

# Introduction



## Mayor's Message

---

**C**apturing the social and cultural history of an area is as important as preserving the bricks and mortar that, on the surface, make up that community. It is therefore important that communities such as Cranbourne, changing so rapidly from a rural township to an outer metropolitan suburb, do not lose their rich, social backgrounds so fondly remembered.

However, whilst this history is looked upon with pride, it is essential that new members of this community are able to establish a sense of belonging by having a greater understanding of the area in which they have now chosen to make their home.

The Commonwealth Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, and the Federal Electorate of Isaacs are to be thanked for providing this funding through the Centenary of Federation Community Projects Program to the City of Casey to make the 'Hands on History' project come to life. This was one of the few projects funded that was not the building of a monument to celebrate this important anniversary in Australia's history. What has been created will be a living chronicle of the history of Cranbourne – a project that will continue to develop as people continue to share their memories.




I would like to acknowledge the support of the Casey Cardinia Library Corporation particularly Claire Turner, Local History Officer who spent a great deal of her time on this project. She has successfully shown a side of Cranbourne and its residents that risked being lost over time.

Not only will the information presented here make enjoyable reading, but I urge all those with an interest in Cranbourne to take the time to watch the video, tour the cemetery, visit the many local attractions and view the artmarkers in Cranbourne's main street.

Cr Mick Morland  
Mayor, City of Casey

# Acknowledgments

---

uch a comprehensive project requires the support and contributions of many people whose information and experiences have helped to enliven the history of the Cranbourne township. The following people, listed alphabetically, have contributed to the project by passing on information, sharing their experiences or making available photos, documents or other family memorabilia:

Peggy Allen, Robin Allison, Frank Bolch, Lotus Brady, Chas Bregazzi, Lorraine Bregazzi, Phyllis Campbell, Peter Cowe, Cranbourne Cemetery Trust, Cranbourne Primary School, Cranbourne RSL, Graham Facey, John Finning, Derry Francis, Beryl Harrison, Father Herman Hengel, Betty Johnson, Maria Jones, Ina Kelly, Joan Kelsall, Clyde Manks, Val Marriott, Rev. Ken Martin, Jean Pillar, Joan Reid, Nell Reynolds, Pam Ridgway, Ivy Savage, Doug & Ruby Smith, Anice Stammers, Pat Stanley, Sylvia Tanti, Lorraine Taylor, Lorraine Whitmore.

The 'Hands on History' Steering Committee comprising the following members: Jenny Ferguson, Cranbourne Library Branch Manager, Casey Cardinia Library Corporation; Claire Turner, Local History Officer, Casey Cardinia Library Corporation; Rosemary Mynard,

Cranbourne Shire Historical Society; Caroline Bell, City of Casey; Sue Helmut, City of Casey; Marja Park, Merinda Park Community Centre; Margaret O'Callaghan, Cranbourne Community House were all important in ensuring that the project stayed on track.

In particular, the efforts of Claire Turner, Local History Officer for Casey Cardinia Library Corporation are to be congratulated as without her, the finished products would not have been as well researched or captivating in their presentation.

Cranbourne Shire Historical Society made available their historical collection of photographs, newspapers and other information that was used in each aspect of this project.

Trinidad James, producer of the video 'Cranbourne: A Town with a History'; Big Fish Workshop for the design, production and installation of the artmarkers, and Kym Ramadge Design for the design of the history map and presentation of the information sheets.

The Finning family and Paul & Linda Spottiswood for making available a family film that formed the basis of the video.

# Index

---

<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>6 Industry</b>	<b>6.1</b>
Mayor's Message	1.2	Farming and Dairying	6.2
Acknowledgment	1.3	Mornington Farmers' Association	6.3
Index	1.4	Gravel and Sand Quarrying	6.4
Introduction	1.5	Cranbourne Market	6.5
<b>2 Cranbourne's Community</b>	<b>2.1</b>	Hotels	6.6
Cranbourne Township	2.2	Shops	6.8
Bunurong History	2.4	Medical Services	6.10
The First European Settlers	2.7	Women in Business	6.11
The Township Settlers	2.8	Post War Industry	6.13
The Women of Cranbourne's Past	2.9	<b>7 Military History</b>	<b>7.1</b>
Country Women's Association	2.11	Cranbourne and its War History	7.2
The Great Depression	2.13	Cranbourne Men Who Served in the First World War	7.3
Migrants	2.14	Avenue of Honour	7.6
Local Governance	2.16	Cranbourne Returned & Services League (RSL)	7.7
Old Shire Office	2.19	War Memorial	7.8
Cranbourne's Chairmen & Shire Presidents	2.21	The Second World War	7.9
<b>3 Families</b>	<b>3.1</b>	Army Camp	7.11
Families in Cranbourne's History	3.2	<b>8 Leisure &amp; Recreation</b>	<b>8.1</b>
Women in Families	3.3	Social Life in Cranbourne	8.2
Individual Families	3.5	Cranbourne Turf Club	8.4
<b>4 Religion</b>	<b>4.1</b>	Rifle Club	8.5
The Role of Religion in Early Settlement	4.2	Cranbourne Cricket Club	8.6
Scot's Presbyterian Church	4.4	The Melbourne Hunt Club in Cranbourne	8.7
St Agatha's Catholic Church	4.6	<b>9 Environment</b>	<b>9.1</b>
St John's Church	4.8	The Natural Environment	9.2
Ladies Guild	4.12	Royal Botanical Gardens, Cranbourne	9.4
Cemeteries in Victoria	4.14	Vegetation	9.7
Cranbourne Cemetery	4.17	Glossary	9.8
Cemetery Tour	4.19	School Plantation	9.9
<b>5 Education</b>	<b>5.1</b>	Cranbourne Meteorites	9.10
The History of Cranbourne Primary School	5.2	<b>10 Appendices</b>	<b>10.1</b>
Cranbourne's First School - Sladen Street	5.4	Further Information	10.2
The New School - South Gippsland Highway	5.5	Bibliography	10.3
Memories of Cranbourne State School No. 2068	5.7	Walk Map	
		Memories	10.6

# Introduction

---

By Claire Turner, Casey Cardinia Library Corporation



**T**he Centenary of Federation in Australia is a special time in the history of every town and suburb in the country. Almost none of us will live to celebrate the Bicentenary of Australia's Nationhood. It is a time for reflection about the way communities have developed over the hundred years since Australia officially became a nation. *Hands on History* is a project devoted to celebrating the past of Cranbourne and how this has contributed to its identity today. We have focused on how the township of Cranbourne has developed from being part of the land and culture of the Bunurong Tribe to early European settlement during the 1850s through to expansion as a suburb after the 1950s.

The move to unite the Colonies of Australia as a single nation was first officially discussed in 1846. As the nineteenth century progressed, colonies gained an increasing sense of identity and were faced with the problems of an enormous continent that had no central government. The first meeting to tackle the issue of Federation was held in 1886 in Hobart. A Federation League was formed in 1893 and planning began for a new constitution. A Referendum on the Constitutional Bill was successful in 1899 and the Bill was passed by the Imperial Parliament in July 1900. The Commonwealth of Australia was inaugurated on 1 January 1901 and the first session of Federal Parliament was opened in Melbourne on 9 May 1901.

When the district of Cranbourne was officially surveyed in 1856, the area had been occupied by European 'squatters' for nearly thirty years. The part surveyed to become a town was covered in tea tree scrub and was part of a rough track that took farmers and their stock through to Dandenong and Melbourne from the grazing land in Gippsland. This was during the decade of the gold rush and many men who had enjoyed little success on the goldfields were settling down to try their luck at farming.

Sadly, by the 1850s, there was little trace of the Bunurong people who had moved around the land and waterways of Western Port for thousands of years. A protectorate at Narre Warren was established as a mission for these people by a Government that could no longer ignore the catastrophic effect that European settlement was having on the Aboriginal population. The reserve was established with Missionary zeal by followers of a school of thought that dictated that Aboriginal people should be protected from their own culture as well as from the new settlers. The land was on the border that divided the country of the Bunurong tribe from the Wurundjeri and was selected because it was a significant place for both. Here they lived and died and attempted to survive the destruction of their culture and of the land as they knew it.

The town of Cranbourne is generally thought to have been named, along with Berwick and Lyndhurst, after a group of British Parliamentarians. It rapidly developed all the hallmarks of a 'pioneering' town, with a hotel, blacksmith, school and Presbyterian church. Many of the early families belonged to the Presbyterian faith,

which was particularly favoured by the Scots that immigrated to Australia. There was a power base of wealthy landowners, notably Alexander Patterson who had the 'St. Germain's' property on Ballarto Road, Alexander Cameron who lived at the large 'Mayfield' property on Camerons Road, and James Lecky who built 'Cranbourne House'.

With the *Roads Act 1858*, towns like Cranbourne formed District Road Boards. The legislation was designed to enable 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.

In 1868 the Cranbourne Shire Council was formed and by 1875 the grand building on the corner of Sladen Street and the South Gippsland Highway was erected as the civic centre. Federation was a festive time for all, with local government being invited to the Opening of the first Federal Parliament. Cranbourne's representative at this grand event was the Shire Secretary, Mr. A. N. Facey. Cranbourne was a very quiet country town during this period 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.

Like many rural townships, Cranbourne was not greatly developed until after the Second World War. It had its beautiful Avenue of Honour to frame the entrance from Tooradin, was renowned for its annual Cranbourne Cup Race at the Racecourse Reserve and was the headquarters of the prestigious Melbourne Hunt Club. Dairying was its staple industry, with most locals either running or working on a farm and the Mayfield Dairy was among the largest employers. Sand was also a primary industry and both the sand and dairy industries' importance for the town were symbolized by the train tracks that were installed along the highway and Cameron Street to allow the produce to be transported.

It was the housing and land shortages after the Second World War that sparked the gradual change from Cranbourne the sleepy town, to the booming urban centre that it is today. Immigrants were offered cheap blocks along the railway, where the Reverend Duff had owned land. They struggled initially with the isolation from neighbouring towns and with wet allotments and scarce building materials. Eventually, with improvements

to the highway and increased sub-division of farms, greater numbers of people came to live in Cranbourne. The resultant explosion in population caused a large shopping centre to supersede the familiar shopping strip, and the towering pine trees in the main street to be lopped to make way for the widening of the road.

There are reminders all around Cranbourne of its colourful past: the stately row of oak trees at the town entrance, the elegance of the Shire Offices as you wait at the traffic lights, and the street names like Lyall and Cameron that bear the names of the European families that first came to live in the town. We hope that you will enjoy the historical information that has been collected through this special Centenary of Federation project. We have tried to collect details about the past of Cranbourne's key features, but it is an *historical fact* that all the facts can never be recorded in their entirety or in the way that all people would like. This project is intended as a model for future historical work in Cranbourne and surrounding districts and as a means of generating further information and interest.

