

# Council tackles Gong collapse risk with **WALL WORKS**



**In a YouTube video outlining the Gong wall project, City of Ballarat Executive Manager, Infrastructure, Vaughn Notting, said late last year that if works were not carried out to reinforce the wall of Buninyong's Gong reservoir that "211 persons would be at risk" downstream should the wall give way.**

The Gong wall forms part of the Cornish Street roadway which presently separates the Gong from the lower Gardens area where once the town's swimming pool was fed from the spring waters from the Gong area.

The wall reinforcement project follows observations over recent months that there has been seepage through the wall. The proposed works consist of construction of a filter layer, raising the dam wall by some 500mm, construction of a rock embankment, and upgrading the outlet to the dam.

All trees on the dam wall, mostly willow and strawberry trees, will be removed and be replaced by smaller shrubs as part of the works. Some trees on the lower side of Cornish Street will also be removed.

Community feedback on the Gong works has been positive about Council's tackling of the problem. Interesting suggestions made on Council's *my say* page have included the closing of Cornish Street across the dam wall to vehicles and converting it into a bicycle/pedestrian pathway, or reducing traffic on the wall to one way and providing better pedestrian or observation facilities and spaces.

President of the Friends of Buninyong Botanic Gardens Group **Roger Permezel** has lobbied for the works to be included in a master plan for the whole gardens area.

*Above: Looking towards the Gong wall.*

*Below: Council's Vaughn Notting (centre) discusses the coming works with (Left) Roger Permezel and Mayor Ben Taylor.*





# First time at Maryborough bike challenge but **STUDENT TEAMS HOT**

**It may not be the Grand Prix, but what it lacks in noise and speed the Human-Powered Vehicle (HPV) Challenge at Maryborough makes up in the determination, grit, expertise and endurance of the schoolchildren involved!**

For the two teams of streamlined bicycle-riders from Buninyong Primary School certainly gave a Grand Prix performance – and, before a crowd of some 30,000 spectators, the enthusiasm showed on their faces.

## First time

While they did not win in their first year, the school's two teams came a creditable 41st and 53rd out of nearly a hundred school teams. And it was achieved in an environmentally-friendly manner, since these HPVs run on zero emissions. The big prize, however, was the challenge of getting through the pre-race assessments as well as the long-distance race.

The twelve members of each primary school team were put through their paces even before hitting the street circuit. Team members had to make a Skills Presentation detailing their training regime, their nutrition strategy, their sponsorships, their knowledge of the bike itself and particularly about safety on the track.



Then, in front of different judges, the team members discussed design and construction of the bikes before facing the scrutineers who checked the functionality of the team's bike. The maintenance and repairs of these bicycles was handled by the teachers and **Matt** at Cyclescape in Ballarat.

At secondary school level team members can design and construct their HPVs thus adding significantly to their skill's base.

## Outcomes

But what will come out of this Challenge? Moving on to secondary school, these same children might be mathematically measuring the stress loads on bicycle frames as they build their own Challenge bicycles. Or at fifteen years they might be designing new sophisticated vehicle braking systems. Or maybe they could develop a passenger compartment for everyday cars that matches the safety cockpit that enabled Formula One driver Alonzo to simply walk away from his catastrophic crash at F1 speed.

With the start-up expertise, skills and experience gained in this Challenge event, it would seem that these schoolchildren can potentially do anything that they put their minds to!

– Russell Luckock

*Above: Organisers Aaron Coulter and Lou Marr were trackside with Zoe Flamsteed who was holding the instruction board for riders as they flashed past. Lou's father has been involved in most of the 28 years since the Challenge started.*

*Opposite: Having crossed the finishing line a weary Harry Frequin still manages a smile while Team member Isabelle Channon checks the bike after the gruelling 14 hour endurance race for the eight-rider teams.*



# Memorials get facelift

## from working bee and Council

One of the village's most important and perhaps its most unseen and neglected memorial – the plaques commemorating the place where gold was discovered in the district in 1851 – has received a major face lift recently from a working bee of eight members of the BDCA and the Historical Society.

Located along Hiscock Gully Road, some 400 metres from the Midland Highway, are two large boulders each with a plaque recording the historical importance of the site.

### Lost cows

One plaque commemorates the discovery of gold there in August 1851 by a group including the village blacksmith **Thomas Hiscock** and his young son, and brothers **John** and **Edwin Thomas**. They had been looking for stray cows in the area when they stumbled upon a small nugget of gold.

The other plaque marks the site of the major underground *Imperial Quartz Mine* which operated close by between 1857 and 1914.

For many years, the site of the two plaques on the western side of Hiscock Gully Road had become overgrown and covered in leaves, weeds and dust.

### Community action

Co-ordinated by **Linda Zibell** and working to a plan prepared by former City Council engineer, **Robert Elshaug** (now BDCA



Community group members take a break from the work on the memorials (L to R) Malcolm Garnett, Anne Beggs-Sunter, Robert Elshaug, Gayle Adams, Jan Schlunke, Linda Zibell and Kevin Zibell.

Treasurer), a working bee of community members in November cleared and levelled the site, and laid a bed of granite sand bordered by an edging of sandstone. An adjoining area where cars can now safely pull off the road to access to the site was also prepared.

The project was assisted by a generous donation of the sand and rocks by **Nigel Hughes**, owner of the nearby *Buninyong Garden & Rural Supplies* business. Council loaned roadworks signage and high-vis jackets for the working bee.

### Other works

In other related improvements to the history there, the 1897 stone obelisk located at the corner of Hiscock Gully Road and the Midland Highway has had its gold lettering

restored by Council, and the large brown roadside signage on the highway pointing to the site of the plaques has been repaired.

Earlier this year a joint approach to Council by the BDCA and the Historical Society resulted in the erection of significant new interpretative signage adjacent to the plaques.

President of the BDCA, **Gayle Adams**, said these works were an example of community groups, Council and local businesses working together on a project which, while not major or very costly, greatly improved an important element of local heritage.

She said great assistance had been given by Council's Parks and Gardens Coordinator **Daryl Wallis**.

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# Mount McCain idea was dumb

**Pre-Christmas time is often referred to as the “silly season”. That certainly was the case on December 12 last when *The Courier* on-line carried a story that set off fireworks in Buninyong a little earlier than expected.**

The fun started a few days later, with a text message to *The News* from a local business owner which included a copy of *The Courier* article headed *Mt Buninyong Becomes Mt McCain for Elite Races*.

## Bright idea

The story reported that *McCain's Foods* had agreed to sponsor various community events associated with the 2020 National Road Cycling Championships. But apparently so excited with this was the CEO of Cycling Australia, **Steve Drake**, that he agreed that Mt Buninyong should be re-named Mt McCain “for the duration of the events.”

Had it been 1 April instead of 12 December that bright idea may have raised a smile. Instead it started a flurry of phone calls from *The News*' editor to the City of Ballarat's Recreation Manager **Mark Bruty** (“don't know anything about it”), to **Roger Permezel** Buninyong's representative on the event's planning committee (“it's never been discussed”), and to Mayor **Ben Taylor** (“they can't be serious!”).

Then a McCain's media release confirmed the company's involvement with the community events, many of which will be in Buninyong, and that “the Mt Buninyong

start/finish line for the elite events will be renamed Mt McCain for the event.” A Federation University press release also referred to the re-titling of the iconic mountain for the major cycling races here.

After hearing of the emerging furore in the late afternoon, BDCA President **Gayle Adams** phoned Mayor Ben Taylor to give him a full briefing on what was underway, indicating that locals would be furious. She said the proposal was very disappointing particularly given that, after some early opposition, most of the community now supports the race.

Even though it was then 7.00pm the Mayor agreed to immediately call City of Ballarat CEO **Justine Linley** suggesting she contact Cycling Australia to discuss the matter.

## Action

By 9.30pm on that same night, Justine Linley had responded by an email headed *Buninyong is and always will be Buninyong*. After stating Council's “wholehearted rejection” of the proposal to rename the mountain, the CEO went on to say

*“The City of Ballarat together with you, the Community Association, businesses and community has worked hard to build the recognition and brand of Buninyong... we would never give that up. Dare I say, it would be a deal breaker. We have already stated our disappointment to Cycling Australia, but I will seek an apology/retraction from them as well.”*

Well done Ben and Justine, and may Mount McCain rest in peace!!!

## Buninyong & district COMMUNITY NEWS

This publication is a community project of the Buninyong & District Community Association (BDCA) supported by the Buninyong Community Bank.

Published monthly

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All contributions (copy, letters, photographs or advertising) must be submitted **before the twelfth of each month to [buninyongnews@gmail.com](mailto:buninyongnews@gmail.com)**. Enquiries to 5341 2844.

Copy should not exceed 400 words and a maximum of two photographs per item may be submitted. Material may be edited because of space, style, or clarity, or for legal reasons.

The name and address of the person submitting any material must be provided (address not for publication).

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Printed by Baxter and Stubbs, Ballarat.

**Available online in full colour at:**  
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# Expo on 23 February

## Care Dare to change

**With the devastating effects of climate change so real and now so frighteningly evident, this community is no longer going to stick with a 'business as usual' attitude. It's definitely time to make the change but where do you start? Right here in Buninyong!**

The *Smart Building and Living Expo* is now in its seventh year and the largest event of its kind in Western Victoria. This year an even bigger attendance is anticipated with the focus on climate change – *Care Dare to Change*.

### Park venue

The Expo will be held at Royal Park in Buninyong on 23 February 2020, 10am - 3.30pm and is an established feature of Australia's *Sustainable Living Festival*.

As always, the 'festival' approach will showcase local sustainable building and lifestyle services.

There will be something for everyone from worms to windows, cars to construction, fixing to food!

Stallholders will be showing off lifestyle and food choices. The Grampians Central West Waste and Resource Recovery Group *Can Do Community Hall* will be back with lots



of tips on waste, repairing and recycling. The Buninyong Primary School will show off their solar boats, *Energy Breakthrough* car and host children's activities.

### Transport

For those interested in sustainable transport come along to see the biggest electric car display outside Melbourne and a great range of electric bikes.

This event provides an opportunity to come and talk to some of the best local professionals, producers and community groups.

The power of consumers can certainly drive change so come and join in to help lead the way for a better future!

If you'd like to register a business or find out more, contact **Andrea Mason** on 0427 338 482 or check out [smartbuildingandlivingexpo.com.au](http://smartbuildingandlivingexpo.com.au) or Facebook: [@buninyongsustainability](https://www.facebook.com/buninyongsustainability)

## streettalk

**LAWBREAKERS** are not renowned for being the sharpest tools in the shed. But one seemed particularly dumb recently when he decided to smash the rear window of a ute parked in Scott Street – owned by local policeman Sgt **Peter Anderson** who was not impressed!

**IT TAKES A LONG TIME** to get action out here on some Council projects. But now the secret is out. Recently a garbage truck driver managed to drop a wheel off the side of the road in Davey Street. Bingo! A team of workers was out there within days installing kerb and channelling – to the dismay of some residents – along the strip where the garbo came to grief. Cost unknown but significant!

**TICKET** sellers for Rotary's charity car raffle at the BP servo recently were intrigued by that buyer who, when asked to write a name and contact details on the ticket stub, wrote *Somebody Else* followed by a phone number. He explained that *Somebody Else* always wins the raffles he goes in.

**MOVING SCENES** at the local cemetery recently at the funeral of a much-loved young CFA volunteer giant **Adrian Bleicher**. Following the Peter Tobin hearse to and into the cemetery was a procession of CFA trucks whose drivers saluted the burial of their mate with horns, lights and sirens.

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# Toys and gifts help to many

**For the fourth consecutive year, the people of Buninyong and surrounding areas have generously donated toys and food to the Ballarat Salvation Army's Christmas Appeal and this year, they have surpassed themselves.**

Anyone walking past the windows of the Buninyong Community Bank up to the 18 December collection day would have seen the growing pile of gifts inside the front windows and guessed that Santa Claus had come down the chimney early!

The collection was coordinated by **Narelle Tatt**, the bank's Customer Relationship Officer who was delighted with this year's response. She said that "we have been overwhelmed with gifts and are so pleased and encouraged that Buninyong and other nearby townships have really got involved

in helping less fortunate families at this special time."

"This year, as requested, we have received more presents suitable for teenagers, and gift vouchers which we can give to parents so that they can buy something that will suit their child's particular interest or hobby," Narelle said.

The presents were collected by volunteers from the Ballarat Salvation Army and taken to a central pool from where they were distributed in and around the Ballarat area.



The volunteers said that the gifts "would be appreciated enormously".

– Rita Russell

# 500 nativity scenes here

**Fiona Tonkin and helpers have been Making a Scene at Christmas for about seven years. They have travelled all over western Victoria and have visited Ballarat several times with a huge collection of 500 nativity scenes that have been sourced from some 60 countries around the world.**

Two years ago the collections were displayed in Canberra and this year they

were brought to Buninyong and displayed at St Peter and Paul's Catholic Church between 12 and 15 December.

Some nativities have interesting histories – one is made from potato chip packets, another from gingerbread, one from bullet shells, others that when lined up, tell the story of the Gospels. And then there is the ugliest Herod...over a century old and which tends to dominate the display.

This year coins of the time and period had been added, one with the Star of Bethlehem on it. There was also an Herodian oil lamp also of the period. Real frankincense and myrrh was available for visitors to see and smell.

*Below: Fiona Tonkin (seated front) chats with (L to R) Tricia Ansell, Alan Ansell, Ivy Goodbourn, 4, Sarah Goodbourn, Jona Tudball, 13.*





# Glimpses of Christmas

In addition to services at all churches, village celebrations included the village market, the start of the annual bikers' toy run, a community picnic in the gardens and the annual Christmas carols in Desoza Park.

Shown below are some scenes from the carols, and the Community Bank's **Pieta McNaught** with daughter **Ruby**, 9, and friend **Leila Begbie**, 9, enjoying the picnic.



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# WIN TO BDCA IN GORSE LOBBY

Over the past six months the Buninyong & District Community Association (BDCA) has been calling on Council, DEWLP, Agriculture Victoria and fire authorities to take action to have the massive gorse infestation in the Greenhill Road/Geelong Road area removed by the landowner.

Not only was the infestation impacting on adjoining properties and areas but the real danger of a fire risk was pointed to. Over recent months *The News* reported on the lobbying by the BDCA to get some action in removing this huge area of gorse. *The News* featured an editorial in the July 2019 issue headed *Gorse Spread is Big Fire Risk*. Recent horrific fire events in this State have underscored this concern.

## Council help

Following a BDCA approach to Council's Infrastructure Director **Terry Demeo**, the landowner has moved to clear the many acres of gorse which over recent years had spread across some 80 per cent of the land area along the creek flats.

BDCA environment spokesperson **Linda Zibell** said the results of the clean-up of the large areas along the creek flats to the east of Geelong Road had been "amazing". She said that "given the toughness of this noxious plant, it is to be hoped that follow-up works will ensure that the problem is kept under control now that the land had been cleared up so well."



*A photograph of the creek flats near Greenhill Road in July 2019.*



*Contractors start work on gorse clearance on the west side of the creek.*



*The same area in December 2019.*



# Frances hands over at cemetery

**Much-loved and respected Secretary to the Buninyong Cemetery Trust, Frances Winnell, has resigned after a ten year term.**

Despite having moved to Scarsdale some five years ago to be nearer to family, Frances continued to travel to Buninyong several times each week for cemetery duties such as attending funerals, and meeting people wishing to choose a cemetery plot. She also continues to be active on the Buninyong Old Library Committee.

Trust Chairman, **Barry Fitzgerald**, said that Frances had made a huge contribution to the Buninyong community through her conscientious and caring role as cemetery Secretary. "She put in long hours to ensure that grieving families were looked after and that all cemetery matters were carefully attended to," he said.

The Trust has appointed Buninyong resident **Cassandra Carland**, active locally in Probus, Voice FM, and as part

of *The News* team, as Secretary from the start of 2020. Cassandra is already well-known and experienced in cemetery/funeral matters, having worked for a time with Peter Tobin and Harrison Funerals and having been a funeral celebrant.

Cassandra can be contacted by email at [buninyongcemetery@gmail.com](mailto:buninyongcemetery@gmail.com) or by phone 0415 929 571 in business hours.

*Cassandra Carland (left) is briefed by retiring Cemetery Secretary Frances Winnell at the Old Library recently.*



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# Bank team help for fire victims

Earlier this month most Victorian residents felt somewhat helpless watching horrendous bushfires devastate this state and others. It's only a few years ago that this community experienced such a tragedy in Scotsburn.

In early January, with many bushfires still raging in the north-east of the State, staff and Directors of the Buninyong community

bank felt that it was time to do their bit in raising much-needed funds for the shattered communities.

## Action

They took the lead during the recent cycling championships by working with Cycling Australia and its partners in Ballarat and Buninyong by volunteering to collect donations each day for the Bendigo Bank bushfire disaster appeal. Dressed in yellow shirts and caps, they collected across five days at Federation University, in Ballarat and at the events in Buninyong.

The Victorian Government has partnered with Bendigo Bank and the Salvation Army to establish the Victorian Bushfire Appeal with 100 per cent of donations going directly to the communities in need.

## Growing

The \$1300 collected through this 'bike race' initiative has been added to the \$23.8 million the State Appeal has raised to date. If you missed making your donation at the RoadNats event call in at the branch or donate online at [bendigobank.com.au](http://bendigobank.com.au).

*Bank Board Chairman Ian Corcoran was at the cycling start line ready to take donations for the Bushfire Disaster Appeal.*



## Review by bag group

**Buninyong Boomerang Bags is looking for community input at their upcoming Planning Meeting on Sunday 9 February at 2.00pm at the Royal Park Hall. It is hoped to discuss the future of the group, and whether a re-focusing of goals is needed.**

Since its start-up some three years ago members of the group have made approximately 2,500 'borrow' bags, many fruit and veg bags, and numerous other hand-made items with the prime goal of reducing reliance on single-use plastic, and to keep good fabric from landfill.

Community members are invited to join in the Planning Meeting and enjoy an afternoon chat and nibbles.

For more information, find Buninyong Boomerang Bags on Facebook, or email **Sam Blanchard** at [buninyongboomerangbags@gmail.com](mailto:buninyongboomerangbags@gmail.com)

During February there are workshops on every Tuesday morning (9.00am to 11.00am) and Tuesday evening (5.00pm to 7.00pm) at the Hall behind the Anglican Church in Warrenheip Street.



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# At home with the Mayor

**It was no surprise to meet Ben Taylor out in a paddock in front of his new home in his work boots and with a mattock in hand after a two hour session grubbing out patches of gorse on his thirteen acre property.**

Not only is the manual work a welcome relief from the pressures of being Mayor of a large provincial city and a part time business development manager for a medical software company, but it also is a throw-back to his roots living on a dairy farm at Curlwaa, near Mildura.

## Farm

Ben's family lived there until he was aged nine when his father, a Minister as well as a farmer, was transferred to Maryborough where Ben attended primary school and then the local Technical College. Later education was at SMB where in 1995 he completed electrical engineering studies with a special interest in computer systems.

After some time "doorknocking around town" he found a job as a computer technician with a local computer company, then, following a short stint in Melbourne, he commenced a six year career in sales



*Above: Chopping and bringing in the firewood is a chore that Ben enjoys. (Lower) Eldest daughter Madeline thinks her father's skills in the kitchen are a bit of a joke!*

and marketing with Xerox in Ballarat. From 2005-2009 he was the Client Relations Manager with the Business Services section of the University of Ballarat city campus.

Then came four years in other copier/computer roles before his current job with UNITI medical software, now reduced to two days a week to allow for his mayoral duties.

## Family

With wife **Christine** and four children (**Madeline**, 18, **Emmerson**, 16, **Annabelle**, 12, and **Carrington**, 8, Ben

recently moved into a new home on the property, part of which formed part of a major old gold mine to the south of Buninyong. Completing the Taylor family are the two retired thoroughbred horses, a rescue cat and a mischievous boxer dog **Murphy**, also a rescued animal.

Eldest daughter Madeline recently has completed

VCE studies at Loreto College. After a gap year she plans to undertake studies in Veterinary Science at Charles Sturt University. She is an experienced horse rider who despite the occasional tumble, exercises the horses several times a week. Sixteen year old Emmerson is a student at St Patrick's College and follows father Ben's recreational interest by being a keen basketballer with the Wildcats.

## Projects

Despite the heavy call on his time in his mayoral role, Ben Taylor, 43, says that he tries to find as much time as possible to spend with his wife and children in activities ranging from work in the paddocks, to building haysheds, or flywire screens for the front windows, digging foundations for a fountain out at the front of the house, to being as "a bit of a computer nerd" on a *Playstation 4*.

The City of Ballarat's fourteenth Mayor said that he found that tackling the issues around the city's growth was both a "big challenge" but also an enjoyable part of the job.

But he said that after many hours being at the centre of local politics, "it is always a relief to come home to where the kids always call things as they see it."





# John thinks he kicked a goal Newcomers love it here

**Having lived in Geelong for most of their lives, in late 2019 John and Gail Young decided the time was right to make a change in their lifestyle.**

They had taken the trip up the Midland Highway on several occasions and had developed a soft spot for Buninyong. "We always stopped for a coffee and some cake at a lovely little café in Buninyong and

one day I said to my wife that I would like to live here," John explained. "It is such a peaceful place with so much beauty."

## Perfect

So a few months ago, they left their life in suburban Geelong and found a home in Buninyong, set amongst trees and birds with views of the Mount, and within walking distance of the town centre. "We couldn't ask

for anything more," said John. "The location is perfect and we have been warmed by the wonderful community spirit here."

A schoolteacher, John has a love of music, especially the saxophone and, true to his Scottish background, the bagpipes. His other hobbies include gardening and walking whilst Gail also enjoys gardening and walking.

Since moving to Buninyong they have been inundated with visitors, with the visitors from Tasmania making it their annual holiday for a week. "Initially some of our friends weren't too sure about why we chose to move to Buninyong," mused John. "But when they came to visit us it didn't take too long for them to realise that Buninyong is more than a just a dot on the map."

## Sons

No doubt John and Gail's three sons, **Ben, Lachie** and **Sam**, who all still live in Geelong, will also be frequent visitors. It looks as if they are going to be very busy, especially with their first grandchild on the way!

John has always been a community-minded person, so if you see him around the village, please give him the usual warm Buninyong welcome – a cheery smile and a wave.

A couple of quotes from the film *The Castle* sums up exactly John and Gail's feelings on life in Buninyong at the moment; "How's the Serenity? So much Serenity" and "Everybody's kicked a goal".

– Rita Russell



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# Midsummer fun in the Gardens The Dream Team

In early February *The Bard in Buninyong* returns to the *Buninyong Botanic Gardens* for their fourth family-friendly season. For 2020 Robert Kelty has edited one of Shakespeare's most popular and funniest plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Set in ancient Greece, the story takes place over one night of madness and mayhem, as the fairies meddle with the lives and loves of mortals.

**Susan Pilbeam** directs a large cast, mixing professional performers with students and children. **Georgina Williams** (leader of the *Buninyong Community Choir*) is Musical Director. Her group, the *Winter Berries* will also be part of the pre-show entertainment, which showcases local musicians. Arts *Buninyong's Micheal Ford* is painting a spectacular backdrop for the show.

In January, school holiday workshops in the visual and performing arts were held

at Buninyong Primary School. Various community groups and local businesses have supported the event, notably the *Friends of the Buninyong Botanic Gardens*, the *Buninyong Historical Society* and *Red Door Pizza*.

### Show time

The show runs on February 7, 8, 9 and 14, 15, 16 (Fri & Sat at 7pm and Sat & Sun at 1pm) in the lovely Buninyong Botanical gardens in Scott Street. Pre-show entertainment will start fifteen minutes before show times.

Tickets can be booked through Trybooking or at the gate – \$25/\$15, children \$5 or family \$50.

So bring a picnic and something to sit on and enjoy the fun.

More info: [facebook.com/ArtsBuninyong](https://facebook.com/ArtsBuninyong)

L to R – Tim Harris (*Demetrius*), Mika Wallace (*Helena*), Zoe James (*Hermia*), Matt Peavey (*Lysander*) will play the four lovers who escape into the forest. Love juice fairies have been meddling and sent them mad with love.

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# Visit inspires sixth graders

**A visit in late 2019 to the Ballarat Steiner School by Buninyong's Graeme Kent had a big impact on the students. For Graeme's work has changed thousands of lives over his career.**

In his early working life Graeme was a youth worker in Melbourne. A career highlight was working with a gang of teenagers on the streets of Melbourne. They were really on the wrong path and people were scared of the gang.

## Trust

Over three years, Graeme built up a relationship with the teenagers and slowly earned their trust. He cared about them and helped them to find a better path. Eventually, some of the gang got jobs with the YMCA and ended up in leadership positions.

In the year 2000, Graeme took 100 young people to Nepal for an exchange. He spent two months there, beside a river, helping teenagers enjoy the experience and caring for them when they were homesick.

## Tin sheds

In Nepal the schools are more like tin sheds with 60 or more students squashed inside. The children have one exercise book and a pencil. They sit on long benches and don't all have desks. In remote villages the schools have no windows and are hot in Summer and freezing in Winter.

Graeme now runs *Aussie Action Abroad*, a charity which helps people in Nepal with schools, housing, health, water and

other community support. He has helped thousands of people and villages. In Nepal they call him *Baje* which is like father, a sign of respect.

In 2015 there were terrible earthquakes which destroyed whole towns. Some buildings simply slid off the sides of hills. *Aussie Action Abroad* took a team of tradespeople and helpers to clear up the rubble and help with rebuilding. Graeme also takes teachers over to Nepal to help

train new teachers there. Graeme now goes to Nepal to help many times each year.

When Graeme came to our school, he told us about how life is different in Nepal. The people have a lot less stuff, but are happy and grateful for what they have. Their lives are hard but their communities are strong and they make the most of things. He invited us to think about helping others. This was a great inspiration to all of us.



This article was written by students of 2019 Class Six at the Steiner School who are shown above with Graeme Kent.

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# THE LOCAL BANK POWERS AHEAD

**At a time when Australia’s ‘big four’ banks were attracting headlines for all of the wrong reasons, Buninyong’s local community bank was hitting new positive targets in terms of client numbers, levels of loans and deposits, and especially in the amount of profits being returned to the community by way of grants and other forms of support.**

Late last year, at the AGM of the Buninyong & District Community Services – the formal body which established the branch of the Bendigo Community Bank here over nine years ago – it was reported that in the two year period since 2017, the bank’s annual profits had risen from \$158,000 to \$387,000 and that the amount returned to community groups by way of grants, sponsorships and donations had jumped from \$67,000 to \$233,000 in the past year.

## Big total

This brought the total amount distributed to some 90 community groups to almost \$900,000 since the start of the bank nine year ago.

Chairman of the company, **Ian Corcoran** said that “the increasing level of community investment, driven by increasing profitability is paramount in delivering the real community dividend of a stronger, thriving, more resilient community.”

He also announced that the dividend for each of the 679,000 \$1 shares (required

to get the bank started in 2010) and taken up by 250 local people, had been lifted to eight cents per share – a very healthy return of 8 per cent. In 2017 the return to shareholders was 5 cents per share.

Some twenty of these local shareholders were present at the AGM together with Bank Board Directors, bank staff and the Regional Manager of the Bendigo Bank **Leanne Martin**. She pointed out that across Australia the Bendigo Bank now had more than 1.7 million customers, and had won national finance sector awards for its financial products and especially for its customer service.

## Great staff

Bank shareholder **Bill Pryor** praised the bank staff for their “outstanding service, friendliness and professionalism.” It was reported that currently the bank has 3750 customers on the books.

In another interesting development it was announced that the local community bank would open a “cashless business office” at Federation University in 2020.

The bank’s ‘community cottage’ at 407 Warrenheip Street also was on target for a mid-2020 re-opening. Bank Director **Stephen Falconer** said that this would provide a “superb, central location at which community groups could work and meet in spaces specifically designed for that purpose.”

*Above: Bank Board Chair Ian Corcoran reports to the bank AGM.*



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# Ernie's annual rainfall review

## Horror end to decade

It's hard to believe, but just over a year ago the weather news from northern Australia was of the devastating impact of Cyclone Owen. A year on and now a 3,000 km long chain of fires has been burning down the east coast of Australia, from Cairns to the Gippsland coast.

These brought the 2010-2019 decade to a searing end and have opened the next decade in the same way. Our lovely seasonal Spring of 2019 has been replaced by a ferocious start to summer, and that change started in mid-November.

### Abrupt stop

The first half of November opened with a glorious thirteen days of rain, but then the tap was abruptly closed and only three slightly damp days occurred in the second half. The total for the month was 67.8mm, just over the recent average. This cessation of rainfall continued through December, with only 10.7mm falling that month.

This resulted in 2019 achieving 706.8mm of rain, a little above the recent annual average of 669.2mm. While being one of the less dry years of the decade, it was also one of the years that had the most restricted distribution of rainfall. Almost all the rain that fell in Buninyong last year arrived between mid-February and mid-November.

Now that the new decade has started it's timely to consider how the rainfall for the past decade compared to the rain



that fell in the decades before. While my observations only go back eleven years, rainfall observations taken at *Mount Boninyong* homestead at Scotsburn extend back to 1856.

This unique record is generously made available through the BOM website and I draw on it to compare average annual rainfall for each decade from 1860 to

2019. The table shows average annual rainfalls for each decade.

It's one thing to display observations like this, but quite another to detect trends in them, let alone extrapolate into the future.

### Plus

For me, the fact that the decade just ended joins in with many before it in delivering annual rainfalls averaging over 750mm is a positive – particularly after the much drier decade before it.

Beyond that, I'll leave it to you to make of these figures what you will. As for the near future, BOM reports that international climate models forecast neutral trends until at least autumn 2020, neither wetter nor drier than we traditionally expect. That's another positive to finish on!

– Ernie Neale, Buninyong Blueberry Farm

### Rainfall Average 1860-2019

Decade	Average	Decade	Average
1860-69	734.0	1940-49	757.1
1870-79	792.7	1950-59	882.6
1880-89	767.9	1960-69	812.6
1890-99	749.6	1970-79	837.7
1900-09	756.8	1980-89	757.5
1910-19	766.7	1990-99*	791.3
1920-29	755.8	2000-09*	691.3
1930-39	804.1	2010-19	764.0

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## Up with the best

At the national Foodworks awards in Hobart in November, for the first time the Buninyong store was nominated for best Deli, Dairy & Produce departments in Victoria.

This led onto being nominated for the best store award across Australia for Store of the Year and also Store Manager of the Year. Despite not winning an award, it was a great achievement for the store and the dedication of the staff at Buninyong Foodworks to be recognized by its peers in the industry

## Bridge danger

In Eyre Street, just a few metres from Warrenheip Street, a small footbridge crosses over Union Jack Creek.

As part of the footpath, the bridge is heavily used by locals, including elderly and children. But one panel of the bridge has been hanging askew for many months, with only a few strips of tape covering a drop of 1.5 m to the presently stagnant water below. Local councillors should take a look and get a work crew out here urgently.



## Julie's game!

The first female President of the Elaine Cricket Club, **Julie Pantzidis** has recently been announced as a "She's Game" winner.

Julie took up cricket only seven years ago to be able to play with her son Nicholas, 17 years. She said that she is enjoying it greatly and encourages other women to take up roles in sports and club administration.



## Coming shows

Following the great success with dinner shows at the Buninyong Golf Club in 2019, these shows have been scheduled for 2020.

**Sat 14 March** – *BABBA* – Australia's Premier Abba Show (see ad p 7)

**Sat 16 May** – *The Eagles Story* – Australia's Premier Eagles Experience

**Sat 27 June** – *Ramble Tambl* – The Australian Creedence Show

**Sat 8 August** – *Ultimate American Rock Show*

**Sat 10 October** – *Wild Dreamers* – The Linda Ronstadt Songbook

**Sat 21 November** – *Come Together* – The Music of The Beatles (Xmas Show)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Wildlife carnage

Through *The News* may I make a plea to stop the carnage of wildlife on Yendon No 2 Road. This road is gazetted as 100 kmh, which seems totally inappropriate for motorists' safety as well as wildlife. I have previously contacted Moorabool Shire who told me to put my case to Regional Roads Victoria. They in turn told me to go to Moorabool Shire!!

Just because a road is listed as 100kmh doesn't mean you have to do it. Can't signage be put up to ask drivers to be 'aware of wildlife'? Nearly every day there is a death. Today it's a ringtail possum yesterday it was a wallaby.

A couple of days ago I rescued a baby peregrine falcon from the middle of the road (uninjured). After a lifetime of farming, I consider myself fairly hardened to natural tragedies but this is just too much.

**Allan Wettenhall, Scotsburn**

### Rash of crime

I write about the burst of crime in Buninyong in late 2019.

My house was broken into at approximately 6 am, whilst my family and I were asleep. Valuables stolen included a handbag, car keys, and our car. The car was featured on the front page of *The Courier* on the following day.

On the same morning our neighbours had their car broken into, and car window smashed. A work colleague had video footage of an attempt to break into his car at 4 am in a nearby street. This morning I also heard of another break into a house near the primary school with credit cards and car stolen.

**Personal details supplied**



# Golf club title to Amy at first try

**Amy Leeson, 20, the course record holder at the Buninyong Golf Club, was successful on her very first attempt in the club's Women's Championship's held in November 2019.**

She had been not been able to complete in recent years due to study commitments. In the 2019 Championship her three excellent stroke rounds were 74, 75 and 80 – a total of 229.

## Record holder

Amy also holds the 18-hole course record achieved in February 2019 with a score of 68. In December 2019 she also won the Ballarat District Golf Women's Championship.

After both wins Amy thanked Buninyong Golf Club for making her welcome and

made special mention of Helen Pascoe who has mentored her into golf including playing in the metropolitan pennant competition.

Full championship results were:

Champion: **Amy Leeson**

Runner Up: **N Prato**

B Grade: **F Feltham**

Runner Up: **H McSparron**

C grade: **R Lightfoot**

Runner Up: **G Bowers**

Jean Scott Trophy (Senior gross):

**B McGuinness**

Dot Bailey Memorial Award (Best nett):

**N Prato**

Beth Scott Trophy (Senior's nett):

**F Feltham**



# Chat with old champ

**At the 2019 National Road Cycling Championships in Buninyong, *The News'* sports reporters 'discovered' Kerry Hoole, a former dual winner of the event now living right here in the village. Kerry was the winner of the event in 1966 and 1973 (*The News*, February 2019, p 20).**

At this year's event, *The News* found and chatted with another champion track and road cyclist of the 1960s.

**Peter Meehan OAM**, national representative and winner of numerous State cycling championships, was sitting in the VIP enclosure at the start/finish line when locals struck up a conversation with him.

Together with Olympian cyclists **John Hine**, and **John Bylsma** and **Malcolm Powell**, Meehan was a long-term Australian record-holder for the 4000 team pursuit, and also participated in the *Tour de France*.

Originally from WA, Peter now lives in Melbourne and has a corporate communications business. During the 1980s and 1990s he was a presenter on Melbourne radio stations 3KZ and 3AW. He also spent time with radio 3BA. He thinks the Buninyong race circuit is a 'great and testing' one, and he is an annual visitor to the event.

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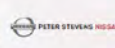
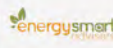


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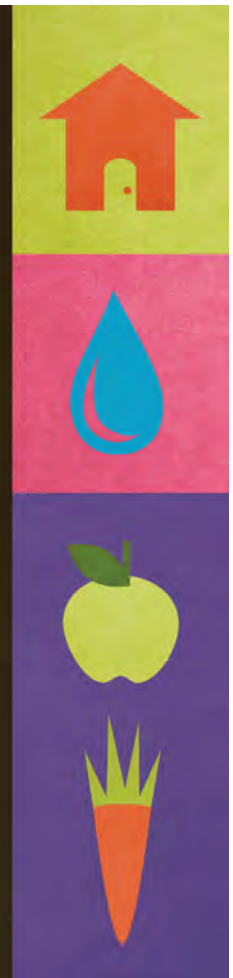


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# 2019 winner feels at home

# Young Sarah shines again

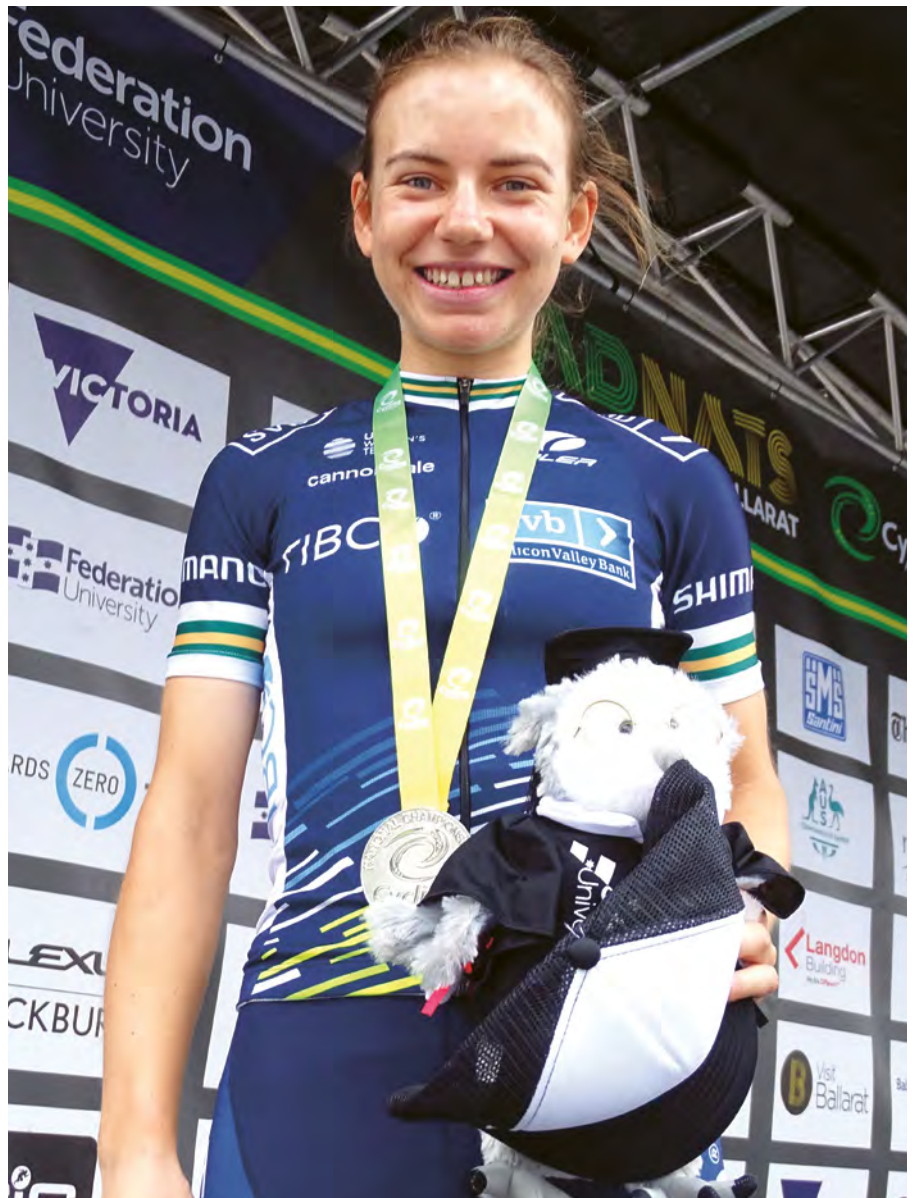
Once again in January the focus of the cycling world was on Ballarat and Buninyong with Australia's elite road racing cyclists and their entourages arriving in the region for five days of top-class cycling. And Ballarat/Buninyong has snared the national championships for three more years.

The weekend belonged to Buninyong. On Saturday, events moved from the windy streets of Ballarat to Buninyong's iconic road race course. The para-cyclists, the U19 men and women and the U23 men were the first to tackle the course before giving way to the *Gran Fondo* (Italian for Big Ride).

## Sarah's link

One of the elite women cyclists, last year's champion 19 year old **Sarah Gigante** told *The News* that she feels strong links to Buninyong with her uncle and aunt, **Peter** and **Pauline Roche**, living on Mount Buninyong. "I love coming here each year, it feels like my home course," she said. After last year's victory Sarah was recruited by a major USA professional cycling team, TIBCO – Silicon Valley Bank.

She rode a great race again this year but as a lone rider was not able to match the tactics of the big teams. "They ganged up on me," she said. Sarah didn't finish the week empty-handed though as she won both the Under 23 and Elite Women's time trial earlier in the week. Maybe good enough for a ticket to the Tokyo Olympics later this year!



*Sarah Gigante on the stage in Warrenheip Street after being presented with her trophies for winning the national Elite and U23 time trial.*

An amazing field of 560 club and amateur cyclists of all ages turned up to test themselves over five laps of the 11.6 km *Gran Fondo* course. Cycling Australia donated \$5 from every entry fee to the Bushfire Appeal.

## International coverage

Sunday's racing saw national and international TV focus on Buninyong with Australia's elite male and female cyclists taking their turn to tackle the testing road-race course. The strong *Mitchelton-Scott* team took out both of the major races with **Cam Meyer** proving too strong in a tough men's race, and former champion **Amanda Spratt** leading home the women.

This is the third year of Federation University's partnership with Cycling

Australia and *The News* also spoke to Federation University's Vice-Chancellor, **Helen Bartlett** and Head of the Ballarat Campus, **Sam Henson**. Both were excited and proud of Federation University's presence and the increased involvement in the week's events.

## Time trial

A key change this year has been the revamped Time Trial, taking on local Yankee Flat Road and starting and finishing in the University. In the lead-up to this event, cyclists commented on the similarity of the layout to the proposed 2020 Olympic course in Japan. It was the perfect test for those elite time-triallers hoping to make the Australian team for Tokyo.

– Ray Sullivan