

Linton and District Historical Society Inc

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# ***Society Notes***

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## **Who Do You Think You Are? Tracing Family History**



Photo: Joan Giles

**Jim Stapleton (centre)** and his family gathered in Linton at our February Society *History Night* to hear Jim tell stories about his life in Linton and beyond (details inside). Also in this issue we look at Jill Wheeler's talk at the April *History Night* about her work tracing the history of her family's journey to Linton from the cotton mills of Lancashire. At our *History Night* next month, on Monday evening 18 June, Joan and Gary Hunt will talk about their experiences of researching local and family history in England (see details p.9).

# Stories from the archives of *The Ballarat Courier*

## Changes to the law show how community values change over time

Most Australians are now probably strongly supportive of restrictions on smoking in public places, and we have become accustomed to speed restrictions in the vicinity of schools. Yet this was not always the case.

The following two stories from the *Ballarat Courier* dealing with issues that arose in the Linton district in the 1980s show how community values and attitudes can change in a relatively short period of time. The first story tells how a proposal put at a **Grenville Shire Council** meeting to stop smoking on public transport was lost by one vote.

Similarly, in 1982, the Council was advised that it was “impossible” to have a speed restriction zone in the vicinity of the school.

### Smoking Ban suggested: *Ballarat Courier*, 2 October 1981

Grenville Shire Council has declined to adopt a proposal from an Elaine man to ban smoking on rural public transport.

Mr. G. W. Aitken wrote to yesterday's council meeting suggesting that the council write to the Municipal Association of Victoria for circulation to other municipalities. However, after some discussion, council took no action.

Cr. Kaye Dunn said the proposal was a good idea. She (said) there was nothing worse than sitting on trains and buses with smokers.

Cr. R. McLean moved that no action be taken. Cr. Dunn moved an amendment that council support the proposal.

The amendment was lost narrowly. The motion was carried on the casting vote of the Shire President, Cr. T. J. Carey.



*Ballarat Courier*, 7 May 1982

The last paragraph of the “Speeding at Haddon” story flags the beginning of the development of the district’s bicycle paths.

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Now that **donations to the Society are tax deductible** (receipts issued on request), many of our members have responded generously to assist us with new projects for preserving and displaying our precious collection of artefacts, photographs and documents. If you would like to make a donation, please contact our Treasurer, Jan Cooke (5342 8554), or post your donation to the Society’s address: PO Box 41, 69 Sussex St., Linton 3360.

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# Some stories from the *Grenville Standard*

## Dangers of living in Linton

The following two stories from *The Grenville Standard* reveals some of the dangers of life in Linton in the 1890s. The first concerns a startling bolt by four horses pulling an empty wagon in Sussex Street. The second story is more sinister – a report of foul play on the diggings, suggesting that someone was trying to do away with a digger who was working his claim.

Residents of Linton living in the vicinity of Sussex street were somewhat startled by a sensational bolt which occurred early on Monday morning. Mr R. Ching, the well-known carrier, was driving an empty waggon, drawn by four powerful horses, past the shire hall, when the animals became startled at some timber lying on the side of the road, and attempted to dash away. The driver, however, succeeded in controlling his team, but a moment later, on getting down to rearrange the harness, the leaders again took fright and bolted, Mr Ching having a very narrow escape from being trampled under foot. Swerving on to the footpath close to the weighbridge, they galloped on till Mr O'Sullivan's verandah was reached, which structure, an old wooden one, was brought with a crash to the ground. Shortly afterwards one of the rear horses stumbled and fell and was completely stripped of its harness. The three remaining horses crossed the road with the waggon and continued their course down the footpath and over the bridge by Murrell's hotel, where they came to a standstill. The horse which fell was very much cut and knocked about, the harness being also a good deal damaged. The only accident to the waggon was a couple of broken shafts.

**FEBRUARY 13, 1897**

One of the most dastardly acts conceivable was committed at Happy Valley last week, when a windlass rope belonging to three miners named J. Gardiner, T. Evans, and S. Morgan, was cut half way through, evidently with the intention of precipitating one of the men down a shaft a distance of 120ft. The perpetrator of the cowardly deed must have tampered with the rope between Saturday afternoon and Monday morning, and it was only by the merest chance that the incision was discovered just as one of the men was about to be lowered into the shaft. Other parties had previously worked the claim, but payable results were not obtained until the present party commenced operations, good gold having been struck last week. The motive for the deed, which amounts to attempted murder, is attributed to jealousy. The case has been put into the hands of the police, and it is to be hoped that the offender may speedily be brought to justice.

## Mrs Wong Pow's wedding

Stories from the nineteenth century gold diggings era often refer to the presence of large numbers of Chinese on the goldfields and a legacy of this in Linton is the substantial Chinese section in the cemetery. Whilst the Chinese often lived separately from the European community, there were numerous instances of marriages between Chinese men and European women. Often these liaisons were frowned upon in polite society and the European wives were discriminated against in local communities. In Linton there were at least half a dozen such marriages of which we are aware, but the glimpses we have of these cross-cultural relationships in Linton seem eminently 'respectable.' However, the following story appeared in the *Grenville Standard*, 6 March 1897. The condescending tone of the writer and the fact that the bride is referred to as 'a Chinese widow', when in fact she was European, suggests that European women who had married Chinese men were held in rather low esteem:

An event which has been looked forward to with considerable interest by residents of Linton for some time past was celebrated on Thursday, when Mr. Wm Anderson and Mrs Wong Pow, a Chinese widow, with four children, were joined together in bonds of holy matrimony. The wedding was of a private character, the ceremony being performed by the Rev. J. S. Drummond at Carngham. Owing to the fact that no vehicles were available, the happy couple had to "foot" the journey to and from Carngham. There were no bridesmaids or best men, and it is understood that the bride "gave herself away". She wore a cream nun's veiling trimmed with ribbon and laces.

This marriage was in fact the final chapter following a family tragedy. The 'back story' is that in 1884, the bride, then Elizabeth Plover, had married a Chinese miner, Wong Pow, in Linton, and they subsequently had four children. The Linton Historical Society has records of two of the boys, Henry and William, attending Sunday School at St Paul's Church of England, Linton, in 1894. In 1896, Wong Pow died of phthisis (miners' lung disease) and was buried in the Church of England section of Linton cemetery. He was aged sixty-one and had been in

Australia approximately thirty years. Left unsupported with four children, Henry, 11, William, 7, Caroline, 5, and Victor, 3, it is not surprising that it was in Elizabeth's interests to remarry. In this case she married a European man, and her eventual fate and that of her children is unknown.

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## Large audience came to hear Jim Stapleton's talk to the Society

Over fifty people packed the Shire Offices in Linton on Monday night, February 20, at the Society's *History Night* to hear 98 year old Jim Stapleton speak about his youth spent in and around Linton and on the family property "Mulvra". The audience, which included many people who are not members of the Society and a number of Jim's extended family, were totally engaged and stimulated by Jim's witty and compelling delivery, which displayed a sharp mind and a keen memory.

### Career as a herd tester

Jim talked about how he obtained his Merit Certificate at the Linton Primary School, then furthered his education at the Ballarat Agricultural School. He had intended to go into the teaching profession but, dissuaded by the poor salary, went back to school and then sat for an exam in 1933 to become a telephone mechanic. Three thousand applicants took part and Jim was placed a credible 70<sup>th</sup> but then they only employed two men. Eventually, Jim chose to be a Herd Tester in the dairy industry. This was to take him to different areas of the State and he recounted some very amusing stories of incidents that occurred whilst he was a dairy inspector and the difficulties he encountered getting across to some dairy farmers the necessity to follow strict guidelines to ensure the town milk supply was fit for human consumption.

Tuberculosis in dairy cattle was a big problem and many herds became infected - a devastating outcome for many dairy farmers - and it was to this important work that Jim devoted himself over many years.

### Childhood in Linton

Jim remembers very fondly his early years as a boy and then a young man living in the town. During the 1930s, he was at various times, the Secretary of the Linton Football Club in 1933, Rover leader and an assistant leader of the Linton Scouts, secretary of the Agricultural Society, and a member of the Linton Fire Brigade. There were two bicycle clubs in Linton and a rifle club of which he was also member.

All of us, who were privileged to hear Jim speak will remember a man who was a community contributor and lead a rich and varied life. Thank you Jim, for coming down from Echuca to relate your most interesting and informative personal life journey.

### DVD available

The Society has made a video recording of Jim's talk, and this can be purchased for \$15 (price includes handling and postage).

The Society plans to present and record other talks from senior current and ex-Lintonians as part of a *Stories from the Elders* series in order preserve for posterity these stories of Linton's history. The next talk in this series will be given by Joan and Rod O'Beirne on **Monday 19 November, 2012**.

## Letter to the editor

6 February 2012

Let me begin by congratulating the members responsible for these publications.

How I wish I could attend the History Night on Monday, February 20. It is, of course, quite natural that I knew all the young men in the picture on the front page, although they were 10 or so years older than me, and probably that then, almost means a different generation !

Every old Lintonian who lived in the 1930 in the district, knew, for instance, Spencer Grigg. He was a little older than the others in the picture, but, he was 'a character'. He was, of course, lost to Linton when a prisoner of war in Malaya, and, I think, it seemed when that information reached Linton, that it was the end of Linton to everyone who knew him.

When I was quite young, some of the others in that picture played football for Linton, and also rode bikes in half time races around the oval. They were 'little tin gods' for 8 to 12 year olds like me who was watching.

As I write this email, I have decided I will do everything I can to get someone to drive me to Linton for that night.

Yours

Jack Fletcher.

P.S. Is the Bill Callaghan listed as a new member, the one I knew who would now be 90 plus? Maybe it is his son!

*Editor's Note:* 1. Yes, Jack did attend Jim Stapleton's talk, and 2. Yes, the new member is Bill Callaghan's son.

## Generous Donation to the Society from the Mannibadar Community's Open Gardens Day



Photo: Joan Giles

Lyn Alexander (right) is pictured presenting Society President, Jill Wheeler, with a \$500 cheque for the Society. The money was raised at the Mannibadar Open Gardens Day held last November. This donation will be put towards the development of the Society's new website.

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### Advance Notice

### **The Annual General Meeting**

**Of the Linton and District Historical Society**

**will be held on**

**Monday 17 September, 2012, 7:30 pm**

**at the Shire Offices, Sussex Street, Linton**

**The name of the guest speaker will be notified in the next issue of *Society Notes***

***Other Business to be conducted:***

- *Presentation of Annual Report by the President*
- *Presentation of Financial Report by the Treasurer*
- *Election of Committee of Management for 2012*

*In accordance with the Society's Constitution, any nomination for any position on the Committee of Management should be made in writing, signed by two members of the Society, and be received by the Secretary seven days before the Annual General Meeting.*

**All welcome. A supper will be served in the Letty Armstrong Resource Centre after the meeting**

## Who Do You Think You Are?

### From Lancashire to Linton – Explorations in Family History



The India Mill, Darwen Lancashire in operation in the nineteenth century. Note the large number of other mills in the town.

The popular SBS television series, *Who Do You Think You Are*, explores the family history of a celebrity guest. Most of these histories contain dramas, and frequently scandals, and there is usually a moment where the guest is moved to tears by some dreadful hardship suffered by an ancestor. But you do not have to be a celebrity to have an interesting family history, as was shown last month when Jill Wheeler, at a Society *History Night*, presented her family's story of their journey from the harsh life working in the cotton mills of Lancashire to the more hopeful environment of nineteenth century Linton.

#### **The Walker family**

Jill Wheeler, on her mother's side, is a descendant of three families – the Walkers, Hogans and Frasers - who all emigrated to Linton during the mid nineteenth century. In her talk, Jill concentrated on the Walkers, a Lancashire family. She began by explaining how her grandmother, Sarah Walker, told her stories of coming to Australia at eight years of age in a sailing ship in "steerage class" where the rats nibbled her toes at night when she lay trying to sleep. Sarah travelled to Australia with her parents, Israel and Sarah Walker (mother and daughter were both called Sarah). At the time, Israel's parents, Isaac and Nancy were already living in Linton, having emigrated in 1856 with their other son, William Henry. One of the questions Jill was seeking answers to was why Isaac and Nancy had left Israel behind when they went to Australia, and what had happened to Israel. (Old Testament names such as Israel and Isaac were popular amongst Methodist, or 'non-conformist' religious families at the time).



## The Walker history trail

Jill had acquired a copy of her grandmother's birth certificate when living in England in the 1970s, and it showed she was born in Darwen, Lancashire, in 1880. Her father, Isaac Walker, signed the certificate with an 'X', which indicated that he was illiterate. To piece together the family history, Jill described how she accessed a series of birth, marriage and death certificates from Australia and England, shipping records which showed dates of emigration, local newspaper stories, documents from the Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV), and UK census records for 1851, 1861, and 1871. Ancestry.com was useful for acquiring the UK records.

From this information, and stories handed down in the family, Jill discovered Israel had been left behind as a child because he was in poor health and might not have survived the arduous voyage to Australia. He lived with his grandfather in Blackburn (a cotton mill centre near Darwen) and moved to Darwen as a young man, where he married his wife, Sarah Ann Bennett.



The Queen St Mill, near Burnley, Lancashire, is now a museum, but the weaving machines work and still produce some items as souvenirs. This room in the mill was used in a scene in the 2010 film *The King's Speech*.

## Life in the Cotton Mills

In Lancashire, several nineteenth and early twentieth century cotton mills have been preserved as museums, and in some the machinery is still in working order. These are well worth a visit, and in 2011 Jill found a 'cotton creel' machine that was probably the sort Israel operated at the time of the 1861 census when, at age 11, his occupation was listed as a cotton 'creeler'. A guided tour of these old mills and museums reveal the harsh and unhealthy life of the mill workers. The women who worked as weaving loom operators suffered a high incidence of industrial deafness and throat cancer, and industrial injuries such as the loss of an eye when hit by a flying shuttle that had accidentally shot away from the loom. To cope with the high noise level in the weaving section of the mill, the women developed a method of communication called 'mee maw', which involved a mix of lip reading and sign language.

## Tragedy

Emigration saved Isaac and Nancy from this harsh life in the cotton mills, However, tragedy struck the family in Linton when their only son in Australia, William Henry Walker, aged 21, was killed when the roof collapsed at the Morey Freehold mine. Jill acquired from the PROV a copy of the inquest into the accident. It found that there was no evidence of negligence in the construction of the roof supports. However, the report revealed an added dimension to the grief experienced by the family - the supervisor on duty that day was Isaac Walker, William Henry's father. William Henry's grave is in the Linton cemetery, along with his parents Isaac and Nancy, and his brother Israel and sister-in-law Sarah (Senior).

## Vale Marie Grigg; 1921 - 1912



Society members were saddened to learn recently of the death of Marie Grigg. Known as Marie, she was born Dora Maree (spelt with a double 'e') Grigg on 21 August 1921 at *Yando* on the Geelong Rd opposite Linton Park.. This was the home of her grandparents Eugene and Mary Sandow, and she and her parents, William and Dora Grigg, lived there until Marie was about five. Her parents, then purchased a house in Adair St Linton, and named it *Gnarkeet* after the area south of Mt Bute where Dora had lived as a child when her father, Eugene, had been an overseer at Mt Bute. Eugene had come to the district as a child, and purchased *Yando* in about 1905. Mary (Marie's grandmother) was a Lewis, another old Linton family. Marie was the oldest of

four children, and the other three – Ivan, Eugene and Lyle – have all pre-deceased her.

After leaving school Marie was house keeper and companion to her mother. Dora died in 1957 and then in 1961, Marie trained as a telephone exchange operator and worked at the Linton exchange, and then at the Skipton exchange until it closed down.

In her younger years Marie enjoyed playing tennis. She tried golf but said she 'could not get the swing of it'. When the Linton Bowling Club started up, Marie joined and became an accomplished and active bowler. After retiring from bowls she kept an eye on the club from her garden gate where she spent much of each day. Marie was also a good cook, and enjoyed knitting.

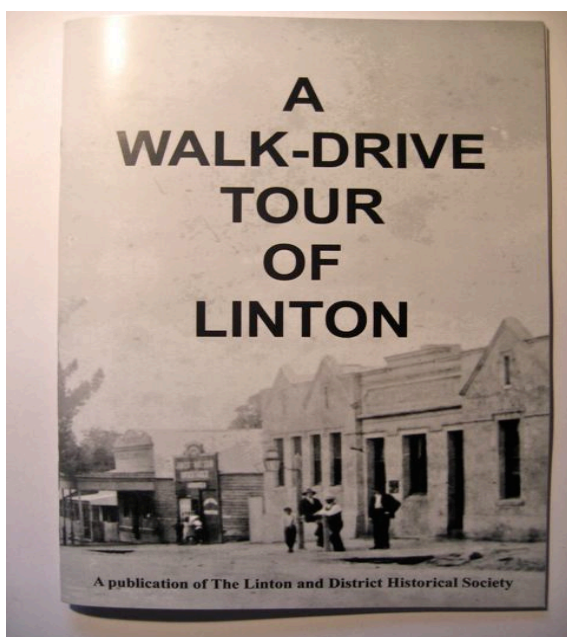
She leaves behind only a few Sandow and Grigg first cousins, but has eleven nephews and nieces, and numerous great nephews and nieces. The death of Marie sees the last of the Grigg family living in Linton after 125 years. (See the letter to the editor, p.4 for a reference to Spencer Grigg).

These biographical notes were submitted by Chris Grigg, one of Marie's nephews. Chris has donated to the Society several items of memorabilia relating to Marie's life, including her telephone operator's certificate.

**Alwyn Roberts**, another Society member, also died recently, and some biographical notes on him will be included in the next issue of *Society Notes*.

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## Walk-Drive Tour Booklet Available



The *Walk-Drive Tour of Linton* booklet was launched last year at the Society's Annual General Meeting. The booklet sets out three tours of Linton and district (two walks, and one drive tour), with explanations of places of historic interest and many photographs.

The booklet is selling well and is available from the Post Office, the Take Away, Susie's on Sussex and the Historical Society. If you cannot get to one of these outlets, **you can order by writing to the Secretary (Town Walk Book), Linton & District Historical Society, PO Box 41 Linton 3360, enclosing \$7 for purchase and postage.**



## History Night Monday 18 June:

### Joan and Gary Hunt: Researching Local and Family History in England

Our next History Night for the year will be held on Monday 18 June, 2012 at the Letty Armstrong Resource Centre, Sussex St, Linton, 7.30 pm.



Our guest speakers 'on location'

Well known local historian, Joan Hunt, and her husband Gary will be our guest speakers at this History Night. They are members of the Society and have just returned from living in England for 18 months. They will share with us their experiences of researching family history in that country. The talk will be supported by some glorious photographs taken by Gary, and there will be plenty of opportunity for discussion and questions.

Supper will be served at the end of the evening.

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## A Word from the President

Greetings to you all, and particularly to our new members! We hope you enjoy your first *Society Notes*.

In February the Society applied for a **Golden Plains Shire Community Grant** for a project we've entitled 'Preserving Linton's Historical Archives.' We have asked for \$1754 to upgrade the electrical work at the Letty Armstrong Resource Centre, and to provide acid-free storage materials for some of our archives. Our matched contribution would be our in-kind labour plus the cost of the new bookshelves that will house our paper archives away from dampness at the Centre.

Readers of this column will know that maintenance of the two Shire buildings that house our archival collections has been a Society concern for some time. While we wait for the official results of Shire inspections and reports to Council, a Community grant would go some way towards securing our archives away from damp and preventing their loss through fire damage. We will not find out the outcome of our application until July 2012.

We are also awaiting the outcome of **our application for a Local History Grant** (through the Public Record Office of Victoria), which, if successful, would enable us to produce another book about Linton's history using some more of our photograph collection. We are due to hear the result by the end of this month.

Meanwhile, we have had two successful **History Nights** in February and April (see reports elsewhere in this edition), and three busy Open Days in February, March and April. We are in great **need of volunteers for our Open Days** – the same five members carry the load here – so if you could spare three hours on the second Sunday of the month anytime, please put your hand up to help out. There would always be someone more experienced working with you, so you'd not be thrown to the wolves! It's a great way to discover what we have in our collection.

Work continues by our web designer on **our website**, which we hope will be completed by the end of this month.

We continue to attend to **requests for research and information** from members and non-members and from other organisations in Linton (see separate Research Report).

On 29 April the Society had a successful **book sale** as part of a wider fundraiser conducted by Linton State School. Thanks to members Joan Giles, Alan Giles and Warwick Madden for their hard work in preparing and conducting this fundraiser for us, and to all those who bought books!



Society Members Alan Giles and Warwick Madden offering bargains for discerning book purchasers.

Photo: Joan Giles

Over the last two months we have provided historical information and photos to the architect for the **Linton Community Precinct** (where the Rail Trail meets the Glenelg Highway) for the interpretive boards that will be part of this project. These will cover various aspects of Linton's history, for example, the gold rush, civic development, the Linton family, the Chinese settlers, etc. Visitors who stop at this spot in Linton, will be able to learn something of the town's history while they pause for a rest, and this might also encourage them to explore a bit more of the town.

On a sunny April Saturday a group of hardy members conducted a **working bee** in the garden around our Sussex St premises. Although member Kath Blackwell has maintained this garden for many years, she now needs assistance. We are in urgent need of volunteers to help her, so if anyone is interested and able, could they please let us know? Thanks meanwhile to Kath for her ongoing work, and to Chris Grigg, Jenny Stuart, and the Cookes for their extra hands (and machines) on the day.

The Society laid a wreath at the war memorial as a part of **Anzac Day** commemorations in Linton on the 24 April, which were organised as they have traditionally been by the Linton State School. Thank you to member Deirdre Nicol for arranging and laying our wreath.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our **next History Night on 18 June** when there will be another presentation on the theme of family and local history research, this time by Joan and Gary Hunt, recently returned from the UK and loaded up with wonderful photographs and lots of first-hand research information.

Jill Wheeler, May 2012





The Society's wreath (centre) at the Linton War Memorial on Anzac Day.

Photo: Joan Giles

## Recent Research Requests

Since February, the following research requests have been dealt with:

**Meyer family** – Andrew Meyer requested any information we might have on his ancestors who lived in Linton in the 1860s. We were able to provide a copy of an inquest into the death of a Meyers child in 1867, and other advice about where to seek further information.

**Robert Grenville Smith** – Emma Richardson, visiting from the UK, requested information about her grandfather, born 1908 in Happy Valley, and other family members in Linton. Copies of our family files on the Smith family were scanned to disc and sent by post.

**Chinese in Linton** – Shirley Doon requested information on the Chinese community in Linton in general and in particular Chinese men who married Australian women. Information provided from our files.

**Linton Football** – a request from Michael O'Beirne for any photographs and memorabilia from past football events in Linton. These were eventually loaned for a display at a local gathering on 27 April to commemorate the anniversary of the 1962 Premiership.

**Furniss family** – Wendy Furniss emailed wanting information on the Furniss family in Linton and Berringa district. We had limited information, but gave advice about where to get more.

**Brown George** – Kevin Weston requesting information on this family who lived in Linton in the 1870s. We had little information but offered advice on where to seek further.

**The Society charges a \$20 fee for detailed research, plus fees for copies of photographs and other documents.**



# the Bulletin board

## The Society will be having a mid-winter break during the months of July and August

- **Next Open Days** – Sundays 13 May and 10 June. After the winter break, the next Open Day will be Sunday 9 September. **Please Note the new opening times – formerly from 1:00 – 4:00 pm, but now 2:00 – 5:00 pm.**
- **Monday 18 June** is our next **History Night – Joan and Gary Hunt speaking on researching local and family history in England** (see details on page 9).
- **Monday 17 September. Advance notice Annual General Meeting –see details on page 5**  
**History Nights commence at 7:30 in the Letty Armstrong Resource Centre** Join us to hear the speakers, join in the discussion and share the supper.
- **Society Notes is now a quarterly publication. The next issue will be August/September.**

**Welcome to new members:** We would like to welcome new members who have recently joined the Society: Sue Collins, Rae Hart, Phyllis O'Beirne, Karen Ronan, Maureen Stapleton.

## Society contacts:

*President, Research Officer, Grants Officer:* **Jill Wheeler** (5344 7386; 0439 895 939); email: jillianleawheeler@gmail.com

*Vice President:* **Alan Giles**

*Treasurer:* **Jan Cooke** (5342 8554)

*Secretary (Correspondence):* **Deirdre Nicol** (5340 3507)

*Membership/Subscriptions:* **Joan Giles** (5344 7424)

*Editor Society Notes:* **Drew Hopkins** (5344 7386; 0439 895 007); email: drewhopkins47@gmail.com

*Photographic collection:* **Warwick Madden** (0457 025 353)

**Society Address: PO Box 41, 69 Sussex St., Linton 3360.**

**(Nelson Bros. Undertakers building, but now the Letty Armstrong Resource Centre)**

**Society Notes contributors and helpers:** Jan Cooke, Susie Cooke, Alan Giles, Joan Giles, Deirdre Nicol, Jenny Stuart, Jill Wheeler.

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