



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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A Tribute to Neisha

As most of you will now be aware Neisha Forbes (Rudd) our inaugural President passed away on the 4th of August after a tenacious fight with brain cancer. We thought it appropriate to produce this special tribute edition of Plenty News and Views in memory of Neisha.

Neisha was the driving force in establishing the Plenty Historical Society and became our first President. She served as President from 2001 – 2009 and then became Secretary from 2010 – 2019 when she was diagnosed with an aggressive form of brain tumor. She represented our



Neisha at the Plenty Centenary Luncheon

Society on the Yarra Plenty Heritage Group and its predecessor Combined Nillumbik Historical Societies Network (a founding member of both); and a number of community working parties particularly in relation to the impacts of the reconstruction of Yan Yean Road.

The idea to form an historical

society began at a community New Year's Day breakfast held at the CFA on 1st January 2000 to celebrate the beginning of a new millennium. Many of us at that breakfast expressed concern that with the rapid development of Plenty our community heritage and history would be lost. We agreed we should get together and form an his-

torical society to preserve our community heritage. Twelve months passed and at the next New Year's Day breakfast we again agreed we should do something . . . It was Neisha who took the lead in early 2001 and called a meeting at the Plenty Hall for all residents interested in preserving the history and community culture of Plenty. It was agreed to form the Plenty Historical Society and Neisha was elected President.

In her role as President and then Secretary Neisha approached Council and was successful in gaining heritage overlays for a number of our historically significant buildings. She was also keen to preserve some of our significant older trees such as the oak trees planted by the first students at Plenty State School and the hawthorn bushes on the site of the farmers cottage at Sutherland Homes, unfortunately the tree overlays did not meet the criteria.

Neisha was passionate about preserving and restoring the War Memorial Gates that were rapidly falling into disrepair. The original restoration included upgrading the memorial plaques to represent major conflicts and peace keeping missions since the 2nd world war and building a garden for reflection around the Memorial Gates. Many locals now enjoy a quiet seat in the garden particularly since the traffic of Yan Yean Road has been diverted. A wreath was laid at the Gates on the day of Neisha's funeral by her family this was quickly added to with flowers left by friends in tribute to a well-loved community



Neisha and Ailsa Fitzmaurice at Ailsa's 100th Birthday Celebration

member.

Neisha along with the Society fought to save the old Plenty State School building and when this was not achievable she then lobbied Council to place an historical marker recounting the history of the school; and the court entering the subdivision named Finneran Court in memory of Maud Finneran who had provided the education department with the land on which to build the school that she had worked to have established. Neisha and Maud, I suspect, had a lot in common.

When the former Uniting (Methodist) Church was in danger of demolition to make way for the realignment of Yan Yean Road, Neisha argued with Council and VicRoads

with dogged persistence to save the church. Against all odds the church was not only saved but eventually restored. The day the church was moved down Yan Yean Road to the Heritage Park, Neisha was there recording every moment. She and several others lay down on Yan Yean Road (traffic had been diverted) as she reckoned it was a once in a lifetime opportunity to lie safely on the old road! Neisha continued the fight with Major Roads Projects Victoria (MRPV) to reinstate the roof of the church which had been partly moved for relocation. Unfortunately, the warnings of the roof falling in were ignored and indeed the roof did collapse. However, MRPV sprang into action and fulfilled their promise to restore the building. Sadly, Neisha became too ill to see the completed church restoration however in discussion with her family we will ensure her contri-

bution is always remembered.

Neisha worked passionately to preserve the history of Plenty. She began an ongoing project collecting family histories of local families; she researched and recorded stories of Plenty residents who had served in World War 1; and took many photographs recording life in Plenty. Before the work started on Yan Yean Road Neisha and I cruised the Diamond Creek Road to Kurrak Road stretch filming both sides of the road to preserve a memory of the way the road looked prior to reconstruction. It is hard to picture the old road now with so many trees and buildings gone.

Neisha was a great community person, she visited and helped many in the community who needed assistance. She passionately joined community activities and promoted the good work of others. Despite her many achievements she remained humble and always gave credit to the team around her. There are many current and former Plenty residents who have lovely stories to tell of Neisha's kindness and support in times of need.

Neisha has left a very large footprint in this community. She will be remembered for her enthusiasm and drive to make things happen; her un-

failing good humor and integrity; and genuine care for all around her. She will be sadly missed. Our thoughts and sympathy are with Neil and the Rudd family at this very sad time.

Once COVID restrictions are eased the Plenty Historical Society are working with Neisha's family to organize an appropriate function at the Plenty Historical Church to remember her as we were unable to do at the time of her passing.

Kerry Fitzmaurice
President

Editor's Note:

This newsletter, *Plenty News and Views*, was named by Neisha's mother, Vera Rudd. A very fitting memorial to Neisha.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support and financial assistance received from Nil-lumbik Shire Council in the production of this newsletter.



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

CONTRIBUTIONS:

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

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Thank you,

Kerry Jones—Newsletter Editor



Floral Tributes to Neisha at the Plenty Memorial Gates with the Flags at Half Mast