kerry Jones**



A Word from our President...

As 2024 draws to a close and Christmas festivities are racing ever closer it is good to clear a little time to reflect. It has been a good year for the Plenty Historical Society with a lot of work behind the scenes and activities that have brought the community into our home and promoted the Society more widely.

Our two most recent activities are reported on in this newsletter and I would like to acknowledge the major role Helen Zull has played in organizing these activities and obtaining supporting grant funds to support them. The family history presentation was certainly interesting and engaging – I hope many of the audience were inspired to start on their own stories and we would love you to share them with the Historical Society. I was delighted to see our pre-COVID plan to hold a short service for Remembrance Day restored. A big thank you to Helen and Annemarie for getting what we hope will be an annual tradition up and running. My thanks to Ian Dunn and Kevin Williams who led an excellent service and to our members who provided morning tea to enjoy whilst browsing our developing collection remembering locals who served in times of war.

The return of the land the former CFA building occupied has in part been returned to open space. Not quite the restoration of Heritage Park we had fought for however, we are currently working with Council to get appropriate heritage signs in place commemorating the original Plenty Village. The time capsule compiled by the children of Plenty State School and an old school bell will also be placed in the open space area.

My grateful thanks to our hard-working Executive committee and Helen in particular, who has taken on much of the organization of the Society in a year which has been very difficult for me personally. As always thank you to our loyal members for your interest and support.

I wish you all a happy and safe Festive Season and look forward to sharing more of our Plenty heritage again next year.

Kerry

Kerry Fitzmaurice

President

Plenty Remembrance Day Service

At the Memorial Gates

On the 11th of November, at 10.30 a small group gathered at the Plenty Memorial Gates to remember those who served in both war and peaceful campaigns. Ian Dunn and Kevin Williams ran the ceremony, as locals and a small contingent of school children from local primary schools looked on. Wreaths were laid at the gates and a moment's silence was given. Morning tea followed in the historical church and the morning was well received by all that attended.



During the ceremony, Kevin read out the following research he conducted on a well loved and known Plenty local:

Vera Florence Rudd

As is customary on occasions such as this we pause to remember a person who served our country in times of war. The person we remember today is Vera Florence Rudd, a well-known and fondly remembered member of this community. In doing so we also remember her daughter and our friend Neisha who sadly passed away in recent years.

Vera was born Vera Florence Twilley in England July 28th 1914. Her father trained as a marine in Canada, then joined the English Army (the "Territorials"). In 1921 the family moved to Australia, just in time for the great depression to hit, beginning with the Wall Street collapse in 1929. In 1926 the family moved to Plenty.

Plenty Remembrance Day Service

At the Memorial Gates continued...

When the second World War broke out, Vera attempted to join the intelligence service. She had read about Mata Hari, an exotic dancer who in 1917 was executed in France, accused of spying for Germany. This was not to be, as Vera was unable to speak more than one language.



Mata Hari who Vera idolised.

Determined to serve her country, Vera trained as an air raid warden, learned morse code, and trained as a vehicle mechanic. She knew quite a bit about mechanical work as she used to help her father in his postwar work.

At the time leading up to the outbreak of the 2nd World War and growing weary of her 12 years or so working in a sock factory, Vera was waiting anxiously for the Australian Women's Army Service (or AWAS) to begin.

Vera and a friend applied to work in a munitions factory where they were put to work packing cigarettes. She quickly decided this was not a career for her so presented herself to Gordon Street in Footscray, the site of a defence munitions factory. There she drove a variety of vehicles and was engaged in the manufacture of artillery shells. The work was physically demanding and dangerous and the hours long.



Women working at the ammunition factory in Footscray

Shift work required Vera to be travelling late at night and in the early morning, the risks of which she was all too aware. She remembered the case of a notorious American serviceman called Leonski who was active in strangling young women at that time.

In an interview for the Australian War Archives, Vera describes where workers filled shells with high explosive, they wore soft footwear and worked in almost total silence for fear of setting off an explosion.

Later Vera trained as a sheet metal worker, again the work being heavy and dangerous. She was to work on repairing aircraft. Sadly, her health deteriorated, no doubt due to the heavy work and poor living conditions of the time.

Vera died January 2nd 2006. Her husband George died in 1969.



Family History Presentation



On Sunday 25th August the society was fortunate to have Julie Nankervis as a guest speaker on researching and presenting your family history. Approximately 21 people, members and non-members from the wider community, attended this session. Julie has a passion for researching the history of her family and those of her extended family and has created some impressive books recording her findings.

Julie made the point that many people believed they have researched the family history when they have completed the family tree that records the date of the birth and death of each family member. However, what is important is the dash between those two dates. What we need to research, and record are the stories of these lives.

Julie was inspired by the poem, 'The Dash' by Linda Ellis [on the following page of the newsletter], which exemplifies understanding the relationship of celebrating the life lived. Ellis' poem speaks to the listener about the value of the 'dash' that is between the birth date and date of their passing. It is not only a reflection of the life of the person lost but also a reminder for the reader to live their own 'dash' to the fullest.

The State Library of Victoria is a rich resource to use for your research.

www.slv.vic.gov.au

Family History tools and resources www.slv.vic.gov.au/search-discover/family-history

Family History Research Guides www.guides.slv.vic.gov.au

A sheet of these and other Family History resources is also available from the society.



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Family History Presentation continued...

The Dash

I read of a man who stood to speak
at the funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on the tombstone from the beginning to the end.
He noted first came the date of the birth and spoke the following date with
tears.
But he said what mattered most of all
was the dash between the years.
For that dash represents all the time
that they spent life on Earth.
And now only those who loved them
know what that little line is worth.
For it matters not how much we own,
the cars, the house, the cash.
What matters is how we live and love,
and how we spend our dash.
So, think about this long and hard.
Are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left that can still be rearranged.
If we could just slow down enough
to consider what's true and real,
and always try to understand
the way other people feel.
And be less quick to anger,
and show appreciation more,
and love the people in our lives
like we've never loved before.
If we treat each other with respect
and more often wear a smile,
remembering that this special dash
might only last a little while.
So, when your eulogy is being read
with your life's actions to rehash,
would you be proud of the things they say
about how you spent your dash?



Successful Grant Applications

The Place Making grant from the Nillumbik Council has been spent providing a wooden bench and planting around the church. A plaque was made for the bench celebrating the contribution of our founding President Neisha Rudd Forbes.



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The Society has also received a Quick Response Grant from the Nillumbik Council. With this grant we have installed black out blinds in the church to enable us to more effectively use our new projector. We also purchased a stand for the projector along with more display boards and easels for display. The Historic Church is now a viable option for the use of small groups for displays, workshops, presentations or meetings.

In August the church was used for a Wellness workshop, this worked very well.

CONTRIBUTIONS:

If you would like to make a contribution to a future edition of 'Plenty News and Views', I can be contacted on:

kerry@jones.id.au or 0414861557

Thank you,

Kerry Jones—Newsletter Editor

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Note: The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Plenty Historical Society or its members.