

Merricks Matters

Autumn 2026

Welcome to the second edition of Merricks Matters for 2026.

Thank you to all our contributors for your articles and photos. In addition to the regular reports from the various Merricks Beach organisations, this edition features stories and photos from several local residents, input from our local councillor and some more interesting Merricks Memories. We also sadly farewell three much loved members of the Merricks Beach community.

Please send in your contributions for future editions. Letters, photos and articles are all welcome. Send your contributions to the Editor at contact@mbra.com.au.

Hope you have had a great Autumn and enjoy reading about what's been happening!

Joyce Lawrence, Editor

MBRA Update

I hope you enjoy this informative edition of Merricks Matters.

Great to see some rains recently and the village spring back to green – with a few colours of autumn on the trees. The rain is also an exciting time to see how some of the stormwater improvement initiatives that have been completed are functioning.

The MBRA committee has been busy progressing stormwater initiatives with a positive recent meeting with Shire representatives. Thanks to participating residents on the home water audits, knowing what they can do to support water management with benefits across the village.

Our membership numbers are stable and we have good cash reserves in the bank for upcoming initiatives following some support over the summer for Foreshore as well as Bill Carroll Reserve projects.

Our investigation and transition to new membership and mailout software continues so keep a look out for updates shortly. Currently we are proposing to use Wild Apricot which is also used by the Yacht Club.

Make sure you grab some plants at an annual giveaway, it does give me great pleasure walking the village and seeing consistency of native vegetation across the village – being native and indigenous in some instances, the plants love the local area and hence thrive in the local conditions. I am sure the fauna love them as well!

We are also continuing to look at future possible enhancement to the Frankston Flinders intersection and advocacy on that front following the lowering of speed limits on Frankston Flinders Rd.

Please get in touch if you have any ideas for improvements to our lovely village.

Kriston Symons – MBRA President

Merricks Matters – Autumn 2026

MERRICKS BEACH RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION INC



Annual MBRA Plant Giveaway June 2026

Over the King's Birthday weekend, the MBRA will once again offer all members a selection of free native plants. Thanks to Richard Anderson, a local resident and owner of the Merricks Nursery, we will have a wonderful range of mostly indigenous grasses and shrubs. Come along to the tennis courts from 10am-12 noon on Saturday and Sunday 6th and 7th June and make your selection and get free advice on planting tips from Richard.

The Merricks Nursery is a wholesale & retail native plant nursery growing indigenous plants of the Mornington Peninsula as well as a large and interesting range of ornamental native plants. Tube stock specialists, planting advice and display gardens available. Located at 3361 Frankston Flinders Road Merricks. Open Monday to Friday 7.30 am to 4.00 pm

Hope to see you there.

Di Hall – MBRA Secretary

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sat 6/Sun 7 June	MBRA Plant giveaway, tennis court, 10am -12noon
Every Thursday, 5.00pm	Social drinks at MYC
Every Tuesday, 10am (excl school holidays)	Craft Group, Yacht Club

Merricks Beach Stormwater Strategy

Implementing the Merricks Beach Stormwater Strategy is now happening, with three projects currently underway.

Merricks Beach Community Stormwater Project

Ten households volunteered to pilot this project, aimed at lot-level solutions. Participating households have all had a stormwater audit done of their properties and have received a report on cost-effective and practical strategies to help collect, retain and better use and manage stormwater within their own lot. The group reconvened in April and May to discuss the results and make recommendations for the future of this project, with lots of ideas being generated! We're expecting the consultant's report on the pilot very soon.

Easement Functionality Project

The MBRA is continuing to investigate how to improve the functionality of the various drainage easements in the lower sections of the village. We've reached out to residents of Wave and Surf St (West) to get their input and we're currently seeking quotes for a couple of options. If you live in another lower lying area of the village and have any concerns, we'd be happy to talk with you too.

Road profile redesign

This is a longer-term project, which is just in its initial stage. The end result will be a new design that we hope will improve both drainage and the quality of stormwater run-off in our street drains. The road survey work has been undertaken, and the next step is the development of some concept drawings. Wave Consulting will consult closely with the MBRA Stormwater Working Group, the Shire and affected residents about the proposed design. Once we have an agreed design, and have secured the necessary funding for construction, we hope to trial it on a short pilot stretch of road in the village.

The MBRA very much appreciates the involvement of residents in these initial projects. We also continue to be extremely grateful to have received the financial support of Melbourne Water and Community Bank, Balnarring and District (Bendigo Bank).

Community Bank
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Joyce Lawrence – MBRA Stormwater Working Group

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Rabbits

Recently the Red Hill Gardening Society hosted guest speakers from Agriculture Victoria - Annie Lamb (Leading Biosecurity Officer) and David Scott (Engagement Officer for Invasives in the South East) to discuss the overwhelming rabbit plague currently being experienced on the Peninsula. The slides from the event are at <https://rhgs.com.au/past-events/>

Previously in 2016 the MBRA conducted a rabbit eradication program at strategic sites around the village and neighbouring farmlands, with the support of about 60 homeowners. The Committee is investigating engaging a contractor to repeat this program and would appreciate receiving expressions of interest from homeowners who would like to participate. There is likely to be a modest cost per participant, but final details have not been resolved.

If you are interested, please email the MBRA at contact@mbra.com.au.

Brad Vann – MBRA Committee Member

News from Merricks Yacht Club

The sailing is over for yet another season, but there is still plenty of activity at the yacht club over the Winter months.

The craft group is meeting every Tuesday at 10am, and the club is cosy and warm as is the conversation among the ladies.

Thursday night happy hours continue every Thursday from 5.00pm, with a chance to have a drink and nibbles while enjoying the wonderful sea views. And of course, there are the occasional fantastic group dinners. It's a great community gathering, and if you are not a member, come down for a visit and see if this is something for you.

Friday mornings is the men's work party – with perhaps more party (over coffee & cake) than work on some days, but they are doing a great job keeping the club spick and span, and solving the world's problems.

And don't forget, Saturday 6 June is the club's annual general meeting at 3pm, and then the presentation night dinner from 6.30pm – who will be crowned Club Champion this year, and why is the handicapper putting a deposit on a Lamborghini?

Of course, we are already planning the next season of sailing, social activities, and activities for children. Sailing will start in late October as we clear the cobwebs from our boats and bones. So if you are an ex-sailor and would like to get back on the water members can access the club boats, or if you have been sailing somewhere else and would like to join a friendly sailing community, with great rivalry during our Saturday races, but nothing too serious, we'd love to see you.

Simon Corden - MYC Commodore (at least until June!)

Foreshore Committee Update

Indigenous Garden – check it out on your next walk

Located on the eastern end of the Fire Track (between Cliff Rd and Bluff Rd) you can find the Merricks Beach Indigenous Garden. The small area protected by a rabbit proof fence was established with the support of the Merricks Beach Residents' Association and State Government funding through the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). Signage with plant names has recently been installed to help with inspiration for your own garden, current plantings include:

- spiny headed mat rush
- wattle mat rush
- running postman
- plume grass
- flax lily
- wiry buttons
- small St John's wort
- fireweed
- chocolate lily

The garden includes plantings from locally sourced seeds, collected, propagated and grown by our community volunteers.



Upcoming works on handrails

The next stage of the work upgrading handrails on the beach access tracks is to be completed at the 'Cave Steps' access track. This will include replacement and extending of handrails on the upper flight of stairs and repairs to the platform support. This follows the earlier works on the handrails at the Foam Street path steps. Funding has been provided by a grant from DEECA. There have been brief track closures while the works were undertaken, and we thank you for your cooperation. Thanks also to local Dave McAnulty who has been completing the works.

Update on erosion works at the bottom of the 'Pine Slide' track

People using the 'Pine Slide' beach access track should continue to take care as the access to the beach at the bottom of the track is impacted by erosion from high tides. The track is not recommended for people with mobility issues or during high tide. The Foreshore Committee is working with the Balnarring Foreshore Committee and

DEECA on the program to install erosion protection works, with funding from DEECA's Treasurer's Advance for Severe Weather Event Recovery. The project is still in the approvals stage and further updates will be provided as the project progresses. The latest updates are available at <https://balnarring.net/sea-wall-reconstruction-project/>

More planting and weeding completed opposite the tennis courts

Thank you to everyone who participated in the working bee on 8 March where we continued the recent work with the community to plant and weed the area opposite the tennis courts. Maintenance work and mulch spreading was also completed on adjacent tracks. Keep an eye on the community notice board at the tennis courts and the Foreshore Committee's Facebook and Instagram pages for upcoming events. Everyone is welcome and you can just drop in for a chat to discuss the latest foreshore activities.



Wildlife boxes for birds, microbats, sugar gliders and other wildlife

The new boxes have been in place along the foreshore reserve for a while now, and you can check out photos of the local wildlife inspecting and using the boxes on our Facebook and Instagram sites. If you want to participate in some 'citizen science' you can register your sightings of birds and other wildlife with 'iNaturalist' (find it online or in your app store). We would like to thank local arborist Jacob Plant and his team from Tree Notion who donated their time to install the new boxes in trees along the foreshore.

10cent cans and bottles – Vic Gov Container Deposit Scheme

We have two container collection points for cans and bottles within the village – they are located at the end of Merricks Beach Rd; and in Bayview Road, on the side of the road near the top of the hill. We have been collecting containers for about a year now and donations to date are in excess of \$600, which has been used to fund ongoing revegetation programs along the foreshore. It would be great if you could contribute your eligible containers to one of our collection sites.

[Merricks Beach Foreshore Reserve Committee of Management](#)

Friends of Bill Carroll Reserve

Easter in the Park

Glorious weather ensured a great turnout for this year's Easter event in the Bill Carroll Reserve.



Artistry and athleticism were on full display

Barbara Hogarth – Friends of Bill Carroll Reserve

Farewell to three community members

Elizabeth Hildebrand

On the 16th February Elizabeth Hildebrand passed away on her beloved farm at King Valley in north-east Victoria. She is survived by her husband of 65 years, Alan, and their eight children and families.



Elizabeth's connection with the Merricks Beach community began in 1949 when she was 10 years old. While on a family holiday in Frankston they visited Merricks General Store and noticed a map of an estate development at Merricks Beach. Elizabeth's auntie, Cath Cochrane, a schoolteacher, and a single lady, decided to purchase one of the blocks of land: 1 Spray Street, a large triangular block, and a scant five minutes walk to the beach.

From the early 1950's Elizabeth spent many holidays at Merricks, along with her brothers John and Hugh, and her sister, Katharine,

but she was the youngest and most frequent visitor while still living at home. When she was a child and teenager Elizabeth's favourite activities were swimming and playing on the beach, exploring the rock pools, climbing up to the cave around the corner from the main beach, and climbing the steep steps to the lookout. On warm summer evenings at low tide, she would take a lantern and search the rockpools for fish, scooping them up with a net. The larger ones were taken back to the house to eat. Of course, she enjoyed many walks along the beach. For a time she had a job selling ice creams at the shop at Point Leo foreshore so she would walk there and back along the beach.

At the end of the cliff path looking down towards Balnarring there was a 'pine slide'. Elizabeth and other children would sit on hessian bags at the top of the cliff among the pine trees and slide down the carpet of pine needles to the foliage at the bottom of the cliff. There were activities at the yacht club as there still are now: nights playing cards or board games, and simple dances with other Merricks Beach holiday-makers. At night there were rare sightings of koalas, but more often the scurrying of possums on the roof and the pesky presence of mosquitos repelled with the distinctive odour of burning mosquito coils.

In 1954 Elizabeth met her husband-to-be, Alan, and she introduced him to Merricks Beach and all her activities and special places. Their friendship developed with the aid of these holiday visits. Elizabeth and Alan married in 1961 and continued coming to Merricks with their growing family for holidays with Grandpa, Grandma and Great Auntie Cath. The littlies slept in the tiny bunkroom, the others in tents in the garden, lots of mosquito coils burning. Alan was very pleased with his creation of a mattress bed in the trailer with a canopy, but sadly Elizabeth suffered from claustrophobia.



The family has many photos of kids draped with towels, carrying buckets and spades, goggles and sand sifters, and sandwiches made by Grandma and Great Auntie Cath.

There was often a crowd as Alan and Elizabeth had 8 children, and often other family members would visit or stay over. Many family photos were taken on that front verandah, now replaced by a lovely deck where Elizabeth, in her 70's and 80's, enjoyed relaxing, gathering for family meals, and even playing a gentle game of table tennis with her grandchildren on occasion.



Elizabeth and Alan made many friends with other residents over the years and always caught up with Jenny and Russell Ferguson who lived on Bayview Road. The activities organised by the yacht club continued: movies, accompanied by popcorn, lollies and soft drink, and especially the annual sandcastle competition held in January. Most recently, members of the family have enjoyed playing in the tennis tournament too.

In the last few years, visits were few, due to age, ill health, and difficulty driving long distances. Alan and Elizabeth's children occasionally went down with them for holidays, and they loved seeing their son, Bruce, who now lives at Red Hill with his family. Elizabeth replaced her own enjoyment of Merricks Beach with the enjoyment of hearing about her children and grandchildren's exploits there. 1 Spray Street, Merricks Beach always had a very special place in her heart. She treasured the legacy that her aunt had left her, and her husband Alan, and her children: Anne, Harry, John, Sally, Kaye, Ruth, Bruce and Louise. We miss her presence so much at the holiday house at Merricks Beach, but treasure the memories of the precious times we spent with her there.

Kaye OKane on behalf of the Hildebrand Family

[Editor's Note: for reasons of space, this is a shortened version of the family's tribute to Elizabeth. If you'd like a copy of the full version with more about the family's early days at Merricks Beach, please email contact@mbra.com.au]

Michael Cohen

Dear Merricks Beach Residents Association

I am passing on the news that my father Michael Cohen passed away peacefully at the age of 95 early this morning. He had a long history with Merricks Beach.

Notably dad (and my late mother Mary) were part of the group that successfully fought the plans of the Ross Trust to subdivide the area at the back of Merricks Beach into hundreds of lots which would have destroyed the character of our village. The Council would have required the roads to be sealed amongst other major changes.

Then when the Ross Trust gave up on these plans and sold the block they were part of the syndicate that bought it and subdivided it into the 18 1 hectare lots which now surround the edge of Merricks Beach and Balnarring Beach.

We (Helen and I) bought one of these lots and built our house in Foam St there. We and our children and grandchildren delight in our time at Merricks Beach.

Long before that Mum and Dad bought 20 Spray Street in 1989 and built the house that stands there today.

Kind regards
Antony

Antony Cohen – Merricks Beach Resident

[Editor's note: For newer residents who may not know about the significance of the Ross Trust land to the North of Merricks Beach village, we've included an article in the Merricks Memories section]

John Murray Newman 25/03/1936 – 19/04/2026



Murray first came to Merricks Beach in 1973. During the family annual fortnightly holiday at Rosebud the weather was blowing a gale on the Port Phillip side of the Peninsula, so the family ventured over to Balnarring Beach, to find a more sheltered spot from the wind. It was too cold to swim, so they walked along the beach and found themselves at Merricks Beach. The only person on the beach was an old friend from his youth. This led to the family staying at 5 Wave Street for \$5 a weekend for a couple of years. Murray and his wife, Valma, then bought 29 Spray Street in January 1976.

They stayed at Merricks for many weekends throughout the year, as well as school holidays. Murray enjoyed going for long walks along the beach or the dirt roads and sitting in his beach chair soaking up the sun. They moved down during COVID and remained living at Merricks permanently until June 2022, when he and Valma moved to Peninsula Grange Aged Care at Mornington until his death.

Murray was a keen sportsman, playing football and cricket and riding his pushbike into his 80's. He worked the majority of his career at the SEC, starting as an Electrical Engineer and ending up as an Economist. Murray was an avid reader and gained five diplomas/degrees throughout his working life.

Murray married Valma in February 1962 and they had been going out together for 9 years prior to getting married. He is survived by Valma and his three children, Kay, Grant and Janine, seven grandchildren and five great grandchildren.



While staying at Merricks, Murray would walk down to the beach each day with the excuse that he had "to check that the beach was still there". Following the celebration of his 90th birthday with his family, he was taken by wheelchair for his last look at the beach. He died peacefully, surrounded by family three weeks later.

Kay Matthews – Merricks Beach Resident

A Buzz in the Garden: Local Beekeeping

George and Mary



What began as a simple desire to establish a healthy garden has grown into a rewarding beekeeping journey for George and Mary at Merricks Beach. With a strong interest in garden health and a wish to support thriving bee populations across the region, they took up

beekeeping around three years

ago—and haven't looked back. Today, their hives are a reflection of the rich natural environment surrounding Mornington Peninsula. Bees forage happily among a diverse mix of garden plants and native vegetation, producing organic honey that captures the unique flavours of the area. For them, that connection between land, plants, and pollinators is one of the most satisfying aspects of the craft.



Unlike some commercial practices, feeding the bees is kept to a minimum. Instead, care is taken to ensure the hive retains enough of its own honey stores to sustain the colony through colder months. This more natural approach supports resilience and keeps the bees closely aligned with seasonal cycles.

Of course, beekeeping is not without its challenges. Unpredictable weather patterns can significantly affect honey production, while broader concerns—such as the decline in bee populations due to chemical use in agriculture—remain an ongoing worry. Closer to home, maintaining a healthy hive requires constant attention and care, even though, fortunately, pests and diseases are not currently a major issue on the Peninsula.

There's also a strong message for the wider community. Simple actions can make a real difference: planting native and perennial species, and restoring vegetation where it has been lost, all help to create a more bee-friendly environment.

For those curious about taking up beekeeping themselves, the advice is clear—start local. Joining a group like the **Mornington Peninsula Beekeepers' Association** is an excellent way to learn the ropes, connect with experienced keepers, and become part of a supportive community.

In a world where bees face increasing pressures, small, local efforts like these are helping to keep both gardens and ecosystems thriving—one hive at a time.

Di Hall – MBRA Secretary

Kaye and Stewart

Our interest in bees started about 12 years ago after watching and reading a few news items about the perilous state of bees worldwide and our reliance on bees for stability in food production and all things in nature.

Our first hive came to us via a work colleague of Stewart's who had two hives in his suburban backyard in Hampton. He had collected a swarm and was keen to re-home this queen and brood box so we thought we would take a giant leap into the world of apiary and we have never looked back.

Beekeeping has many rewards; it's not just harvesting honey (although that is top of the list) that brings joy. For me, it can be simply walking into your yard on a warm afternoon and hearing the buzz of bees around the boxes and smelling the honey knowing that the bees are busy being 'bees'.

Another awareness I have developed over the years is following the change of seasons watching the cycle of trees and flowers blooming in spring and summer, then the changing of colours through autumn to finally resting during winter readying to repeat this seasonal flow over the next 12 months.

I also marvel at how a population of 40-50,000 bees can live harmoniously in such a small environment and provide humans with food directly and indirectly.

Stewart will 'go into the hive' regularly over the year (donning a full set of bee keeping apparel!) to check on the queen (he doesn't always find her), look at the health of the hive, scan for mites and other pests (we have a hit list) and adjust the height of the hive by adding on or taking off boxes according to the weather and the degree of 'capping' within the hive.

The first three years of beekeeping we were able to harvest honey three times a year collecting between 15-20kgs of honey each time, sadly this has dwindled over time and now we collect once every year or so. The change in weather, with major storms over spring and summer some years, lack of rain throughout the year (our rainy season seems to be confined to a couple of months now) over the past three years has impacted the flowering times and duration for many of the plants that bees collect pollen from. The bees are currently only collecting enough pollen to keep their colony alive.

This year we have been feeding the bees a mixture of sugary water (half sugar/half water heated until dissolved) every few weeks since November 2025. We will continue to feed throughout winter and hope for steady rains, not too much wind (knocking flowers off plants) and sunny days over spring.

Our hives are registered with the environment agency and we do receive alerts about the progress of various potential insect infestations that have been reported to the department (these potential threats usually hitch a ride on cargo ships coming to Australia). Equally we are required to report annually and when required (in the case of infestation) to the department on the health of the hives.

To help the bees in their busy endeavours, plant a wide variety of flowering plants with staggered flowering times throughout the

season, have a fountain or water source that you top up regularly and watch the bees add value to your gardens.

Kaye and Stewart Carter – Merricks Beach Residents

Community Corner – Food and Green Organics and Recycling

Mornington Peninsula Food and Green Waste

The MPSC offers three different food and green (garden) waste services:

- Green waste disposal at our [Resource Recovery centres](#). We offer 4 'no charge/free' green waste weekend events per year. (Friday-Sunday). The next one is Friday 22 - Sunday 24 May.
- Food and green waste kerbside bin collection is available
- [Book a green and/or hard waste collection service](#) to be collected from your nature strip. Fees apply and bookings are essential.

Tip for free

[Free of charge items at our resource recovery centres \(tips\) - Mornington Peninsula Shire](#)

BRAD – Banish Recycling and Disposal

You can access the [BRAD \(Banish Recycling and Disposal\) program](#) near Balnarring by dropping off your filled shoebox of hard-to-recycle items at the [Community Bank Balnarring & District](#). The program accepts items like bottle lids, blister packs, and beauty packaging that cannot go in standard kerbside recycling. [banish.com.au +2](https://banish.com.au)

- **What to collect:** Gather hard-to-recycle items, such as dental products, pumps, sprays, and plastic bread tags.
- **Drop-off:** Visit the [Community Bank Balnarring & District branch](#) to drop off your BRAD box.
- **Preparation:** Ensure items are clean and dry, packed into a shoebox-sized container

[Get the BRAD Downloadable Guide | Banish Recycling and Disposal Program](#)

Recycling



Visit the Shire website for more information [Waste and Recycling Guide - Mornington Peninsula Shire](#)

Di Hall & Angela Richards – MBRA Committee Members

Your Elected Community Advocate



Cr. David Gill

david.gill@mornpen.vic.gov.au

My connection to Merricks Beach goes back 60 years when I rode horses from Johnny Osmond's horse ranch in the middle of Mt Eliza Village, across the Peninsula, and along Somers Beach to Merricks Beach.

Back then, I often startled large flocks of small birds on the sand. I now know they were relatively rare red-capped plovers—tiny beach-nesting birds that are vulnerable to disturbance including from curious dogs and introduced predators.

Today I live in Balnarring Beach and I've been your Coolart Ward councillor (including Merricks Beach) for the past 10 years. I still walk these beaches regularly and I'm always happy to chat about how we can protect the character and natural environment of our local area.



- If you notice problems with Shire buildings, roads, drainage, vegetation, street bins, litter or dumped waste, please report them at mornpen.vic.gov.au/reportit. For urgent matters, call 1300 850 600. Or use this link - www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/Your-Property/Rubbish-Recycling/Snap-Send-Solve

- The **Save Western Port** – “Protect its Environment and Biodiversity from Urban Sprawl” petition endorsing a strategic management plan has now reached over 3,500 signatures, reflecting strong community engagement on environmental protection. Please see: <https://chng.it/9vvvRj8kJW>

- **Rabbits!!!!** I attended the Rabbit Information Session on 1st May at the Red Hill Mechanics Hall with over 60 concerned locals.

Thank you to the Red Hill Gardening Society for putting together a practical and informative session on how to deal with the explosion in the local rabbit population which is having broad economic and environmental effects.

The session was mainly for farmers but also contained a lot of useful information for residents on house blocks. Please see the following link provided by Annie Lamb from Agricultural Victoria. <https://rhgs.com.au/past-events/>

- I am an indigenous bee enthusiast and give community talks about their little-known habits and background in my *The secret life of bees* presentations which include
 - The incredible differences between imported honey bee species and our 20000 native bee species in Australia
 - How to attract native bees to your garden
 - The need to protect our 40 Peninsula local species of bees
 - Types of local bees and how to find them
 - The essential role of indigenous bees in pollinating native vegetation

You will soon realise that all you know about bees usually only applies to 5 European imported honey bee species. Our native bees have very different lives and remain a mystery waiting to fascinate you.

Regards,
David davidgill4coolartward@gmail.com

David Gill – MPSC Shire Councillor, Coolart Ward

From the Editor's In-box

Thank you to everyone who contributed their news or shared their photos with me for inclusion in this edition. I look forward to getting more input for future issues!

ANZAC Day Service 2026

It was a happy decision to choose to attend the Anzac Day service at Balnarring, held in ANZAC park at the back of the shopping centre, as it was a simple, respectful, inclusive and engaging event - without the cliches.

The fact that we are close the Cerberus naval base provided a naval MC (Retired Commodore David Goble), the Catafalque Party, as well as a little-known story of the work at Gallipoli by a Royal Australian Navy Bridging Train, the story given succinctly by a part-time sailor.

Commodore Goble acknowledged the First Peoples of the area, the Boon Wurrung people.

A couple of Leonard Cohen's *Halleluiah* verses relevant to war were sung and accompanied by a guitarist. The music prompted some tears.

At the Balnarring service, there is a tradition that the Grade 6 students enter an essay competition relating 'What Anzac Day means to me', and the winners – Leo from Somers Primary School, and Myra from Balnarring Primary School – were invited to read their winning essays. I was astounded by their talent. (And I loved seeing that in Grade 6 the girl was much taller than the boy, and to speculate about their heights in ten years' time!) Each student was awarded a Certificate and a book voucher from Petersen's Bookstore in Hastings.

Commodore Goble then told us that, from henceforth, the essay competition prize that was to be awarded would acknowledge and be named for Edward Attfield as there were still Attfield descendants in the Merricks area (later they were asked to identify and they raised their hands).

He then told us another remarkable story – the story of Attfield. Attfield tried to enlist seven times, was finally accepted, sent to Gallipoli, wounded, hospitalised, recovered, sent back, wounded again, hospitalised in Cairo, then Attfield disappeared and he was not seen again. He was assumed to have deserted. Attfield's family continued searching and descendants, historians, researchers did not give up - none accepted he would have deserted. A soldier had been murdered and buried in an unmarked grave in Cairo. Yes, there is forensic evidence and Attfield was identified as the murdered soldier in Cairo. His gravestone reads: 'I was lost and now I am found'.

Vicar Keiron Jones paid tribute and reminded us that all sides are affected in war and offered a gentle inclusive prayer before the traditional Christian *Lord's Prayer* that would have been familiar to those in the First World War.



Many community groups laid wreaths, and it was pleasing to see the Merricks Beach community were represented - Di Hall for MBRA and Simon Corden for MYC.

A Vietnam Vet, who, with New Zealand soldiers in his unit, served

two terms in Vietnam, read the Ode. The bugler played and a dog also cried for the fallen. A woman came from Marysville to lead us in the Australian National Anthem.

Commodore Goble thanked all volunteers - there were many - who assisted to plan for, set up, and run the one-hour-long event, including the laundromat that provided the source of power.

Mary Daley – Merricks Beach Resident

Solar and Batteries at Merricks Beach

Dear Joyce - I recently completed a new house build which included solar panels and a smart charger for my electric car. In addition, I signed up for an EV plan with my electricity retailer that offers a heavily discounted rate when charging the car from the grid. It was frustrating initially as if I was out during the day the system would import power at night for the car battery and export during the day at an unfavourable spread. The setup cost of adding a battery is significant and the payoff time lengthy so I gave it serious consideration. The rebate available from the federal government is currently generous and I decided to go ahead. My calculations suggest that I can now power the house and car for less than the cost of the daily supply charge. As well, I have the security of backup power in the event of grid outages. I'd be happy to discuss my setup with interested parties. Regards - Charlotte

Charlotte Limb – Merricks Beach Resident



We recently had a 14.4kWh battery installed (see photo) at approx. \$5k outlay after Federal grant

(<https://www.dceew.gov.au/energy/programs/cheaper-home-batteries>).

We were interested to receive notification of a recent planned power outage for maintenance in our street to see how the battery would respond. Whilst the power was out, the battery continued to power the fridge, rainwater water pump and some lights and power that was being used. A great outcome! And we also chose a plan with an energy retailer that suited a battery set-up and just received a \$40 gift card from the retailer as a result of the battery discharging at peak times in the afternoon when the electricity grid is under stress. Overall a great technology addition to the house assisting with household electricity costs!

Kris Symons – Merricks Beach Resident

LandCare Farm Walk

Last month the Mornington Peninsula LandCare Network conducted a survey of one of the neighbouring farms to Merricks Beach. The report provided a detailed assessment of the ecological conservation values associated with the farm itself, but two aspects arose which might be of interest more generally.

Firstly, the verge along Merricks Beach Road was confirmed as supporting a high level of indigenous biodiversity, including species that are difficult to establish or susceptible to disturbance, reflecting the likelihood of remnant vegetation communities that have been simplified without complete disturbance. This may be surprising, but the bushland along the road has been largely undisturbed and still retains much well-established indigenous flora.



Secondly, the photo of Merricks Beach above (thought to be from around 1939) was provided. This shows how the region was largely denuded of its flora at that time. It has been the concerted effort of the community since that time which has resulted in the well-treed village and foreshore that we experience today.

Brad Vann – MBRA Committee Member

Merricks Memories

Remembering the yacht club's Mystery Dinners

Who can recall the yacht club's mystery dinners? Elaine Larsson is planning to do an article on them for the next Merricks Matters. If you have some recollections or photos, please send them to contact@mbra.com.au and we'll forward them to Elaine. In the meantime, here is a 'taster' from Elaine for this edition.

Who could forget the MYC end of season Mystery Dinner at the Merricks Store with Rick and Eunice as hosts...sloping floors, gollywogs, dancing on the counter and a conga line out the front door.





Norma loved planning it all, the bus driver would take us in the opposite direction to keep us guessing!
Graham Crossley always sang *Foggy, Foggy, Dew* on the home straight

And who and where are these young revellers?



Elaine Larsson – Merricks Beach Resident

The Ross Trust

In December 1996, The Ross Trust, long-time owners of the land behind Merricks Beach and Balnarring Beach—locally known as the “horse paddock”—announced plans to subdivide the area into 123 residential lots.

Original proposal



The proposal was met with strong opposition from the local community. Following a legal process funded by residents, the Trust ultimately decided to sell the land. In response, Peter Drake, then President of the Merricks Beach Residents’ Association, brought together a group of residents to collectively purchase the site.

Their vision was to create a low-density subdivision of just twenty-two hectare lots. Within twelve months, the subdivision was completed and all lots were sold—successfully preserving the character of Merricks Beach and preventing a large-scale increase in development.

Merricks and Balnarring folk are up in arms over a charity trust's plans to create a slab of suburbia surrounding their peaceful waterside hamlets. RUSSELL ROBINSON reports

Beach battle lines drawn

BATTLE Lines have been scratched in the exclusive sands of Merricks and Balnarring beaches over a charity trust's plan to carve up surrounding land into more than 100 suburban house blocks.

The adjoining beach residents, whose shore rates rolls read like a Who's Who of Melbourne's corporate and society high fliers, have vowed to fight the high-density development.

They complain the 123 extra houses will destroy the social and environmental fabric of the communities.

Ironically, the R.E. Ross Charity Trust is known on the Mornington Peninsula for its commitment to the environment, having contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Arthur's Seat and Point Nepean parks.

The trust named after businessman Roy Edward Ross, has also donated more than \$6 million to charities around Victoria.

Coincidentally, Warwick Daley, chief executive of the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, which will be asked to decide on the project, has a holiday house at Balnarring beach.

Merricks and Balnarring have vowed to fight the proposed development, warning that it could become an election issue at the re-introduction of council polls in March.

"We don't want a halt to progress, but only to unnecessary developments," said Merricks Beach Ratepayers Association treasurer Phil Bennett.

"This development is not welcome here and feelings are running high."

On the other hand, Balnarring Beach (70 houses) has made roads with speeds restricted to 40 kmh.

house) enjoys its reputation as a "sleepy hollow". It has shunned all forms of progress, except for electricity.

It has no made roads, no reticulated water and, therefore, no sewerage.

"That's the way we want it and that's the way we want it to stay," said the owner of a holiday house, who did not want to be named.

Under the Rural Residential zone pro-

On Wednesday evening a meeting called by the trust will be held in the Suburbs Village Hall to discuss the concept.

The process is in accordance with council directions that it must consult with the community before submitting any proposals.

According to council, the trust wants the 123 area re-zoned from Rural Residential 1 to the higher density Coastal Village.

Under the Rural Residential zone pro-

vision, land may be subdivided into one-hectare lots, while lots of 150 square metres are permitted in the Coastal Village zone.

"We're not opposed to developing the area but we believe allowing quarter-acre blocks will only harm the environment," Peter Cooper, president of the Balnarring Beach Ratepayers' Association, said.

"We're calling on the shire to put off any decision until an elected council is returned in March."

The Planned Subdivision

Keep out: Merricks resident Phil Bennett is adamantly opposed to a proposed new subdivision. Picture: BILL McAULEY

News coverage at the time

Di Hall – MBRA Secretary

Merricks Beach Road Traffic Management

Traffic concerns at Merricks Beach are nothing new. Past attempts at traffic control at Merricks Beach have included speed signs and the (infamous) spoon drains. Here are some photos from back in the day!



Di Hall – MBRA Secretary