

Granny's Grave buried in bureaucracy



Despite promises of greater recognition for the 'Granny' behind Granny's grave – and the need for restoration – the site remains unchanged and falling into further disrepair.

OPINION

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] T
[/dropcap]here are not a lot of memorials to women in Warrnambool: in fact compared to the ovals, parks, plaques, sculptures, plinths and pioneer boards that have been devoted to civic-minded and influential men, there is barely anything at all.

The historic Warrnambool Pioneer Board appears to have set the standard and has become as famous for its omissions as its inclusions.

Put together in 1907, the 3m x 2m board features 204 individual photographs of Warrnambool's pioneers and not one of them is a woman. In an almost humorous twist, the board itself was assembled and illustrated by a woman, **Lillian Foyle**, but nobody remembers her name compared to those who feature in the circular frames.

You would think that more than 100 years on things might have changed considerably, but it appears not.

I am happy to stand corrected, but the only high-profile monuments to women that come to my mind easily are the contemporary Val Bertrand Stadium in west Warrnambool and the 110-year-old Granny's Grave in the sand dunes off the bike/walking track in east Warrnambool.

And the Granny's Grave site is looking increasingly worse for wear.



The Warrnambool Pioneers' Board, now displayed at Warrnambool's History House, was made in 1907 and does not feature a single woman. Image: [Warrnambool and District Historical Society](#).

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"]D[/dropcap]espite being passed by thousands of people every year, including tourists [who are encouraged to visit the grave](#), the monument is covered in rust stains, the paintwork is peeling and chipped, the metal surround is completely out of character with the grave, and the site is surrounded by weeds.

There is also no interpretive plaque or information about "Granny", other than the few – and as it turns out, incorrect – lines etched into the basalt headstone, even though the

Warrnambool City Council announced earlier this year that a plaque would be in place by the end of June.

It is now the middle of October, and I have become tired of asking the council when the plaque might be coming and no doubt they have tired of me too.

Bluestone wrote earlier this year about [the fascinating story behind the "Granny"](#) who lies in Granny's Grave – **Agnes Ruttleton** – and how she has come to represent all of the faceless and nameless women who were among the very first to come to a scrap of a town called Warrnambool in the hope of a better life.

Agnes was never a rich woman, and she died in poverty at the age of 60 in 1848, but there was something about her indefatigable, pioneering spirit that more successful and wealthy citizens like **Richard Osburne** thought was worth commemorating. He lobbied for years to have the approximate site of her burial marked by an official grave.

The council knows this is a special site, but the wheels turn extremely slowly when it comes to preserving key elements of our past.



A council report from 2008 first raised the need for significant restoration on the high-profile site, but only the handrail has been replaced.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] A [/dropcap] 2008 management report into the city's public art and cultural assets concluded way back then that Granny's Grave needed "significant restoration", including replacing the rusted handrail, ongoing weeding and, with the help of expert advice, cleaning the stone surface, removing the rust stains and re-patching and re-coating the concrete as required.

The handrail has been replaced, but that's where work has stopped.

I wonder if the council – and us, as residents – would be so accepting of the situation if the memorial marked a returned soldier, a famous footballer, or a founding father of the town?

The council recently voted to apply heritage planning controls over the Granny's Grave site and I was slightly stunned that it hadn't already been covered.

Councillor Jacinta Ermacora [summed it up when she said the heritage protection process](#) not only for Granny's Grave, but for dozens of other sites around Warrnambool had "taken far too long". Given the process began in 1983 – when the council first realised its heritage controls were hopelessly out of date – Cr Ermacora is being generous.

Why is it like this?

Why does it take so long for any action to be taken on preserving our heritage and, when it is, it is often half-finished and then abandoned?

It appears that we are so focussed on the "now" that we have lost sight of preserving the characters and essence of our past.

Agnes is certainly a rare character from our past who deserves her proper place in our story.



Meanwhile, in Portland, the council is adding contemporary monuments to key women from the city's past, including this seat in honour of suffragette Vida Goldstein by local artist Carmel Wallace.

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New book: Warrnambool – This is home



Me – Carol Altmann – with my self-published tribute to my hometown of Warrnambool that will be launched on August 19.

[box] “Warrnambool – This is home” is limited to 500 signed and numbered copies: \$30 plus \$8 flat postage anywhere in Australia. You can [order a book direct from the author by direct deposit or Paypal](#). Books are also available from [Warrnambool Books](#), Fairy St. [/box]

[dropcap style="color: #a5cecd;"] W [/dropcap]hen I first returned to live in my hometown of Warrnambool in early 2013 after being away for more than 20 years, I had a new appreciation for the ties that bind people from this seaside

city.

Despite Warrnambool now being a place of 32,000 people, we all feel like we know each other and, if we don't, we spend a few minutes playing what one friend described to me as "the game".

This is where you ask each other what school you went to, or the names of your parents/brothers/sisters, or if you knew such-and-such and – usually – within no more than four or five moves, "bingo!" you have made a connection.

But it is also more than that.

It is the environment that also connects us: the wild ocean, the bent trees, the Norfolk pines, the whales, the restless wind...

And it is even more than that.

It is the iconic people and places that are so familiar to us and that we remember so fondly, even nostalgically, as we all age and they start to slip away. Names like Swintons, Kermonds, Macks Snacks, Ryan's Removals, The Savoy, Rauert's shoe store, Politis fish and chips, the Matera Brothers and on it goes.

I chose 30 of these icons to photograph and write briefly (snapshots) about – I could have chosen many more – as a small collection of some of the places and faces that connect us as being "from Warrnambool", even if we live many miles away.



Warrnambool identities: John, Maroulla and Peter Sycopoulis in front of their Kepler St family home. The book is dedicated to Maroulla, who passed away earlier this year.

[dropcap style="color: #a5cecd;"] A [/dropcap]s the book unfolded, I felt an increasing sense of urgency to capture these special places and faces before it was too late, because there is no doubt Warrnambool is facing unprecedented challenges that are seeing many businesses close and not replaced by others.

In the 16 months since I started this book, the Savoy has closed, the Criterion Hotel building has been pulled down and Lucas Bros butchers was sold out of the family. Just this week it was announced that Capricorn Records would come to an end next month after 35 years.

Warrnambool is changing and, as with any change, there is both an anticipation about what might come and a sadness about what has been lost.

This book is my attempt to preserve some of our shared and precious past.

As I say in the introduction: "Whether you live in Warrnambool, or you simply carry it in your heart, this is a tribute to the place by the sea that no matter how widely we travel, we will always call home".

* * *

***Warrnambool – This is home* features the following:** Swinton's Supermarket (Val Grundy/Dot Grauer); Lucas Bros Butchers (Ken Lucas); Materia Bros (Mario, Paul and Mark Materia); the Sycopoulis family home (John, Maroulla and Peter Sycopoulis); Kermond's Snack Bar (Rob and Bill Kermond); Mack's Snacks (Graeme, Keith and Paul McLeod); Savoy Restaurant (Alan Tampion); Rauert's Shoe Store (Ron and Peter Rauert); The Bowl (Lucas Reid and Andrea Occhipinti); Politis Seafood (Helen, George and Chris Politis); Robert Ulmann whale mural (Justy Ulmann); Warrnambool Surf Lifesaving Club (Lisa Logan (Cole), Ben Logan, Ron Cole); The Warrnambool Standard (Peter Collins and Peter Fletcher); The Warrnambool Woollen Mill site (Mary Jackson); Chittick's Bakery (Ian Robb and John Chittick); Capitol Cinema (Ivan Berndt); Fletcher Jones Gardens (Lex Caldwell); The Quarry/ art collectives (Claire Drylie) Ryan's Removals (Frank and Graeme Ryan); 3YB radio (Steve Welsh and Lyndsay Hill); W'bool Grand Annual Steeplechase (Brian McIver); W'bool Aquarium (Donna Krebs (Livingston)); Timor St Newsagency (Brian Mills); Bojangles Pizza (Simon Mugavin); Isles General Store (Ken Isles); McNeil's BP Service Station (Noel McNeil); the War Memorial Angel; T&G clocktower (Peter Hogg); The Criterion Hotel.

[box type="bio"] ***Warrnambool – This is home* will be limited to 500 numbered and signed editions. If you would like to order a copy (\$30 plus \$8 flat postage if required) from Bluestone Magazine, [you can do so here](#). Books are also on sale at [Warrnambool Books](#).** [/box]

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Hunt on for ex-staff of Lady Bay Hotel



The black tie bouncers at Warrnambool's former Lady Bay hotel in the early 1990s. Nicole Lane (the only woman pictured!) is organising a staff reunion. Image courtesy of Nicole Lane.

If you ever lived in Warrnambool at any time up until around 2001, then these three words will mean something to you: **Lady Bay Hotel**.

The former Lady Bay Hotel, as opposed to the multi-storey resort that now stands in its place at the end of Pertobe Road, was one of the city's most famous – and infamous – watering holes until it was demolished in 2001.

Moves are afoot to bring former workers at the Lady Bay Hotel back together for a reunion, including bar staff, kitchen staff, cleaners, managers and the unforgettable bouncers who at one point dressed in black tie.

The hotel was originally called the Bay View Hotel from 1890 until 1954, when it was refurbished, enlarged and renamed the Lady Bay Hotel, but quickly became known simply as "The Bay".

While the original hotel no doubt had its share of wild times, the arrival of rock and roll in the 1960s and 70s saw The Bay

transformed into a place for serious partying to some of Australia's best bands: Cold Chisel, Midnight Oil, The Angels, Paul Kelly and the Coloured Girls, Icehouse, Australian Crawl, Hoodoo Gurus...and many more.



The Bay, as it used to be known, became one of Warrnambool's most infamous watering holes.

An attached disco was also one of the most popular in town, where people would flock in the 1980s to drink fluffy ducks and tequila sunrises and dance to the Bee Gees until the small hours.

No wonder the staff who kept all of this unbridled energy, sexual tension and youthful exuberance under control shared a special bond.

One of the Bay's few female bouncers, **Nicole Lane**, of Warrnambool, is the driving force behind the idea of a reunion

and said she was inspired to try and pull together an event after one of the hotel's most well-loved bouncers, **Bob Kelly**, passed away recently.

"When Bob passed away it made me think about how we are all getting older and how it would be great to try and get some of the old crew together to talk about old times," Nicole said.

Nicole was 22 when she started "bouncing" at the hotel. She was given a chance to try her skills after the partner of another famous Lady Bay bouncer, **Big Mal**, left the job and the bouncing staff needed another woman.

"I ended up working as a bouncer at lots of places, but everyone has a memory of the Lady Bay," Nicole said.

"Years later I was bouncing in a bar in Killarney, Ireland, and this woman points at me and says, 'Oh no! It's the bouncer from the Lady Bay!'" she laughed.



A group shot in the maritime themed room at the Lady Bay hotel with former managers Jim and Denise Ryan. Image courtesy of Nicole Lane.

A “Back to the Bay” celebration was held shortly before the original Lady Bay Hotel was pulled down, but that was mainly for former patrons. This reunion is specifically aimed at former staff.

“It is really in its first stages and I am not sure how much interest we will get,” Nicole said.

“We could end up with only a few and catch up over a cup of tea,” she laughed.

Some how, that seems unlikely.



Looking back at the Lady Bay Hotel from Pickering Point. The FJ silver ball can be seen on the skyline. Image courtesy of Nicole Lane.

[box] If you would like to know more about the Lady Bay Hotel staff reunion, contact Nicole at nic.nax@live.com or [join the Facebook group](#).[/box]



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Lost history finds loyal following



The Warrnambool Foreshore Caravan Park in the days before Winnebagos were invented. Image: Lost Warrnambool.

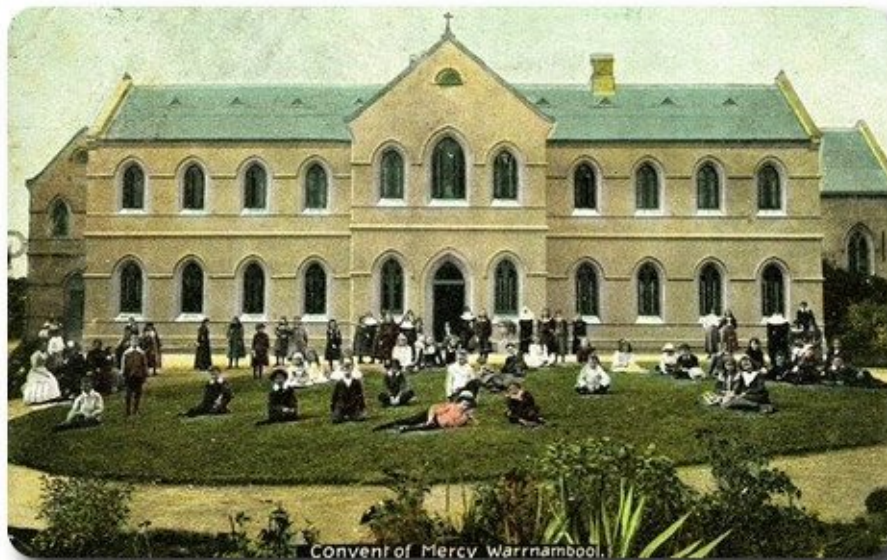
By Carol Altmann

Preserving and, just as importantly, *sharing* our history is no longer only the preserve of museums, academics and a few dedicated souls prepared to pore over faded documents.

Social media has created a new kid on the old block and that is the so-called “Lost” movement, where Facebook sites have been set up for a particular city or town and people are invited to share their photographs and memories.

The Lost Melbourne Facebook page, for example, has more than 41,000 followers who contribute and comment on photographs that capture a past life in Victoria’s capitol city.

Closer to home, we are fortunate to have a [Lost Warrnambool Facebook page](#) that has almost 3000 followers who are united in their love of nostalgia.



Do you recognise this? The Warrnambool
“Convent of Mercy”. Image: Lost Warrnambool.

The page is maintained, monitored and updated by a Warrnambool man whom we won't name here, because he doesn't name himself on the page, mainly because the page is not about him.

It is about us: where we come from, who we are, how we have grown, what has changed, what hasn't.

It is a social forum, a fun forum, like a giant reunion where we share our bond to this city by the sea.

But it also involves a lot of hard work and Lost Warrnambool shares photographs that he has either purchased, been given, or been sent – and anyone who writes a blog or maintains a Facebook page knows that this all takes time.

Lost Warrnambool is creating and maintaining an important social record and opening up our history for us all to enjoy, so, for this, we consider Lost Warrnambool to be a Quiet Hero. Well done, Lost Warrnambool.

Please visit [the Lost Warrnambool Facebook Page](#) and spread the word about this wonderful site.

[box] The founder of Lost Warrnambool will receive a \$20

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THE WARRNAMBOOL PLANNING AND HERITAGE GROUP:

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] R
[/dropcap] ecommendations to council:

i) Council and Heritage Victoria to conduct a survey of the Fletcher Jones site in Warrnambool to consider the current condition and integrity of its state heritage listed aspects. The survey should re-examine what remains of the most significant aspects of the site to the local community and to the state. We would like to see Heritage Victoria and Council take a proactive role with the owner (present or future) to find a solution for renewal of this site and a way to share the stories attached to this site. Examples of best practice and processes for renewal of similar sites could be used to inspire recommendations for options and incentives to ensure

it has a viable, vibrant future.

ii). Council and Heritage Victoria to provide funds for a current structural assessment of the Fletcher Jones water tower (locally called the Silver Ball) with a view to determining a schedule of repair and maintenance works (and their cost) to ensure this state heritage listed structure is safe and viable for the next 50 years.

iii). Council and Heritage Victoria work with the Jones family to develop a social history project that tells the Fletcher Jones story and connection in Warrnambool.

The Warrnambool City Council's response (as listed 9/12/13):

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] A [/dropcap] number of buildings and features within the site are listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) as significant.

Council is interested in working with the current landowner, or any future landowner, to ensure that significant elements of the site are properly protected and managed. Council is also interested in ensuring that any future redevelopment of the site involves renewal and moves away from its historical manufacturing past.

A structural assessment of the former water tower (silver ball) was undertaken in 2004. The assessment identified rectification works including replacement of hold down bolts on the south-western column, and removal of ladder and water pipe. The assessment also recommended a painting program to protect the tower from further corrosion.

In 2010, the bolts were replaced, and the water pipe and ladder were removed. It is unknown whether the painting program has been implemented.

Council officers will continue to work with the current

landowner, or any future landowner, with a view to update the 2004 structural report and identify any further matters that may need addressing.

The former Fletcher Jones factory is clearly of social significance to Warrnambool and the State of Victoria. There will many people within the community who have strong links to this site. It is becoming increasingly important that these stories are captured and shared.

Council officers will investigate funding opportunities to undertake a social history of the site (involving the Jones Family, former factory workers and members of the community). These stories will assist in the preservation of important elements of the site and in any future redevelopment of the site.

* * *