Cranbourne's Community

Cranbourne Township

By Claire Turner, Casey Cardinia Library Corporation

Cranbourne township was first surveyed for town allotments in 1856. The original town was organized around High Street, the blocks encompassed by Cameron and Sladen Streets, and the four entrances into the township. By the 1880s, there were plantings of pines along the main street, a very active Recreational Reserve that included the Racecourse and a new school on the South Gippsland Highway. The community was heavily centred on church life, with Presbyterian, Church of England and Catholic churches. A large landmark on the corner of Sladen Street and the Gippsland Highway was the Shire Offices, Post Office and Courthouse opened in 1875.

This was a farming community and the people largely came from Ireland, England and Scotland, with occasional travellers from America such as the Tucker brothers. Like neighbouring Berwick, Cranbourne developed during the 1850s when rural settlement expanded due to the gold rush. Although Cranbourne was not a gold town, it enjoyed an influx of immigrants who had originally been attracted to Australia because of the discovery of gold. The Great Swamp that now holds townships like Koo Wee Rup, Lang Lang and also Bunyip would not begin to be drained for human habitation until the 1880s. The railway did not go through until the 1880s and it took six hours by coach to reach Melbourne. Other neighbouring settlements such as Tooradin and Bass were largely accessed by sea because the roads and tracks were treacherous. Cranbourne was considered to be a prosperous new settlement, surrounded by good flat pasture for agriculture and offering a future for small business to support the town.

Shire of Cranbourne

Cranbourne continued to be a country community until the 1950s when sub-division for a new focus on small residential property began to occur. Like many country towns, the community was close and centred around church committees, the Shire, mothers' club and Country Women's Association to mention a few. Engagements, weddings and 21st birthdays were usually a case of putting up a sign and inviting the whole town, with the guarantee that everyone would bring along food and would be prepared to put on some entertainment. Many quirky stories remain that provide a sense of 'Cranbourne the Country Town'.

Many of the families first came to Cranbourne to establish farms. Farming was the main occupation although following the Second World War, industry expanded. Factories began to be established and more people came to live in the town. In the last thirty years, Cranbourne has experienced significant development, and over the past 10 years, the Cranbourne population has steadily increased, with the central township now flanked by newly developed housing estates.

The Main Street (High Street)
This was a very quiet street compared with the thoroughfare that it is today. There were pine trees planted along the sides from the railway crossing up to the Shire Hall, and post rails outside the shops for

people to tie their horses. There were also water troughs for horses at intervals along the street. One of these troughs can still be seen at the Old Fisherman's Cottage Museum in Tooradin.

High Street was a dirt road until the early 1930s. The shops opposite the Cranbourne Park Shopping Centre mark the original shopping strip. Many of the shops had residential quarters attached and also had land adjacent for tethering a cow or horse. Some of the school children would rely on these spaces as a 'car park' for their ponies as most children relied on their ponies or bikes to get to school. Some landmark buildings remain in the main street today such as St. Agatha's church, the Old Shire Offices and Kelly's Hotel.

Bunurong History

by Steve Compton, Spokesperson for the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

The Bunurong people are indigenous people from south-east Victoria, their traditional lands are from the Werribee River in the north-west, down to Wilson's Promontory in the south-east, taking in the catchments of the old Carrum swamp, Tarwin River and Westernport Bay, and including the Mornington Peninsula, French and Phillip Islands.

Bunurong people were part of a language group or nation known as Koolin. Bunurong people prefer to be described as Koolin or Bunurong rather than Koorie, which is a word from another Aboriginal language.

The City of Casey lies within the boundary of the Mayone Bulluk Bunurong. Also in the City is the site of the old Native police barracks, where many Bunurong people were forced to live in the early years of colonisation while their traditional land was being appropriated.

The Native police was formed by the colonial government as a tool to control the Aboriginal community and promote assimilation. Today there is no Native police force but there are Aboriginal people within the public service that play a more passive but similar role. It was also around this time that it was suggested that Aboriginal people could survive economically by selling art and craft. Though this clearly did not work, state and federal governments still see this as a solution for Aboriginal peoples low economic status after being forcibly disenfranchised from their land and natural resources. It would be like the present government saying that everybody that lives in south-east Victoria had to stop what they are doing and must move to Melbourne by tomorrow, where they will survive by making porcelain ducks and decorative plates, while your land is being sold to foreign investors at bargain prices and you get clay and a wheel.

The Mayone Bulluk Bunurong

As with most indigenous peoples of the world, the Mayone Bulluk culture, ceremonial and spiritual life was dictated by the seasons through the availability of their sustainable natural resources. Through thousands of years of observation, Bunurong people were able to predict the availability of their seasonal resources by certain changes in plant growth and animal behaviour.

Bunurong people knew that when the first wattles flowered that some species of fish were about to begin spawning, and this would give them enough time to travel to places such as Cannons Creek, Blind Bight or

perhaps over to Quail Island to net or spear fish. This sort of knowledge allowed the Bunurong and many other indigenous peoples to survive sustainably and comfortably for thousands of generations.

During the summer months the Mayone Bulluk could (and still can) be found at one of their many coastal camps at Mordialloc, Tooradin or Warneet on Westerport Bay. Here they would be accessing many of their favourite resources such as bird eggs, fish, shellfish, and as always, hunting kangaroo and possum. For vegetables they would collect a variety of bulbs, shoots and foliage like the Warrigal Spinach. After eating their meal the Mayone Bulluk would wash it all down with a lovely drink made from the nectar of the Coastal Banksia flowers, then while sitting around the campfire they told their children scary stories of the big hairy monster named Toora' dun that lived in a deep waterhole at Sawtells Inlet. It is from this Bunurong mythological creature that the township of Tooradin derives its name.

They would spend this time on the coast camping in small huts, which are called 'miam'mia', which were made from the boughs of trees or thatched with one of the many grasses or sedges that once flourished on Bunurong land. From these huts the Mayone Bulluk would launch excursions to forage for yams and shoots, hunt kangaroos and possums whose skins they were continually tanning for the purpose of making cloaks and rugs for the coming winter months. The cloaks were also a valuable trade item and it is said that one possum skin cloak made from 50 hides was worth one greenstone axe-head blank.

As winter drew near the Mayone Bulluk families would begin to move inland to their favourite winter camps around present-day Dandenong, Cranbourne and Moorooduc, where during the coldest months when kangaroos were frisky, they would meet up with neighbouring Bunurong clans to mount large scale hunts and fulfil ceremonial obligations. They would catch eels and collect the many fungi, orchid and lily bulbs that were abundant at that time of the year.

Occasionally the women would show the children how to take seed from an ant's nest, which the ants unknowingly stored while collecting their own food. The seed would be used to make a stomach-filling bread that would be shared with everyone and with, a little wild honey was guaranteed to put a smile on everybody's face. Some would feast on the sweet piths of the tree fern or grass tree while others would be in the many freshwater streams like Cardinia Creek catching eels and fish while also gathering freshwater mussels and crayfish. The men would teach the young boys the art of snaring and tracking small game, as the young girls learnt the art of making eel traps and basketry. All the while the Mayone Bulluk would see out the cold in small houses made from the bark of trees, these huts known as 'willam'. Scars on trees caused by Mayone Bulluk people removing the bark for different tasks can still be seen on the old red gums around Lynbrook and Cranbourne West.

When the Elders of the Mayone Bulluk observed the black wattle trees first blooms they would begin the trip back down to the swamp and then later onto the coast where they knew awaited the plentiful resources of Port Phillip Bay, and once again the seasons changed and the Mayone Bulluk moved with them.

This knowledge still survives strongly in the minds and hearts of Bunurong people today and many individuals within the community put this knowledge into practice on a daily basis, knowledge that unites the community and is a great source of pride in being Bunurong.

Today very little of the landscape that the Mayone Bulluk Bunurong utilised can be seen due to introduced land management practices, and wide spread and rapid development. The few remaining sites of cultural, social and spiritual significance to the Bunurong people on Mayone Bulluk land are under threat from development, and sites are being destroyed or disturbed on a daily basis.

If you were to go to Blind Bight very early on a summer morning and look across the bay toward French Island you might be lucky to catch a glimpse of and hear what a Mayone Bulluk person would have seen and heard 200 years ago.

Bunurong people despite still being totally dispossessed of their traditional land play an active role in the protection, preservation and awareness of their culture, heritage and environment through the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation.

The First European Settlers

By Claire Turner, Casey Cardinia Library Corporation

The region that later became Cranbourne is strongly connected to the early history of Western Port. The history of settlement at Western Port was punctuated by a range of hasty attempts that were a reaction to the international political climate of the early nineteenth century. In 1802 the French were exploring the southern tip of Australia, making comprehensive scientific notes as they went. This was during the war between France and England when Napoleon governed France. The competition was fierce and once the English, who had been preoccupied with their settlement at Botany Bay, realized what the French were 'up to', they launched headlong into plans to populate the southern part of the continent.

The first attempt was in 1803, when Lieutenant Colonel David Collins established a camp near Sorrento. It failed, largely due to the perceived threat of attack by local Aboriginal people and an inability to locate fresh water. The settlers retreated and the area remained inhabited only by the Aboriginal people and the notorious sealers until 1824 when Hamilton Hume and William Hovell began to explore Port Phillip Bay in search of grazing country. In 1826 a second attempt was made at settlement in the Western Port region. The settlement was near Corinella and was led by Captain Frederick Wetherall, but also failed. Following this, energy was re-directed into building a settlement on the swamplands of the Yarra River, which offered the essential fresh water. John Batman is largely associated with this settlement and the place was officially proclaimed 'Melbourne' in 1834.

Squatters came to the area that would later become Cranbourne during the 1830s. There were a series of large land runs, among them 'Mayune', 'St Germains' and 'Gin Gin Bin'. Men like Hugh Glass and John Turner Clarke ran enormous portions of land. Sheep and cattle were farmed and were sent to the markets at Melbourne. Agriculture was the thriving industry in the new settlement of Port Phillip, which became the Colony of Victoria in 1852.

The Township Settlers

By Claire Turner, Casey Cardinia Library Corporation

By the 1850s, the land of the large farming runs was divided up and offered for sale. This was when towns were surveyed and settlers came to try their luck at farming. Cranbourne was one of these towns, surveyed in 1856. By 1860 there was a school in Sladen Street, a Presbyterian church, two hotels and a general store. Cranbourne quickly acquired blacksmiths, a bakery, butcher and by the 1890s even a coffee palace. The main part of the original township

was the blocks surrounded by Cameron Street, Sladen Street and High Street. The Reverend Duff came to Cranbourne in the early 1850s and his residence was in Childers Street. Local people in the town generally ran businesses there. These included Mr. Mullins the storekeeper, Mr. Todd the saddler, Peter Peterson's butcher shop and by the 1880s, a Temperance Hall owned by the Independent Order of Rachabites and managed by Archibald Thomson, the schoolteacher who lived in the new school opposite the racecourse. The Cobb and Co. coach would stop at the Cranbourne Hotel, which was also where the early Council meetings were held before the Shire Offices were built in 1875. Families living in the town included that of George Poole, Alexander Cameron and William Brunt. The Police Station has always been on the corner of Sladen Street and the South Gippsland Highway, and the Primary School was next door to it for nearly one hundred years.

The Women of Cranbourne's Past

By Claire Turner, Casey Cardinia Library Corporation

This letter was written in 1897 as an expression of interest in a position to do the cleaning at St. John's church. Mrs Meade lived in Cranbourne and like many other women at the time, was limited to unskilled work. Mrs Meade's voice gives us some insight into the experiences of ordinary women in Cranbourne's history. She was possibly a widow reliant on work to keep her family and it is also possible that she had asked someone else to write her letter for her.

The experiences of European women in Australia's history are something that is attracting increasing attention in recent historical research. Women are rarely to be seen in the established histories of traditional outlets in public life such as business and local government. In the established early histories of Cranbourne, it is the names of men like Alexander
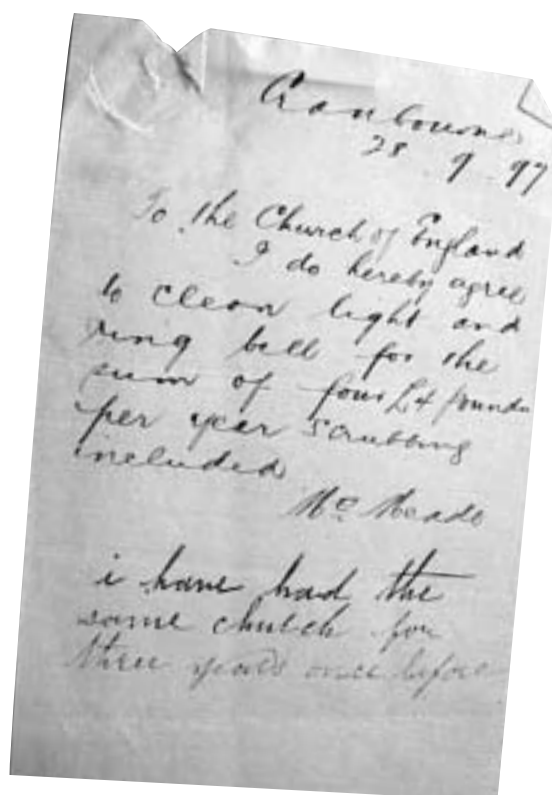
Cranbourne 28.9.1897

To the Church of England
I do hereby agree to clean light and ring bell for the sum of four £4 pounds per year scrubbing included.

Patterson, Cameron and Duff that predominate. These names fill the typical lists of Council representatives, significant landowners and key players in Cranbourne's development. While these men feature as important in Cranbourne's past, we know that there must have been women working to build the township also.

As wives, daughters and mothers, women primarily occupied supportive roles for men until opportunities broadened after the Second World War. They toiled over crude cooking facilities, endured the life-threatening experience of childbirth in isolation, and suffered the overall hardship of life in a young and far-away township like Cranbourne. This traditional work, that was for most an automatic part of being a woman, is not widely recorded in history. Their names do not appear in the lists for council service or in the stories of Cranbourne's past. But, in snippets from newspapers,

community group minutes and official records, we can start to reconstruct a picture of these womens' lives. Some of Cranbourne's women occupied quite public roles in the township, particularly as business owners and landholders.

If we dig deeper, it becomes apparent that the women of Cranbourne were most definitely a vivid presence in the life of the township and helped to shape the community. Women found acceptable ways to be involved in public life, which was technically considered to be a male domain. They worked their influence through the Church, women's organisations, their husband's businesses and through the family unit. The condition of widowhood was another, involuntary way that women became active in areas like business and property ownership.

Country Women's Association

By Claire Turner, Casey Cardinia Library Corporation

The Country Women's Association (CWA) began in 1928 as a support for women living in rural places. It is a philanthropic organisation, basing its work on dedication to providing assistance and support to women who may be facing difficulties living in an isolated environment. It was designed to encourage women to network and build useful relationships. Cranbourne was one of the earliest branches, formed in 1928.[1] This was during a time when assistance was especially needed due to the onset of the Great Depression years. It was strongly believed at the time that women, with their domestic interests and feminine approach, could offer something unique to the improvement of society. The Chairman of the Royal Agricultural Society called a meeting to address what was thought by the organisers, to be a problem of too many women living in isolation without guidance:

> There is a need for a State wide organised body of country women untrammelled by political or sectarian obligations, to speak with authority on, and command attention to, matters of public interest connected with community affairs.[2]

The Chairman's comments reflect the social-reforming zeal typical of the period. The areas of health and leisure were targeted by the middle class founders of the organisation as areas where they could try to make social improvements. On a practical level, these organisations functioned in two ways: one where the middle class ladies conducted the administration and organisation of activities and areas targeted, and another where assistance was provided to working class women through a decided agenda. This agenda is an example of how sections of the middle class imposed their beliefs in what was and was not important in a woman's life onto the women of a lower class: in this case women living and working on farms. This is a reality of the era in which these groups developed and the approach was carried out with positive intentions and mostly positive responses. The CWA enjoyed enormous growth during its early years, demonstrating the relevance of the organisation.

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[1] *Years of Adventure: Fifty Years of Service by the Country Women's Association of Victoria 1928-1978,* Country Women's Association of Victoria. 1978, p. 2.

[2] *Years of Adventure,* p. 2.

The Cranbourne Branch of the CWA has been an enduring force in the township. Mrs Bruce was the first President and it is possible that she was the wife of the Reverend Bruce of Scot's church. Women from local families such as Duff, Rolstone, Greaves, Brunt, McLeod and Manks were involved in the branch activities. Miss Ryland was also a foundation member. These women were there to help during all the key community hardships. Events like the depression years, the 1939 bushfires and the Second World War were times when the group really excelled. They would take meals to families in need, raise money through catering for weddings and other celebrations, and generally offered a solid network of mutual assistance for their members.[3]

Their contribution to Cranbourne has been an enduring one. They donated forty-six trees to be placed along Sladen Street. Unfortunately these have been removed to allow for the road widening. They were involved in township parades, most notably in the 1954 parade to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. They have provided the catering at the Dandenong Show since their inception, and continue to do so. Until recently and since 1959, they presented flowers at the Citizenship ceremonies. This is an interesting reflection of the increase in new residents from overseas since the Second World War. More recent projects include the funding of a table and chairs at the Greg Clydesdale Square in memory of a special member, along with a time capsule. The Cranbourne ladies of the CWA are remembered as having worked tirelessly during the crisis that followed the 1983 bushfires. They also devote their energies to assisting women in other countries by sending parcels and raising money for water tanks and other facilities.

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[3] Recollections of Mrs. Jean Piller, Cranbourne, 2000.

The Great Depression

By Claire Turner, Casey Cardinia Library Corporation

The late 1920s and early 1930s was a very financially difficult time around the world. People in Cranbourne struggled to meet payments for every day necessities and a barter system developed. Anice Stammers, whose father ran Facey's butcher shop, can remember how her father would accept a bag of potatoes or a case of apples at the end of the month as payment for a struggling family's meat account.

Local resident Joan Kelsall can remember that many children came to school without shoes, which was especially tough for those who walked to school during winter. Peter Cowe also recalls that their teacher used to make sure that the children from struggling families received a hot drink and something to eat when they arrived at school.

It was a poor time, but in the country, families and friends would assist each other. Businesses were prepared to accept goods and labour if people were not able to pay. There was generally a good supply of fresh produce so that people did not go hungry, and organisations such as the Country Women's Association and the Red Cross provided support for families.

Migrants

By Claire Turner, Casey Cardinia Library Corporation

After the Second World War, there were many refugees coming to Australia from Europe who needed to make a new start. These 'displaced persons' were sent to rural parts of Australia to begin to work for a place of their own. This resettlement was during the period of the 'White Australia Policy', and selective immigration was considered by the Federal Government as a means of strengthening the country by boosting the low population, and also as a way to help re-invigorate the economy by improving industry growth. Many schemes were developed as part of this post war ethos. Examples include the Snowy Mountain Hydro-Electric Scheme, the catchments scheme at Eildon and more locally the community housing scheme at Doveton. Migrants were sent to rural townships including Cranbourne.

The area around the railway in Cranbourne was an original settlement for European migrants during this post-war period. It is interesting that they were called 'migrants' when only one hundred years earlier, European 'settlers' had first come to Cranbourne. It is an example of the strong national identity that had taken hold over a relatively short period in world history.

Cranbourne cemetery clearly demonstrates the change in the district's demography after the Second World War. The Roman Catholic section is largely occupied by families from refugee countries in Europe, whereas the graves from the earlier period of European settlement are concentrated in the Presbyterian and Church of England sections, reflecting the high proportion of Scottish, Irish and English settlers in Cranbourne.

These migrant families have been largely responsible for the boom in the market gardening industry that has become Cranbourne's trademark industry since the 1950s. One such person was remembered for his work tending the flowerbeds around the Shire Offices and the shopping centre, creating beautiful displays.

Pam Ridgway grew up in Cranbourne during the 1930s and 40s and she can remember when the first migrants came to Cranbourne and some of the difficulties they experienced:

After the war a lot of British and Europeans were migrating to Australia around 1950. The first two arrived at Cranbourne under the Government scheme – they worked at allotted jobs for two years regardless of their qualifications – one was a Yugoslav, the other Northern Italian. Their home was just a little hut near the Railway Station and they worked with the rail maintenance gang travelling on the little rail trolleys. They picked up the language from the locals they mixed with, sometimes being told wrong words deliberately and then being embarrassed. Being only two of them, they mixed well with the locals. Three to four years later, migrants were arriving in larger numbers.

Today, Cranbourne is very proud of the multiculturalism that has created a vibrant and diverse community.

Local Governance

By Caroline Bell, City of Casey

Cranbourne Shire Council 1909

With the Roads Act 1858, towns like Cranbourne formed District Road Boards. The legislation was designed to allow towns to manage and improve the roads and bridges that could not adequately support a rapidly increasing rural population. Road Boards were the first types of local government and, naturally, the wealthy men and those who stood to gain economically from improved access for transport were the ones most keenly involved.

The original Cranbourne Road Board comprised Dr James Adams of the property 'Balla Balla' as the Chairman, James Bruce of 'Sherwood Park', Richard Chomley of Lyndhurst, James Lecky (Snr) of 'Cranbourne', Edward Malloy of 'Mayune', Alexander Patterson of 'St Germains', Christopher Peed of 'Springmount', Patrick Thompson of 'Oaklands', and John Wedge from Lyndhurst. The Board (and then the Council) used the Cranbourne Hotel (located on the site of the Cranbourne Park Shopping Centre) as its meeting place.

On 24th February, 1868 the Cranbourne Shire Council was proclaimed and by 1875 the grand building on the corner of Sladen Street and the South Gippsland Highway was erected as the civic centre. Members of the first Council were: James Lecky (Snr) as President, Alexander Patterson, Thomas Keys, William Norquay, George Poole, Edward John Tucker, Frederick Poole, Edward Malloy and Herbert Foley.

(insert photo of Councillors – use image from artmarkers)

Following its move into the grand shire building in September 1875, monthly meetings re-commenced in October and were held on the Saturday following market day.

A highlight for Cranbourne Shire Secretary, A.N. Facey was to attend the Opening of the first Federal Parliament held in Melbourne in May, 1901.

Cranbourne was a very quiet country town for the early part of the twentieth century and indeed until the 1950s. In fact, there was an almost successful move during the 1920s by a section of the Council to shift headquarters into the township of Koo Wee Rup, which had flourished considerably since the swampy plains were drained for farming.

The early years of the Cranbourne Shire were marked by the ongoing demand of building and maintaining roads, drains and bridges. The Shire, which stretched out to Lang Lang and Koo Wee Rup, depended on these amenities for the smooth running of its staple agricultural industry. This work was designed by the Shire Engineers and implemented by the road gangs and sub contractors. The physical work was mainly completed using horse - power, even in the 1940s. There

was a Shire Ranger employed to ensure that farmers' stock were not wandering. The Ranger would ride on horseback to inspect complaints. Council had a pound, which unlike the dog pounds we know, was for the restraint of stray cows, sheep, horses and other livestock caught out of their paddocks. Farmers had to pay to get them back.

The Cranbourne Shire relied mainly on local resources to carry out its work. There was a staff of around eight until after the second World War, mostly drawn from the local community. Local businesses were tendered to supply gravel and build roads. Gravel, sand, bricks and other materials were all produced within the Shire. Tooradin was a road building base in the 1870s, with necessary imported materials being delivered by sea.

Many of Cranbourne's long-serving staff were recognised through the naming of streets and reserves in their honour. Mr Harry Cockcroft , Shire Engineer for 30 years had many streets named after himself and members of his family. Greg Clydesdale replaced Harry Cockcroft as Shire Engineer in 1957 for over 20 years – his work was recognised by the naming of the Greg Clydesdale Square, in front of the Cranbourne Park Shopping Centre, whilst Terry Vickerman, the last and Cranbourne's tenth Shire Secretary had the sporting complex named in his honour.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, amendments to the Local Government Act resulted in changes within Councils and Cranbourne was no exception. At the same time, the growth of Melbourne's south-east corridor had a significant impact on Cranbourne, resulting in what we now know as Cranbourne the suburb, a far cry from Cranbourne, the country town. In recognition of this growth, Cranbourne was proclaimed as a City in 1994 with former Shire President Mr Peter

Bottomley becoming the City's first Mayor. Over 300 people attended the official proclamation ceremony conducted by the Governor of Victoria, Mr Richard McGarvie, and local residents were also treated to celebrations and a spectacular fireworks display at the Cranbourne Racecourse that evening.

However the move to become a City was short-lived, in fact the City of Cranbourne was again to change, becoming amalgamated with the former City of Berwick to form what we know today as the City of Casey. These amalgamations occurred not long after the formation of the City of Cranbourne and many were left to wonder about these changes.

Many of Cranbourne's pioneers played an active role in shaping the community through their involvement in the governance of the local area. Their families often continued with this involvement with participation often carried through fathers and sons, such as Robert and William Campbell and William and Norman Brunt. These early Cranbourne families had a passionate interest in how their town changed and improved. The early days of settlement survived in living memory and the teams of men and later, women worked through local government to see those early hopes for Cranbourne realised. Their contribution is recognised in the plaques, memorials, street names, reserves and in the overall success of Cranbourne as a city.

Cranbourne's Shire Building – The Old Shire Offices

By Caroline Bell, City of Casey

The Cranbourne Shire Council, and its predecessor, the Cranbourne Road Board conducted all their meetings and official business at the Cranbourne Hotel in High Street in the 1860s. However it soon became obvious that to cope with the increasing growth of the township, something more was needed in the way of municipal accommodation.

To this end, Councillors Edward John Tucker and Charles Rossiter moved a motion at a Council meeting held on 11 February, 1871 that the Council build a Shire Hall that would then be used for all official activities of the Council. Early in 1873, an application was made to the Public Works Department for plans to be drawn for a building that would include Council offices, a Court House and Post Office. However it took some 4 years to raise enough funds to commence building, with assistance from a Government grant of £1,000 and a contribution of £749 from Council.

On 6 March 1875, Councillor William Lyall laid the foundation stone of the grand building on the corner of Sladen Street and the South Gippsland Highway, placing coins and documents in the cavity of the stone. Mr William Smith was commissioned as the Builder, and

Cranbourne shire offices

John Donnelly and his father carted bricks made of clay dug from a hole near Narre Warren Road in the vicinity of the railway crossing, although it is said that construction was held up 'because the bricks were not dry'.[4] A replica of the trowel used to lay the Foundation Stone was presented to Council by the Lyall family in 1978 and can be found on display at the Narre Warren Council Offices.

The building was finally completed in September 1875, then in 1892 a Post Master's residence was added. Further extensions were undertaken to the Hall in 1913 adding a new Council Chamber, although a porch had

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[4] Conservation Management Plan: former Cranbourne Shire Hall, Court House & Post Office. Unpublished report. Graeme Butler & Associates. 1996.

also previously been added to the Post Office in 1910. An exterior clock (not the current one) was also purchase by Council in 1891 for the princely sum of £25.

For many years the building served as Cranbourne's only Public Hall. One of the single largest functions held at the Hall was the 1927 'Back To' celebrations. Over 1,000 attended this function but as you can imagine, not all were able to crowd into the Hall for this joyous get-together.

In 1948, the Shire Hall was taken over as the Council Chamber and for use as additional office space to meet the growing needs of the Shire. At around the same time, the two Norfolk pine trees that are still standing to the side of the building were planted.

The first stage of a long-term 3-stage plan commenced in 1962 with the building of an Engineering Block at the rear of the Shire Offices at a cost of $40,000. It was envisaged that this would be the beginning of a modern Civic Centre precinct, however these plans also anticipated the demolition of the old building. As Henry Kirwin, former employee with the Shire of Cranbourne mentioned, 'things were cramped and had to change to keep up with times...'.

Henry remembers that:
The old health office (located in an old wooden shed out the front of the now Customer Service Centre) was in a condemned state with a floor slope so bad that you had to have brakes on your chair or you would roll out the door.

Another former employee, Tedd Finn also recalled the state of the health office, saying that after each visit you walked lop-sided.

The dream for a new Civic Centre was in fact realised on 26 November, 1976 when the Shire President Cr. Ernest Marriott laid a foundation stone using the same silver trowel used by William Lyall on 6 March 1875 when he laid the Foundation Stone of the original Shire Offices.

This new Centre was officially opened on 22 April 1978 by the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Winneke, next door to the existing Shire Hall after a total estimated cost for construction being approximately $1.7 million, much greater than the £1,750 required to build the original building.

The completion of the Civic Centre sparked the debate over what to do with the Old Shire Office. The Shire Council plan was to demolish the building however the local community rallied behind Mr Wilf Facey and Mr James Lineham in their efforts to preserve the old building. The Council had felt justified in their plans to demolish the building as it had been pronounced as unworthy of Classification by the National Trust (at that time the Trust only classified buildings of State significance) and they intended to develop the site as a public garden. However the local community, led by Facey and Lineham, believed that the building 'was not just a shire hall but the district's only major public hall for a long time and therefore had a long involvement with the history of the community and its social life'.

The Old Shire Office building is easily recognisable as one of the town's significant landmarks, located as it is at the top of the town's main commercial street. It is one of the few remaining 19th century buildings in Cranbourne and as such one of the few reminders of the area's past.

Cranbourne Shire Hall

Cranbourne's Chairmen and Shire Presidents

By Caroline Bell, City of Casey

1860-63, 64-65	Dr. James Smith Adams	1895-96	Robert Gibbs
1863-64, 72-73	Alexander Patterson	1896-97	David Craig
1865-71, 76-80	James Lecky (Snr)	1897-98 (November)	John Henry Smethurst
1871-72, 80-82 (June), 82-83	Charles Rossiter	1898-99	Richard Grice
1873-74	George Bird	1899-1900	Prosper Henry Victor Le Roux
1874-75, 85-86, 89-90	George Poole	1901-02, 1907-08, 13-14	William Clement Greaves (Snr)
1875-76, 83-84, 91-93	Alexander Cameron (Jnr)	1903-04	William Charles McLennan
1882	George Howard	1904-05	William Herbert Gardiner
1884-85 (May)	Paul Fahey	1905-07	David McCulloch
1885, 88-89, 94-95, 1900-01	James Lecky (Jnr)	1908-09	Francis Brumby
1886-87	Walter Duff	1909-10, 16	Frank Callanan
1887-88	Frederick Poole	1910-11, 20-21	Angus Cameron
1890-91	John Alexander Gamble	1911-12, 21-22	William Brunt
1893-94, 1902-03	John Snipe	1912-13	John Lloyd
		1914-15	William Hardy

1915-16 (June)	Robert Herkes	1945	Frank Hodgson
1916-17	John Thomas O'Brien	1947-48	Harry Kirkham
1917-18	James Brisbane Wilson	1948-49, 56-57	Albert Edward Hillier Webb
1918-20	Donald MacGregor	1949 (October)	William Taylor
1922-23	Edward Simpson Hill	1950-51	George Ridgway
1923-24	Frank Wildes	1951-52	Frederick David Spottiswood
1924-25	Cyril Croskell	1952-53	Walter Leonard Mills
1925-27	David Stewart McCulloch	1953-54, 65-66	Percy Bazil Fechner
1927-28	George Randall Burhop	1955-56, 59-60, 72-73	George Flawith Knowles
1928-29, 36-37, 46-47, 54-55	William Clement Greaves (Jnr)	1958-59, 66-68, 75-76, 85-86	William Thwaites, OBE, JP
1929-30	Joseph Taylor	1960-61	Russell Ansden Smith
1930-31	George Bowden	1961-62	Henry Evans
1931-32, 41-42	Matthew Bennett	1962-63	William McLellan Greaves
1932-33	Albert Stafford	1963-64	Norman Llewellyn Brunt
1933-34	Stanley John Fairbairn	1964-65	William John Bosse
1934-35, 44-45	Harry Holloway Lloyd	1968-69, 76-77	Ernest James Marriott
1935-36, 46, 49-50, 57-58	Leslie James Cochrane	1969-70	John Gregory Dore
1937-40	Robert Campbell	1970-71	Albert McDonald Bethune
1940-41	Robert Longmuir	1971-72	Keith Maxton Lawrence
1942-44	John Thwaites	1973-74	Gordon Bousfield Harris
		1975-75, 84-85	Colin Maxwell Utber, JP

1977-78	Dudley Edwin Brierly Callinan	1986-87	John Sawyer
1978-79	Kester Herbert Kitchin	1988-89	Judith Ann Elso
1979-80	William Brunt Campbell	1989-90	Ronald White
1980-81	Graham Wood	1990-91	Ian Craig Greenaway
1981-82	Keith William Emmett	1991-92	Patrick Marshall
1982-83	William (Bill) Robert Parkin	1992-93	Peter J. Giles
1983-84, 87-88	Arthur Wren		