

When Books were King

Celebrating 100 years of the Mentone Public Library serving the community.

1925 - 2025

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Front cover: Long-term Library volunteer the late Lu Rose makes a careful selection from among the library's unique catalogue.

Volunteers created a book lender for the people

In 1925, with radio in its infancy, films restricted to black-and-white silence, and television the futuristic notion of an inspired Scottish inventor, books were king.

They still provided the most accessible creative runway for a person's imagination to take flight.

It was also long before municipal lending centres were even being considered, Mentone Public Library launched by the people, for the people, 35 years before the first local Council Library would open its doors at Parkdale.

Blossoming in this literary void, the resolute operation grew and grew to the point it was lending out books by the hundreds every day. At its peak in 1957, loans totalled an astonishing 79,442 for the 12 months.

It is hard to visualise that scenario now, but older volunteers relate tales of the glory days when "people were lining up in the street outside."

"There they would be, books in hand, waiting patiently to return them and take out more," they recall.

A constant challenge was that the library was not always sited in a consistent, readily identifiable location. Across the 100 years it has been shunted around to a handful of locales, like pass-the-parcel at a five-year-old's birthday party.

Some addresses were exotic, such as its original sharing of space with the Mentone Miniature Rifle Range. Some were rather unedifying, such as 'The Old Tin Shed' in a recreation reserve. Some had a touch of class, being housed in the Mordialloc City Council Chambers. Some were proffered as a last-minute alternative to killing the whole operation off, underlining the conviction of a handful of less-than-sympathetic councillors.

What to make then of its present home, tucked away at the "Rear" of 36 Florence Street? One word that comes to mind is "discreet ..."

Undaunted, a constant stream of men and women voluntarily gave up their time to check books in and out, to buy them and catalogue them, to weed out the damaged ones, and to repair the salvageable. At different times, the latter were sent off to soldiers on the battlefield, or to country kids to help them with their literacy, or to local charities to support those in need.

As is outlined in this book - a combination of members' recollections, reports, poems a year-by-year history seasoned with local, national and international events cherry-picked to give the reader a sense of time and place - those volunteers were determined to give ordinary folk, the men, women and children of Mentone, the opportunity to expand their minds via the wonder of the written word. A truly noble cause that they felt should never be abandoned, no matter what the location.

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Why a library was proposed in the first place

Why did a band of enthusiastic Mentone citizens get together in 1925 and decide to take on the daunting task of launching a library from the ground up?

After all, an earlier version had already collapsed.

The timing had a lot to do with it, the decision being made seven years after the end of World War 1, when the scarring physical and mental wounds of that most cruel of military conflagrations were finally starting to heal.

It was exquisitely explained some forty years later by the library's President, Mr. O. C. Phillips, in 1967:

"Not the least of the social benefits that accrued from the Great World War was the broadening of the horizons of people everywhere.

"Pre-war isolation and parochialism was supplemented by a thirst for knowledge of the social and economic life of people in other lands.

"Thoughtful people everywhere believed that if peace were to be maintained, a close and sympathetic understanding of the way in which people of other nations lived must be achieved.

"Travel and reading were a means to this end. The former was costly and often impracticable but, with adequate organisation, the written word could reach all who wished to participate. It was natural, therefore, that there was an upsurge of interest in books on a wide range of subjects."

He then added that it had been no easy path:

"Although Government assistance was negligible and there existed no co-ordinating library associations to which enthusiasts could turn for help, several communities in Victoria proceeded with the establishment of community libraries which were destined to face strong competition from the mushroom growth of commercial libraries."

Everyone agreed that the challenge, no matter how confronting, was worth taking on.

Members explain what the library is all about

Whether providing the quite ambience to inspire creativity, or hosting an illuminating author presentation, Mentone Public Library has provided a wonderful haven for the literary minded over the years, as these Members outline:

Lindsay Bamfield

Tucked away in the Melbourne suburb of Mentone is a library.

Staying with my daughter in Mentone in 2018 for the birth of her first baby, I did some shopping for her and spotted a sign to Mentone Public Library. I couldn't actually see where the library was and, time being of the essence, I had to rush back with the shopping.

Just under a year later I arrived in Australia to live. My first priority was to buy a home and the second to join my nearest library. I searched on the Kingston website and found plenty of libraries including those at nearby Cheltenham and Parkdale but no mention of Mentone. I guessed it had been closed like so many of the libraries in my native UK. My former local library in North London had been drastically reduced in size and hundreds of others in UK closed in spite of public protest. But a little more investigation found I was wrong. Mentone Public Library was alive and well, albeit now sleeping during Covid lockdowns.

You won't find it on the Kingston library website because it's an independent public library. On 14th May 2022 it celebrated its 97th birthday. In its newly painted interior, a number of us gathered around its brand-new tables amidst the bookshelves lining the walls and read aloud short pieces of our writing. Some were published authors, others still dabbling and some yet to commit to calling themselves a writer; all were made welcome.

Established in 1925 - making it the longest surviving community library in Melbourne's City of Kingston - Mentone Public Library has always been staffed entirely by volunteers. Not only lending books, the library's mission is to encourage literary discussion, promote local authors and run community events.

I learned about its history from the City of Kingston's Local History website in an article by Graham J. Whitehead.

Mentone first had a library in 1890 consisting of three rooms in the Skating Rink with a selection of 300 books and newspapers. Later, the books were transferred to an estate agency as the rink's room closed in winter. Lack of council funding and support led the people of Mentone to set about raising funds to establish their own library building.

To raise money, they held a garden fete to be opened by the governor of Victoria, Sir John Fuller. He spoke of the importance of education and reading but, he warned, there were also many books, the trashy "shilling shockers", which if read, left the reader worse for having read them. He hoped the good people of Mentone would avoid such nonsense. In spite of their best endeavours, the library closed down in 1924. Perhaps because those good people read too many shilling shockers!

A few months later a group of twenty-five people met with the aim of establishing a new library and on May 6th, 1925, a temporary library opened in the rooms of the Rifle Range in Brindisi Street. It boasted 120 subscribers who could borrow any of their 550 books.

After the first ten years 175,000 books had been exchanged, with the stock now numbering 4500.

The library moved home to a room in the Council Chambers in 1955, a time when the establishment of a new free municipal public library was under discussion eventually resulting in the library at Parkdale. The Mentone library was struggling and once again moved home, this time to a large container in the recreation ground. Another couple of moves found the library eventually settling into a room to the rear of the Citizen's Advice Bureau in Florence Street in 1997 which is still its home today and where I made my first visit.

Today the shelves are packed with around 3500 books bought with library funds and grants from Kingston City Council, a great supporter of the library, and donations from members and other benefactors.

From its inception as the only library in the area almost a hundred years ago Mentone Public Library is now sandwiched between well-stocked free public libraries, so this little library needed to rethink its position. The committee are repurposing it as a Writers Centre and in keeping with that aim, its library stock will focus on books about the locale, whether histories, memoirs or fiction as well as books by local authors.

The volunteers kept events going during pandemic lockdowns by transferring to Zoom and they took advantage of the library's closure to smarten it up, but it remains a delightful combination of old and new.

Judy Sullivan

My membership of the library began after retiring as an art teacher at Mentone Girls' Secondary College in 1996. Many delightful Saturday mornings were spent listening to local authors displaying their wares, encouraged by President Tony Brooker and Secretary Julia Reichstein, who had breathed new life into an 'old girl' that had existed for almost a century. Julia instigated a highly successful literary showcase dubbed 'Author for all Seasons,' which I have enjoyed tremendously. Our Bayside area is agog with creative talent, and Julia saw the gap and gave them a forum.

How good was it to have a real author tell us not only about the art of writing a book, but also about the process of printing it, and elements such as what sort of cover would enhance the final presentation! Up until then I had I never thought much about the size or weight of a book. With each presentation coming up, I wanted to see what the author had in store for me. This was so different from painting or playing a piece of music, which is what I was used to.

The library then broadened its charter from pure writing into exploring music, poetry, and even theatre. Who could forget Tony dressed in a skirt in an Agatha Christie melodrama complete with chalk outlined body on carpeted floor? Just as Covid hit in 2019, we were even diversifying into art with an exhibition planned.

The author talks continue to this day and the presentations are both stimulating and interesting. I have both been part of the audience and presented as well.

I had never written anything until I met up with another member of the library, Terri Adams. We were part of a creatives conglomerate called the Kingston Art Network, a local support group of kindred spirits across all arts - visual, aural, written.

I was also involved with the U3R Choir, a large group of highly acclaimed local musicians who got together to enjoy music and give concerts, and Terri and I met there. Unfortunately, Covid 19 killed this and it never recovered.

Terri had an impressive professional record as a radio actress in the days when radio ruled the air waves. She has a beautiful speaking voice and was doing local radio on 88.3 Southern FM.

"Judy, write me a play about this," she instructed me one day, passing over a faded newspaper report on a bizarre murder.

What could I do?

I began writing. And as I was doing it, and the various voices were coming to me, I realised that this was a labour of love. As each word hit the page, I couldn't wait to see what would come next! That was just the beginning. In the end I amassed a large body of work which I made into a book. It was my secret indulgence.

Over time I must have written over 20 plays. I'd write them, Terri would take part in them, produce them, and broadcast them.

It has been a wonderful experience.

Terri Adams OAM

The Bayside U3A Writers Group commenced in 2013 as a 'How to Write Radio Plays' course, tutored by myself and well-known theatre critic and author Dr Cheryl Threadgold OAM. It worked so well, course participants then decided to continue monthly sessions, and now they explore a variety of genres, including fiction, non-fiction, and poetry.

I felt that Judy had all the skills to create radio plays, and the first one she wrote proved the point. It has been a joy to produce them and broadcast them on 88.3 Southern FM.

Sometimes Judy provides a scene to be performed at the library's Open Mic session, and it is a thrill to get others involved and do a round table read of her work.

My late husband Derek and I settled in Mentone many years ago, and enjoyed going to the Lolly Shop Café, which was an "informal Mentone club", where reading material was provided for patrons. A blackboard would feature fascinating chalk-written quotes. These were changed daily and provided debate or laughter as we sipped our skinny flat whites. Eons ago, 88.3 Southern FM had its premises at 22 Balcombe Rd, Mentone, and the Lolly Jar was popular with many presenters.

With its Citizen Advice Bureau, Op Shop, plenty of retail stores, and a pet shop near Coles where Derek and I bought our dog's meat, Mentone was a good place to live. In those days there was even a State Savings Bank.

But not everything was above board.

One time the Mordialloc-Chelsea Leader ran a story, "Drug bust in Mentone". The proprietors had been caught with narcotics in their upstairs premises. Shock, horror for Mentonians, especially in that era.

Another time, a new shop opened next door to the Lolly Jar. The shop window was done up in tasteful decor, and the place looked affluent, but we never saw anybody go in or come out, and Derek and I could never work out what their actual business was.

Then one day, a headline revealed all. "Brothel in Mentone". There was another, more discreet entry via the laneway. Just goes to show you never can tell.

Dorothy Plummer

Things have changed a lot since the 1920s and the simpler days of horse drawn lorries. That was when I was born, and when the Mentone Public Library was first established.

At the time, Mentone and Mordialloc were seaside resorts, places to go on hot summers days for outings and Sunday School picnics. The family would take the train, loaded down with towels, food, a sun umbrella, and buckets and spades. We'd rub coconut oil all over our bodies and feast on raspberry cordial and ice-cream from the ice creamery.

Long days in the sun, splashing in the Bay, playing on the sand, taking part in egg-and-spoon, three-legged and potato-sack races, before hopping aboard the train for the return journey, tired and sunburnt.

Later, when cars became more common, holiday makers camped along the foreshore from Mordialloc to Parkdale. The annual Carnival, Pompei's Boat Building works and Doyle's Hotel all provided backdrops to carefree summer holidays.

Trawlers fished the Bay bringing their haul back home to Mordialloc Creek as dusk fell.

We children fished with hope in our hearts from Mordialloc Pier. When bored with that, we'd launch ourselves into the water with a splash.

Allnuts had boats for hire for the Dads to wet a line in the Bay and the fish and chip and Chinese shops provided relief for the Mums from the relentless task of feeding their families.

I remember the Sea Scouts where boys could imagine they were riding the high seas, Holden's Drapery Store, the Post Office and the Amcal chemist on the corner and, of course, the palm trees.

Horses! Always horses! The Epsom Racecourse up the road, horse stables amongst the market gardens, and horses on the early morning swimming, rolling in the sand.

Silhouettes of children jumping from the pier in front of the glorious sunsets over the water. Tired bodies drifting to sleep in their canvas shelters.

The dunny man who collected the sewage cans was a daily early morning sight, until the 60s saw the arrival of the septic tank and later the town sewerage. Only racing drivers wore seat belts and all the services came to the home - the grocer, the baker, the butcher, the woodman, the iceman and the green grocer's truck.

The Heidelberg School of Artists captured the beauty of our neighbourhood for posterity.

When we compare the locations today, very little has changed. It is still a beautiful place.

I have always been interested in books and other writers and so it seemed natural that I would be involved in the Mentone Public Library, which over the years has been like a club of like-minded people.

I have always been a writer. I was first published when I was 15 years old in the University High School publication 'Ubique', with a piece morosely named "The Death Symphony."

Then as an Early Childhood Educator I wrote for the children I taught, using developmentally appropriate language and themes, rhythm, rhyme, and predictability. Kids love playing with language, discovering how it works, and their enthusiasm was my enjoyment.

Mentone Public Library gave me a chance to showcase my books and interact with other creatives.

I sometimes despair at the way we pigeon-hole children today, expecting them to be little robots, doing things by the book and passing testing regimes that adults have set for them.

We treat human development as set in stone and fuss too much about things that come naturally. We are too quick to label and this affects a child for the rest of his/her life.

In my ideal world, I would concentrate on the adults who are around the children with an emphasis on providing a rich language environment. Creative play is crucial.

With some small exceptions in the case of neurological conditions, if a young child is spoken to, listened to, read to, and played with, then language skills will happen naturally. Leo the Late Bloomer is just that. Given time, he will blossom.

Fiona Oakes

The Mentone Public Library regularly comes to life with Author Talks and Open Mic days for experienced and aspiring writers alike. So much inspiration is gained from these fabulous events and the sharing of knowledge and gentle guidance from other writers is so valuable. With the incredible milestone of its 100th birthday, it is certainly cause for celebration including a Literary Festival that will highlight what it presents and what it has achieved. As a new member, I know I join everyone associated with this unique group in looking forward to a successful outcome. I truly believe the success of this Centenary Celebration will encourage new supporters and see us into the future.

Denise Tobin Shine

When the Mentone Public Library Committee suggested that a Literary Festival should be held next May 2025 to coincide with the Centenary of the library, I immediately felt a rush of enthusiasm.

As an older published writer, I know first-hand how important such an event could be for emerging writers or just great lovers of books. For many years I have attended the Melbourne Writers' Festival and enjoyed listening to the wisdom of established Australian writers such as Michael Robotham, Geraldine Brooks and Helen Garner. Many international writers have also given of their time, and I know have inspired many a writer to "keep going and not give up their dreams" to see their name in print.

However, of most importance and inspiration by far, have been the occasional local literary festivals held by Councils over the years. For example, the Bayside Writers Festival of 2019 finally convinced and showed me how to publish my second book, *Jeremiah's Trunk*. It's so important that writers are shown the pathways to how to write creatively by having the opportunity to attend workshops and presentations by gifted writers. I've found over the years, many are only too happy to share their skills, when given the opportunity at a writers' festival.

Mentone Public Library has supported local writers for years - including me - by encouraging them and giving them the opportunity to highlight their books. The fact that the present energetic and forward-thinking members see the need, and are prepared to conduct, such a Festival for local writers and readers in the community, should be applauded and encouraged by the Kingston Council. Also, it would be a great way to generate more interest in the library and encourage younger people to attend and thus guarantee a healthy future for it.

It's a hidden gem awaiting an even brighter future.

Julia Reichstein

I express my congratulations to all involved on the MPL Centenary Committee and the MPL community for this wonderful achievement and milestone.

I certainly remember well when 'An Author for All Seasons' launched in March 2011 with local author Shirley Randles. I never, ever imagined I'd be running 11 series of a local literary outreach endeavour.

Seeing the initiative take flight and meeting so many wonderful local authors across the City of Kingston and surrounding municipalities will always be a special memory and time in my life.

I'm very proud of "The Little Library That Could ... and Did."

Congratulations again. All the very best for the future.

AN AUTHOR FOR ALL SEASONS

Taking us deep into the mind of the creative

A key element to the survival and resurgence of the Mentone Public Library was the launch of 'An Author For All Seasons', the creative presentation series originally devised by Julia Reichstein, who had joined the library in 2008 as a volunteer book cataloguer and later became our long-serving and indefatigable Secretary.

Launched in 2011, Julia's idea was to both revitalise interest in the library and "serve as a promotional launch pad to local authors, poets and storytellers."

It proved so successful, it grew out of its title, which was based on Julia's belief that she would probably only be able to book four authors for that first year – that is, one per season. It soon settled into hosting up to 10 writers per year, on a monthly basis, not only providing a platform for local writers but also award-winning big sellers.

Importantly, it gave the audience some insight into the wonderful world of the writer.

What are authors like? How do they go about their business? What sort of life do they lead? Since its inception in 2011, 'An Author For All Seasons' has shone a light on the world of the dedicated author, ranging from the anxious first-time self-publisher to the accomplished international big seller.

One thing it has revealed is that authors by and large are generous with their time. That they are keen to share their knowledge, that they are happy to reveal how they dream up their stories, that they are willing to outline how they go about the task.

Especially when it comes down to the Great Writing Technique Divide. Are they a 'plotter', steadfastly constructing the architecture of the book first before putting pen to paper? Or are they a 'pantser', hitting the keyboard straight away, flying by the seat of their pants and seeing what unfolds?

When they spell out that first sentence, does it flow easily from there? Or do they bleed all over the keyboard?

Is it a feeling of glowing satisfaction when it is finished? Or sheer, unabashed relief?

Their themes vary, from spectacular science fiction to lovelorn romance to horrific relationship challenges. There is pop lit, cultural folklore, personal memoir, and page-turning crime.

Local authors, following the old axiom of "write what you know", often set their work in a time and place that we all recognise, giving us the chance to learn more about characters, invented or otherwise, that are part of our daily lives.

The beauty is that the series brings together a community of like-minded people, offering the opportunity for attendees to mix with other readers who are passionate about literature – the bonus being that they get to meet the author and have a chat.

The brainchild of volunteer Julia Reichstein, 'Author' not only offered the opportunity for local writers to talk about their work, but brought new energy, a change of direction, and a much-needed boost to the library's finances.

As is outlined in 'The Ninth Second Decade, - 2005 to 2014', long-term committee members were at first reluctant to stray from the library's original brief, even though annual book borrowings had dropped from more than 70,000 in the library's heyday to less than 200. When the idea for the program was first raised by Julia, along with three other clientele boosting proposals, it was described as a "very good" concept but would need further discussion and feasibility studies.

Persistence won out and on March 5, 2011, the project got underway, Julia declaring that she felt "incredibly blessed". The title came from her humble feeling that they would probably only get four authors in a year, that is, four seasons, but it very rapidly moved beyond that, running monthly at 11 o'clock on a Saturday morning for anything up to 10 times a year.

From there it has presented an extraordinary range of creatives, the emphasis being on local talent but ultimately including award winners and major literary figures.

It has not been limited to authors, either, expanding into poets, singers, actors, cartoonists, playwrights, performance groups and history enthusiasts.

It also encouraged the library to launch additional literary programs, including Page Turners, Open Mic, Creative Writing Workshops, and The Writer Meets The Readers, strengthening its resolve to re-invent itself as a Writers Centre.

Long may it live.

The presenters

Presenters from 2011 to 2025, with at least one title of the works or themes they presented, and allowing for errors/omission/additions, include:

Alan Rose: The Fabulous Bush Pigs.

Alex Miller: Max, Coal Creek.

Alice Pung: One Hundred Days.

Alison Knight: Peter Stone, The Close, The Undiscovered Room.

Amanda Apthorpe: Whispers In The Wiring, A Single Breath.

Anita Bentata: The Wolf In A Suit.

Barry Dickins: One Punch.

Bayside Poetry Group: Heart & Soul Food.

Bep Gomperts: Amsterdam, 1940-45, The Shadow of My Life.

Beverley Pinder OAM: Pride Without Prejudice.

Bob Whiteway with Shirley Whiteway and Jane Mack: Teacher Inside Out.

Bruce Hargrave: The Chef Shot Through.

Caitlin Johnstone: The Complete Book of Astrology, The Angel Chronicles.

Christine Heart Savage: Living Beyond Stress, Anxiety and Overwhelm.

Cindy Rochstein: Mendemic.

Danae Andrea Harwood: The Writer's Runway, How We Published Then And How We Publish Now. With The Blue Chair Poets (Yvette Bentata-Moore, Sarah Farrugia, Debbie Williams): How We Learned Then And How We Learn Now. As Danae Andrea Konidaris: Guide to Your Greek Citizenship By Descent, Guide to Deferring Your Greek Army Service Indefinitely.

David Dodd: Rock Around the Historical Clock.

Dee White: K9 Heroes - True Tales of Real Rescues.

Denise Tobin Shine: The Undertaker's Daughter, Jeremiah's Trunk.

Dorothy Booth: Friends of Mentone Station & Gardens, Winning More Friends.

Dorothy Plummer: Writing for Language Development in Children.

Dr Cheryl Threadgold OAM: In the Name of Theatre, The Riddle-O-Pedia.

Elizabeth Flann: Beware of Dogs.

Elsie Johnstone: Ma's Garden, Our Little Town, Lakes Entrance Girl, Catholic Girl, Old Girl. And with Graeme Johnstone: Lover, Husband, Father, Monster trilogy, Come on Victoria I'm Done.

Gabrielle Greig: Re-framing.

Gael Cresp: Fish For Breakfast, Gilbert Alexander Pig.

Galit Klas: Page It & Stage It.

Gary Seeary: The Moonbeamers, Horty Brown & Co.

Gaytana Adorna: Writing Against Adversity.

George Ivanoff: Monster Island, Other Worlds, The Australia Survival Guide, The Human Body Survival Guide, The Supernatural Survival Guide, You Choose Series, Royal Flying Doctor Service Adventure Series, Lethbridge Stewart, and many, many more.

Geraldine Colson: The Soldier Who Didn't Die.

Glenice Whitting: Pickle to Pie; Something Missing.

Graeme Johnstone: The Playmakers, Joan - Child of Labor, Chardonnay Socialist, OK Boomer, Normie The Musical. With Elsie Johnstone: Lover, Husband, Father, Monster trilogy, Come on Victoria I'm Done.

Grant Finnegan: Flight 19, The Seventh List.

Helen Merrick-Andrews: Haiku Saga of Life In Kingston.

Ian Cochrane: Cards and Clay.

J. B. Rowley: Whisper My Secret.

J. M. Yates: The Vine Bleeds.

Jackie Kerin: Lyrebird! A True Story. With Beth Cregan & Matteo: Grandparents Storytelling Day.

Jacquie Wise: The Gift of the Gab.

James Maclean: Mordialloc.

Jane Sinclair: Shy Love Smiles and Acid Drops.

Janine Marshall Wood: No Ordinary Convict.

Jessica Hooper with George Ivanoff: You Choose book series. With George Ivanoff & Joe Bosa: Royal Flying Doctor Service Adventure Series.

John Lowe: Houndstooth.

Joy Meekings: Derek's Dilemma. With Cerise de Gelder: Simon Says. With Dr Cheryl Threadgold OAM: Writing Radio Plays.

Judy Sullivan: The Perfect Husband.

Julie DeBondt-Barker: The Mourning After.

Kate Forster: On Writing Romance.

Katie McMahon: The Mistake; The Accident.

Ken Piesse: Living The Dream.

Kerryn Mayne: Lenny Marks Gets Away With Murder, Joy Moody is Out of Time.

Kylie Ladd: I'll Leave You With This.

Kylie Orr: The Eleventh Floor.

Leah Kaminsky: Stitching Things Together, Writer M.D.

Leanda Michelle: The Light of the Truth.

Leeanne Vernon: The Scholarship Kid, Netball Dreamz.

Legends of the Skies: How To Fly A Play When Grounded, Tale of an Italian Aviator's Landing in Melbourne, Meet the Playwrights.

Leonie Binge: Nellie's Vow.

Liliane Grace: Quest for Riches, Wanted - Greener Grass, Power of the Light, The Boy Who Barked.

Lyn Duclos: Beneath my Skin.

Maggie Morrison: Legends of the Skies, theatrical excerpts.

Mairi Neil: Writing Against Adversity.

Maree Roberts: The Impossible History of Trotsky's Sister.

Mark McGurgan: Original songs.

Mary O'Rourke: A Life Not Ordinary.

Max Gillies: On Being Bob Hawke, and others.

Meesha Salaria: Start - To Begin with Beginning.

Mentone Mordialloc Portrait Group: Narrating With Brush Strokes.

Mentone Writers Group: Memoir writing.

Michael Stromenger: The Cigarette Filter, You and Me.

Mick Both: Cooking for Kids by Dads.

Mordialloc Writers Group (Mairi Neil, Glenice Whitting, Maureen Hanna, Barbara Davies, Jillian Bailey): Kingston My City, selected works.

Natalie Vujovich: Where Did I Leave My Dragon?

Noah Berlow & Szilva Vecserdy: A Story Teller's Quest.

Pamela Holko: Wednesdays at Gam's.

Patricia Bowmer: Akalina - Out Of The Woods.

Peter Kocic: Adventures of Luke.

Philippa Bishop: Tupperware Presentation, introduction, Dr David Taylor.

Pina Grieco-Tiso: Murph's Mob, Sticks & Stones, For Sale - One Family.

Richard Falkinger: Josephine, Wolfspeer, Ringing The Changes.

Roza & Margarita Riaikenen: The Laws of Life, Creator and Creators.

Sara Vidal: Bella and Chaim - the Story of Beauty and Life.

Shirley Randles: No Locked Doors - Jewish Life in Shepparton, Writing Against Adversity. With the U3A Writing Group: I Remember.

Shirley Whiteway: Juliet - The hatmaker's loves ...

Susan Berg: The Girl Who Lived.

Suzanne McCourt: The Lost Child, Old Dogs.

Suzy J. Brown: Freedom Finds Her, Calmer Suits Her.

Suzy Zail: The Wrong Boy, The Tatooed Flower, I Am Change.

Tanya de Haan: Holistic Happiness.

Teena Hartnett and Matteo: Grandparents Story Telling Day.

Terry Bahat: Fit Mind, Fab Body. With Sara Vidal: Kingston Seniors Festival Literary Showcase.

The Bent Sisters (Liliane Grace, Anita Bentata, Yvette Bentata-Moore): Wanted.

The Blue Chair Poets (Yvette Bentata-Moore, Sarah Farrugia, Debbie Williams): Threesome, Poetry Healing Workshop.

Vikki Petraitis: The Frankston Murders, The Russell Street Bombing, Cops, Drugs, Lawyer X and Me.

Virginia Lowe: The Myopic's Vision.

“I had no idea you were here!”

It's an involuntary expression, full of surprise, often tinged with puzzlement, followed invariably by a sigh of delight.

It happens quite often, still to this day.

A first-time visitor peeks through the open library door, steps inside, looks around, and declares:

“I had no idea you were here!”

Sometimes, after absorbing the creative ambience, the atmospheric sense of history, the shelf after shelf of neatly catalogued books, he or she might go a little further, and add, “In fact, I had no idea you existed ...”

But exist the Mentone Public Library has. For 100 years in fact, despite that oft-repeated mantra, a reaction particularly expressed since the early 1990s when it was moved to its current spot, a room at the back of a rather unremarkable Californian bungalow housing the Mentone Community Assistance and Information Bureau.

It was the shift that spawned the library's current and rather less than salubrious official address of “Rear, 36 Florence Street.”

Try as they have, no committee person, no volunteer, no member, no author, no inspired poet, no council official, not even a well-meaning postman, has ever come up with an assignation other than the ungainly “Rear.” The major problem being that the library is not officially separated on the property title, so it cannot be endowed with something more routine, such as “2/36 Florence”, or “36B Florence.”

As well, despite the best efforts to erect suitable signage by everyone associated and varying thoughts of prettying it up with street art, the library can be hard to find in the first place.

It can be easily missed among the yawning space and ever-circulating vehicles of its home paddock, the Mentone Coles Car Park. Hence the cry of delight uttered after solving the puzzle and entering.

The first version of the library

While we are celebrating 100 years of the Mentone Public Library, there was an earlier incarnation that started out with similar enthusiasm and achieved many of its aims. But - as Lindsay Bamfield has pointed in her splendid piece earlier in this book - it eventually faltered and closed.

The Mentone Athenaeum and Free Library had its beginnings at a public meeting in October, 1890, which very quickly resulted in an operation set up in three rooms at the Mentone Skating Rink at a rental of five shillings a week. It offered about 300 books, newspapers, a reading area and an amusements section.

It was officially opened by Victoria's then Chief Secretary, the Honourable George Langridge, who said that though Mentone was only "a young town, you had progressed splendidly." "Most young towns had churches and a skating rink, or a racecourse or a free library, but Mentone had all these," he said.

Despite the glowing support of the Chief Secretary, who died some months later, neither Government nor local Council financial support was forthcoming.

Nevertheless, things progressed enough to the point that in 1912 a fund-raising program was launched to construct a building to house the library. A garden fete on the Recreation Reserve was declared open by the Governor of Victoria, Sir John Fuller, and a juvenile fancy dress ball was held at the Mentone Skating Rink.

The building never eventuated, war intervened, lives changed, the impetus was lost, and by 1924 the noble idea had collapsed.

Shortly after, the need for a local library was recognised once more and planning began in earnest.

So, where are we up to now?

Perhaps the best summary of the state of the library is spelled out in the Minutes of the latest Annual General Meeting held on Saturday, November 23, 2024, at 11 am, at the Library.

Present

Graeme Johnstone, Elsie Johnstone, Nathaniel Davies, Philippa Davies, Lesley McGurgan, Garry Andrews, Lyn Duclos, Kevin Balshaw, Tony Boon, Caitlin Johnstone, Ian McMahon, Judy Sullivan, Lindsay Bamfield, Ethan Moyle.

Apologies

Katherine Lee, Geri Colson, Terri Adams, Denise Tobin Shine, Patsy Smith, Ross Smith, Jenny Frewin, Tim Foley, Betty Nelson, Ron Goldsmith.

Welcome

The 2024 Annual General Meeting of the Mentone Public Library commenced with a warm welcome to all attendees. Acknowledgment was given to the Traditional Owners of the land, the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation, expressing respect for their enduring connection to land, water, and culture.

Acceptance of Minutes of 2023 AGM

Review, matters arising and acceptance of the 98th AGM Minutes, which highlighted the transformative developments propelling the Mentone Public Library into a new era including embracing technology such as internet connectivity, credit card facilities, social media advertising, and the launch of our website, mentonepubliclibrary.com.

Funding expansions and tax-deductible donations were also secured as well as a shift away from lending books to curate a unique collection, particularly local and Australian material.

The result of this effort was evident in the upbeat financial results, which saw the library return to profitability, a situation enhanced by reduced spending on equipment and diversification into other income streams.

Accepted. Moved: Graeme Johnstone. Seconded: Philippa Davies.

Summary of Department Reports

President's Report, Graeme Johnstone

The library, now just one year away from its Centenary, took further steps in the preceding 12 months to ensure its longevity. Main points included:

In our continuing move to re-invent ourselves as a Writers Centre, the library invested money for the first time in securing talent for our 'Author For All Seasons' program. In doing so, we drew 'name' writers of the calibre of Alice Pung, the noted chronicler of growing up Asian in Australia.

As well as making splendid presentations, these authors spread the word amongst the writing community about what a unique, welcoming and encouraging environment the Mentone Public Library provided.

Although we ventured for the first time into paying author expenses, we still made a profit.

As an indicator as to where the library is heading, we determined that as book loans were now negligible, we would no longer charge members the fee for borrowing an item, or fine them for its late return. The change, along with other initiatives, resulted in an almost doubling of membership, a great sign for the future.

We secured a three-year Partnership Grant with Kingston City, providing us with a fixed sum each year from Kingston to cover our day-to-day working expenses. A vital result secured by Development Manager Katherine Lee.

There was much discussion and planning put into the 2025 Centenary celebrations, which are not only designed to tell the world who we are and what we are up to, but hopefully to set us up for another 100 years.

My thanks to all members of our very talented and enthusiastic Committee who have done a fantastic job in helping the Library grow and re-shape its identity.

Now in my fifth year as President and having been involved with the library for 13 years, I am considering my future in the role and urge committee, members and supporters to consider becoming more involved in the Library's leadership.

Accepted. Moved: Caitlin Johnstone. Seconded: Nathaniel Davies.

Treasurer's Report, Graeme Johnstone

Our first ever move into spending money on talent for the Author For All Seasons series proved very successful. It resulted in:

A significant increase in audience numbers.

Attracting many people that had never heard of us before.

A doubling of Membership figures on last year.

Although expenses were up from approximately \$4000 last year to \$7000 this year, income still jumped fractionally more.

Allowing for ongoing depreciation of assets, we made a profit for the year of \$221.

Not an Elon Musk figure, but on the right side of the ledger, and an improvement on the \$14 of the previous year.

My thanks to our Auditor, Garry Andrews, who not only does a splendid job auditing the books but also provides helpful advice during the year, based on his many years of experience as an accountant.

Mr Andrews reported that the records showed a "a true and fair view of all transactions for the year", that net assets stand at \$15,646, and that the "prospects for the future are bright."

He suggested combining the Centenary with a Membership campaign, aiming at a specific target, and naming it "A Hundred Members for A Hundred Years."

Accepted. Moved: Lindsay Bamfield. Seconded, Tony Boon.

Collections Management Report, Philippa Davies

There have been quite a few things happening in the collections space this year.

We have simplified our unique catalogue by eliminating the need for numbers and organising the books in order according to the authors' surnames. It will now be much easier to find multiple books from the same author when using the spreadsheet.

Our book collection continues to be regularly updated, through buying a collection of new books, specifically crime and Australiana, plus we have had two very generous donations from community members.

Cataloguing and adding labels to the new Australiana collection has been completed.

We are looking into establishing a basic computer system that more easily keeps track of the books going in and out of the library and who is borrowing them, as well as looking into how we make it clear that we are a subscription library, and the benefits a library such as ours provides.

A major aim is to put the catalogue up on the internet to provide people with easy access.

Accepted. Moved: Lyn Duclos. Seconded: Nathaniel Davies.

Newsletter & Communication Report, Nathaniel Davies

The Library/Writers Centre has been gradually increasing in membership with our communication approach concentrating on:

Informing the current members of what the library is and does, and how and where they can engage.

Prompting interest for the audience of irregular non-members who don't use the service every time.

Educating them in what is available and the opportunities they have, as well as publishing stories about our Library /Writers Centre that may spark interest and get them to come along, from which point they might become members.

Prompting interest and building prospective new members from the public outside of our existing library networks.

The newsletter and mailouts are most effective at reaching both current members and non-members who have come to an event and requested to be on the list.

Flyers, social media and community radio are reaching and engaging new members and informing people what's on.

The website and blog sites cover all of these aspects, with the website being found by curious interested parties who want more information.

Accepted. Moved: Judy Sullivan. Seconded: Leslie McGurgan.

Social Media Report, Caitlin Johnstone

This year we had a budget of \$500 to advertise on our social media pages - the Facebook page for Mentone Public Library (MPL) and the Facebook page for Mentone Public Library (MPLWC) - and it had a quantifiably positive effect.

We roughly divide the advertising spend between the two, according to whether the subject we are advertising appeals to readers, in which case it goes to the MPL page, or writers, which is advertised on the MPLWC page.

Advertising makes a huge difference to our visibility on social media. For example, a jump in views came from our advertising campaign for Gary Seeary's 'Author For All Seasons' appearance.

Advertising also has a direct and quantifiable impact on ticket sales to our events, with a jump in Trybooking activity as soon as the ads go up.

Another advantage is that advertising brings in new people who wouldn't otherwise know about either the event or our library.

Accepted. Moved: Graeme Johnstone. Seconded: Philippa Davies.

Development Officer's Report, Katherine Lee

In a significant milestone for the library, we signed a multi-year partnership funding agreement with the Kingston City Council in 2024. This agreement will provide \$3000 annually for the next three years, through to 2027.

The funding will cover the library's ongoing expenses such as rent, insurance, internet, subscriptions, stationery, maintenance and so on, allowing us the freedom to apply other income to manage our literary programs while expanding into new projects.

The securing of this agreement is the result of more than three years of negotiations and applications.

Meanwhile, we:

Acquitted - that is, provided proof of our spending as outlined in our application - the \$3,477.56 in Annual Grants funding received from Kingston City for the 2023/2024 period.

Put in a separate application of funding for the Mentone Public Library Centenary Literary Festival.

Continued to successfully operate our relatively new Australian Cultural Fund portal account, which we set up to allow donations from donors to be tax-deductible. This is an alternative to being registered as a charity.

Accepted. Moved: Graeme Johnstone. Seconded: Philippa Davies.

Writer Meets The Readers Report, Elsie Johnstone

Another successful year with members loving the opportunity to meet our local authors in person and to discuss with them the book that they wrote and that we read.

It was an education to be at the same table, to explore a variety of genres and to ask questions. I also think that our authors valued the feedback that the interchange facilitated. And what a wonderful lot of authors we have in this community. The young Mum writers particularly impressed us old Mums. They are an amazing generation of capable and talented women. They manage to hold down a job, look after a family, and find time to write.

To all the local authors who so generously gave their time, thank you, on behalf of the Mentone Public Library Book Club, where the reader is privileged to meet the writers.

Accepted. Moved: Caitlin Johnstone. Seconded: Lyn Duclos.

Open Mic Report, Elsie Johnstone

This year we have seen the popular Open Mic series expand from one session a month to two. A big thankyou to Nathaniel and Pip Davies who volunteered to develop and steer a Sunday afternoon session.

Open Mic has proven to be a good sounding board for local writers of all sorts - poets, short story writers, novelists, essayists, playwrights and songwriters - who take the opportunity to air their writing in front of their peers, test their work and receive sympathetic feedback.

Over the year we have averaged 8 to 10 participants, a perfect number to ensure each person has the opportunity to participate fully.

Accepted. Moved: Leslie McGurgan. Seconded: Tony Boon.

Dungeons & Dragons Report, Daisy Johnstone

Each Thursday evening the library is the setting for a local chapter of Dungeons & Dragons, a structured, yet open-ended role-playing game, usually played indoors with the participants seated around a tabletop.

A group of young people from Mentone and surrounds gather to tell stories and act out magical fantasies. Players, including Library Member Daisy Johnstone, create an exciting story where their bold adventurers confront deadly perils.

A typical Dungeons & Dragons game consists of an "adventure", which is roughly equivalent to a single story or quest. The master either designs an original adventure or follows one of the many pre-made versions.

Our Thursday participants are required to become Library members and to pay a gold coin to cover electricity.

We believe that D&D is another way of reaching out to young storytellers and to make them familiar with the library. Who knows? One day there may be a Library President amongst them?

Accepted. Moved: Nathaniel Davies. Seconded: Graeme Johnstone.

Centenary Celebrations Report, Graeme Johnstone

On May 6, 1925, Mentone Public Library opened its doors for the first time to provide access to the wonderful world of literature for the expanding beachside community.

It deserves to be honoured, and will be, via a Centenary Literary Festival scheduled for early May, 2025.

Highlights will include:

Afternoon Tea, featuring the launch of the book, '100 Years of Mentone Public Library'

Open Mic, a night of inspired stand-up, poetry, song, and memoir.

Open Day, starting with 88.3 Southern FM Outside Broadcast, 'Ambrosia' hosted by Leanne Cutler.

Morning and Afternoon Sessions with workshops and presentations featuring a range of authors and performers.

Announcement of the Mentone Public Library Centenary Literary awards.

Accepted. Moved: Elsie Johnstone. Seconded: Caitlin Johnstone.

Full copies of all Reports are available on request.

General Business

Ideas brought up in General Business included:

Philippa Davies proposed a re-writing of the welcoming Acknowledgement of Country to say that we are meeting "on the land of the Bunurong people of the Kulin nation, the original storytellers of this area". This was considered an excellent suggestion and will be incorporated in future.

In terms of the Centenary Celebrations, ideas proposed included street performance, poetry recitations, and depending on finance, seeking sponsorship from local traders and political representatives. Promotion could include letterbox drops.

Posters at local TAFEs were suggested as a way of promoting Open Mic, along with expanding our social media footprint into Instagram, the microblogging service BlueSky and the publishing platform Substack.

It was suggested we build a 'Street Library' near our entrance for people to take/contribute books at their leisure. As well as promoting activity and interest, this would provide a visual identifier for people visiting us for the first time. If successful, more could be built around the Mentone streets.

Nominations and Elections

President: Graeme Johnstone.

Vice-President: To be appointed.

Secretary: Nathaniel Davies.

Treasurer: Graeme Johnstone.

Collections Manager: Philippa Davies.

Marketing, Publicity, Newsletter Manager: Ethan Moyle.

Social Media Manager: Caitlin Johnstone.

Development Manager: Katherine Lee.

Writer Meets Readers Manager: Elsie Johnstone.

Membership Manager: Ian McMahon.

Author Presentations Manager: To be appointed.

Accepted. Moved: Judy Sullivan. Seconded: Tony Boon.

Meeting closed: 12.20 pm.

How the 100 years unfolded, decade by decade

OUR FIRST DECADE - 1925 to 1934

The right time for a library to be launched

1925

The year 1925 is a significant one in literature, led by the publication of 'The Great Gatsby' by F. Scott Fitzgerald. It is destined to become an iconic novel, but its lacklustre sales of just 20,000 and rapid disappearance from the shelves combine to have shattering long-term effects on the author's belief in his abilities.

It coincides with the release of 'Mrs Dalloway' by Virginia Woolf, its breakthrough stream-of-consciousness style drawing both high praise and critical condemnation.

An Australian highlight is a collection of 'Poetical Works' by Henry Lawson, honouring the extraordinary output of the brilliant but troubled writer who had died just three years earlier.

Amid these heady creative times, a meeting is held in the Mentone Recreation Hall on March 16, presided over by the Mayor, Cr. William Bradshaw. It has been inspired by a gathering of the Mentone Progress Association in December of the previous year when a local resident Mr. George Maloney suggested perhaps "the time was ripe for Mentone to have a Public Library."

Maloney's proposal is enough to encourage 25 people to attend the March 16 meeting and elect a Foundation Committee comprising Messrs. G. E. Ashley, G. Davis, G. A. Desailly, H. L. Dickinson, W. Harry, A. K. Lemmon, G. A. Pepper, H. Peterson, W. Riley, M. Wilson, and A. F. Bellany, a valuable nomination as he is a trained librarian.

The appointment is also made of Maloney, Mr J. O. Thomas and Mrs. Lannan as its initial trustees.

Eight days later, on March 24, the Foundation Committee's first meeting is held and Maloney is appointed President, Dickinson as Secretary, Wilson as Treasurer, and Bellany as Librarian. The annual subscription of ten shillings attracts 15 subscribers, 150 books are bought at one shilling a copy, others are donated, including one donation of 100 books, and more are sought on loan from the Melbourne and North Melbourne Public Libraries. Offers of financial assistance include £165 passed on by the trustees of the earlier Mentone library venture which had closed due to lack of support.

As for a location, space is generously offered as temporary premises by the Mentone Miniature Rifle Club, which had been established in 1916 in Brindisi Street. Miniature or smallbore rifle clubs are spreading worldwide, providing the opportunity for shooting using smaller calibre rifles, indoors as well as outdoors, and for both men and women.

The purchase of fittings is authorised for this first home, and on May 6 the library is officially declared open with a membership of 53 subscribers. By July there are 120 subscribers and 550 books, with an amount of £10 per quarter allowed for the purchase of new stock.

The Foundation Committee ceases to function on October 26, having completed its task of establishing the library, and the first annual meeting is held next day, attended by 41 subscribers, with these office-bearers elected: President - Mr. G. Maloney; Secretary - Mr. H.

L. Dickinson; Treasurer - Mr. R. Wilson; Auditor - Mr. W. Norman; with Bellany stepping down and Dickinson taking on the additional role of Librarian.

Within six months, membership has increased to 141, and stock has grown to 1193 books, of which 714 have been donated.

It is a brilliant start to a new local project, in the middle of a decade - often referred to as The Roaring Twenties - where all things seem possible. In Paris, an exhibition of modern architecture and interior decoration gives rise to the title Art Deco; in Sydney, 2UE, Australia's oldest commercial radio station begins broadcasting; in Dublin, the Abbey Theatre, the first state-supported theatre in the English-speaking world, is established; in California, the world's first motel is opened; and in football-mad Melbourne, the VFL is expanded from nine to 12 clubs with Footscray, Hawthorn and North Melbourne joining its ranks.

Talk around the library is already swirling on the question of leaving the Rifle Club and obtaining larger, independent quarters.

1926

The library's growth and success in its first year is proving, ironically, to be a problem.

It is already running out of space for its expanding catalogue and booming membership, as well as a suitable area to conduct committee meetings.

Administrative gatherings are having to be held at the homes of committee members, or at the nearby Mentone Skating Rink in Brindisi Street. This large, barn-like building, as well as providing roller skating facilities, also hosts meetings, dances, balls and regular showings of silent movies, complete with piano player capturing the mood, by an enterprising promoter named Carr.

While the Mentone Miniature Rifle Club has been generous in allocating space for the fledgling literary operation, it is finding that hosting its new tenant is causing inconvenience in the running of its own affairs. Discussions begin about extending the rifle club rooms to accommodate both organisations, but these eventually stall.

Luckily, the Recreation Reserve Committee steps up and says that it is prepared to construct a brand-new building next door to the rifle club, which the library could use at a rental of £4 per year.

The opportunity is made more attractive by the Progress Association chipping in funds and the Mordialloc Council donating £20.

The annual meeting of subscribers in November once again elects G. Maloney as president while H. L. Dickinson and W. Wilson continue in their roles of Secretary and Treasurer.

Dickinson maintains the additional task of Librarian.

Members on the committee of management are Messrs W. Harry, R. Riley, H. P. Peterson, G. Pepper, G. Lemmon, G. Croker, E. A. Pleasants, Mrs Richardson and Miss Phillips. One seat on the committee is reserved for a nominee from the newly-proclaimed City of Mordialloc, which comprises the old Borough of Mentone & Mordialloc and a small section of Moorabbin.

The library is not the only thing on the move – down the coast, HMVS Cerebus, a once-proud flagship of the Victorian Naval Forces, is towed to Black Rock, complete with rotating gun turrets, and sunk to provide a breakwater, gradually submerging over the years as rust takes over.

In December, the library begins its move to the new location, a small timber construction erected by the Recreation Reserve Committee. By now the catalogue contains 1600 books and membership has reached 169.

With A. A. Milne introducing 'Winnie-the-Pooh', poet Dorothea Mackellar releasing a book of 'Fancy Dress and Other Verse', and Steele Rudd publishing a short story, 'The Rudd Family', illustrated by Percy Lindsay, of the famous artistic clan, things are looking rosy on the literary front.

In London, there is a moment in time that will impact greatly on the future of the world's reading habits, and in fact on everyone's life. In his Soho laboratory, a Scottish inventor named John Logie Baird provides a reporter from The Times and members of The Royal Institution with the first public demonstration of a system called "television."

1927

Now entering its third year, the running of the library is starting to firm up. This begins with its move over summer to the small timber construction built by the Recreation Reserve Committee for the library, next door to its original host, the Mentone Miniature Rifle Club in Brindisi Street.

New and old members are constantly advised that management is carried out on "departmental lines."

That is, there is a Department of the Librarian, a Department of the Secretary, and a Department of the Treasurer.

Within these departments, there is a Book Purchasing section, which attends to all buying of stock and to the removal and writing-off of out-of-date books. There is also a Book Repairing & Renovating division, which restores stock which worth maintaining.

The guidelines add: "The housekeeping and maintenance of the premises in a clean and orderly condition is in the hands of two lady members of the Committee ..."

The whole is presided over by the President, it being the duty of members at the annual meeting to appoint a Committee to carry out these various functions for the ensuing year.

The suggestion is that the only persons suitable for nomination are those who have "the time and the desire to help in the work to the extent of devoting at least one evening a week to attendance at the Counter, and also to be available if required on other occasions to assist in a Department or to attend a working bee."

With the foundations solidly in place, the retirement is announced of Mr. George Maloney, the library's first President and the local resident who instigated the idea of a library at a meeting of the Mentone Progress Association in 1924.

He is honoured as the library's first Life Member, and it is generally agreed that it is an honour he richly deserves.

For a short period, Mr. Pleasants takes over as President and during his term a 500-book Children's Section is added to the library.

On the field, Mentone Cricket Club wins its first A Grade premiership in the Frankston-Glenhuntly league, Harry Fielding blitzing Cheltenham with 8/32 in the second innings.

These events coincide with a year of great change: Parliament House is officially opened in Canberra, the ACTU is formed, playwright Alan Seymour of 'The One Day of the Year' fame is born, and gangster Squizzy Taylor is shot dead.

'Madman's Island', a novel by Ion Idriess is published, as is a poem by Judith Wright titled 'Trapped Dingo,' while German-Swiss author Hermann Hesse continues his examination of spirituality with 'Steppenwolf.'

Once again, an event comes along that will have a massive impact on how the world will be entertained and informed, with the release of the movie 'The Jazz Singer', starring Al Jolson. It is the first to feature speech and singing, thus introducing the talkies and signalling the end of the silent film era.

Coincidentally, the Council-backed Mentone Skating Rink, converted three nights a week to host films in a crowded, uncomfortable setting, is about to be challenged by English migrant and businessman Albert Lydford. He releases plans for the construction of the purpose-built New Mentone Theatre on the corner of Balcombe Road and Point Nepean Road, now Nepean Highway.

1928

Flush with stock, the library announces an innovative program of offering books free of charge and delivered, freight paid, to people in remote areas. Following a report on the plan in The Argus newspaper, 30 applications are received.

One lot of 50 books is sent to help establish a soldier settlement library at Willowvale, near Skipton, west of Melbourne, while a further batch of 50 is despatched to start a library for present and former scholars of a school at Sarsfield in East Gippsland.

Other lots are forwarded to clergymen in outback localities who undertake to distribute reading matter to residents "irrespective of denomination."

In all, 11 parcels are distributed, including one much appreciated by a party of 70 men employed constructing roads by the Country Roads Board at Gormandale in Gippsland.

The Committee's only regret is the number of applicants who had to go unsupplied.

In another first, a Children's Section is established, where children of subscribers are issued with books free of charge on Friday evenings, from 7.00 to 7.30 pm.

In this respect, the library is very appreciative of the efforts of one of its members, Mrs. J. J. Rogers, who contributes by presenting copies of 'My Magazine' to the Children's Section. She also helps out by providing magazines for the country circulation program and generally donating books from time to time to add to the library stock.

Albert Lydford's cinema plans come to fruition, his New Mentone Theatre opening in May. With its spectacular décor, spacious foyer, grand staircase, plush curtains, novel orchestra pit, 800 comfortable seats and state-of-the-art sound system, it will eventually force the perfunctory skating rink film operation into closure and take the movie-loving citizens of Mentone on a thirty-year journey through the Golden Age of Cinema.

Kilbreda College adds a new wing for boarders, the English, Scottish and Australasian Bank comes to town, a new grandstand is opened at Mentone Oval and the Tigers respond by defeating Moorabbin to win its first ever Federal Association premiership, much to the delight of an enraptured crowd.

On a national scale, it is also a year of firsts, especially in the sky, with the Royal Flying Doctor Service making its maiden official flight from Cloncurry to Julia Creek, Bert Hinkler being the first person to fly solo from England to Australia, and Charles Kingsford Smith and Charles Ulm completing a breakthrough trans-Pacific flight. Work begins on the Shrine of Remembrance and the first Speedo swimming costume is introduced.

English-born Nevil Shute, later to move to Australia and become a significant player in our literary scene, publishes his second novel, 'So Disdained', while the newest work of Miles Franklin, titled 'Up The Country', has the strap line 'A tale of early Australian squattocracy.' Everything in the publishing world is eclipsed by the launch of the controversial eleventh novel by D. H. Lawrence, titled 'Lady Chatterley's Lover', its sex scenes leading it to being dragged through the courts.

Meanwhile, the library sustains a severe loss with the tragic death of a member, Mr. W. L. Harry. A pioneer of the library movement and a former committee member, he has rendered splendid service for two years in the selection and purchase of books, and also helped in the negotiations with the Recreation Reserve Committee for the erection of the library premises in Brindisi Street.

His passing is sadly mourned, but the committee is heartened by the news that the Treasurer, Mr. R. Wilson, has recovered from a terrible accident "which at one time threatened grave possibilities."

"So seriously was the matter viewed at the time that we were advised that Mr. Wilson would require to relinquish the Treasurership for all time," the Secretary declares.

"We are pleased to report, however, that Mr Wilson's condition has improved to an extent to cause us to hope that his services in the interest and welfare of the Library will still be available for some years to come.

"Mr. Wilson has acted as Treasurer since the Library was first formed and no section of our work has been more conscientiously and thoroughly carried out than the Department of Treasurer. Our best wishes are that Mr. Wilson may long be spared to associate with the Library he has served so faithfully and well."

In further good news, 114 new members join up, with about half that number having also resigned, mainly on account of change of residence, resulting in 224 names on the members' roll representing 264 paid-up subscriptions.

The stock of books reaches 2611 volumes, book issues are up 33%, the circulation achieves just under 20,000 books for the year, and there is £56/6/10 in the bank.

With such encouraging figures, everyone is optimistically looking forward to a great new year.

That being, of course, 1929 ...

1929

Subscribers with an interest in military literature have an intriguing choice with the release of two very different books about World War 1.

These are 'A Farewell to Arms' based on Ernest Hemingway's experiences, and Erich Maria Remarque's 'All Quiet On The Western Front', describing the German point of view.

Both will go on to become classics, although Hemingway's novel, and a newly published version of 'One Thousand And One Nights', a collection of occasionally racy Arabic folk tales, both carry a Library note stating firmly that they are "Only To Be Let Out Under Censorship." No such warnings for Edna Ferber's 'Cimarron' and Katharine Susannah Prichard's 'Coonardoo'.

Mr. A. K. Lemmon becomes President, one of his challenges being to stop people continuing to take out books without the knowledge of the Librarian, thus causing "anxiety and loss."

A general plea is repeated: "The Committee would appreciate very much the co-operation of members in the detection of any member irregularly removing books, and would regard any assistance given as confidential.

"It is obvious that the smooth working of the Library involves a considerable amount of labour, quite apart from attendance at the Counter and Library openings. All this labour is given voluntarily, and members are very much indebted to their Committee accordingly. "Had we to pay for services rendered there would be no option but to substantially increase the rate of subscription, or make a drastic curtailment in the number of books purchased per annum."

Otherwise, things are looking bright. As at September 30 the library houses 2988 volumes, compared to 2611 the previous year. This follows 750 new books having been added at a cost of £164, and old and damaged books weeded out.

There is a record set of 23,072 borrowings, an increase of 3640 on the previous year, with membership rising from 222 to 233, and 'extra' books loaned generating a further £105/19/0. Buoyed by a trading profit of £33, the newly elected set of office-bearers is expanded to include 'Book Selectors' and 'Book Reviewers.'

And then ... on Black Thursday, October 24, the US stock market goes into a death spiral, and is driven further down on Black Tuesday, October 29. The Depression has arrived.

Labor's win of the Federal election, held earlier on October 12, has overnight turned into a poisoned chalice. Even Stanley Melbourne Bruce, the leader of the defeated Nationalist/Country Coalition, the first incumbent Prime Minister to lose his seat, later comments to colleagues that they were probably fortunate to get beaten.

As a pointer to the future, the lives of Robert James Lee Hawke and Hazel Susan Masterson, born six months apart in 1929, are destined to become intertwined and forever imbedded in the great Australian narrative.

1930

The Depression starts to bite, and with unemployment rising and money hard to find, people search for a beacon of light to guide them through the dark times. They find it in a horse named Phar Lap.

Having finished third in the Melbourne Cup the previous year, and then embarking on a remarkable series of victories, the giant chestnut gelding - nick-named Big Red and stabled at Braeside by trainer Harry Telford - draws a huge crowd at Flemington on the first Tuesday in November.

He sets it alight with a runaway win, truly a hero to a nation, along with his devoted young strapper Tommy Woodcock.

The library has a victory of sorts, too. Despite the downward trend of business activities throughout the state, membership hangs on at 214. And with people perhaps seeking solace via a good book, at the monthly meeting in August it is noted that 1883 books had been issued in July alone, and the book purchase level has risen to 59 books a month.

There is plenty to read on the local literary front. New publications include Miles Franklin's 'Ten Creeks Run', Katharine Susannah Prichard's 'Haxby's Circus' and Norman Lindsay's 'Redheap'. Dame Mary Gilmore's collection of poems, 'The Wild Swan' is also popular. Internationally, Leslie Charteris furthers the legend of the loveable rogue Simon Templar with 'Enter The Saint', while William Faulkner releases his Southern Gothic stream-of-consciousness masterpiece, 'As I Lay Dying.'

The tough economic times bring the library's costings into sharp focus. The original annual subscription, "payable yearly or half-yearly in advance, regardless of age or sex", is maintained at 10 shillings, as it will for many years to come.

Casual Subscribers can be admitted as members by depositing five shillings and “may then borrow books, subject to the rules and regulations of the library, on payment of 3d for each book, deposit to be refunded on cessation of membership.”

There is also a category described as “Distance Membership” where people living away from the library can apply for a “distance card”, taking three books at a time without extra charge. Just how distant one needs to be from the library to be eligible is debatable, but as an example, a person from Parkdale is included in this category.

Despite things getting tougher, and the library holding on for dear life, it still graciously offers continuation of membership to subscribers who can no longer pay the fees.

The reality is that a Sustenance System is introduced, where the unemployed receive vouchers to redeem for the basics, the maximum amount of 12 shillings going to a man with a family.

As an indicator to people’s approach to the tough times, the Mentone/Mordialloc Royal Victorian Institute of the Blind Auxiliary is formed on May 28, going on to provide more than 70 years of fund-raising to help those with vision challenges.

Two international events provide insight into the disparity of the old and new worlds. In India, Mahatma Ghandi leads the Salt March, protesting against the British monopoly of the essential cooking ingredient and centuries-old food preservative.

On the other side of the planet, a modern-day, revolutionary process to preserve food - by freezing it - is being patented by American inventor and entrepreneur, Clarence Birdseye. He has been inspired by a visit to the Arctic where he sees the Inuit people preserving freshly caught fish in barrels of seawater that freezes in the cold conditions.

1931

Frank Dalby Davidson wins the Australian Literary Society Gold Medal for his young adult novel ‘Man-Shy’, proving that persistence plays as much a role as talent if you want to succeed in the writing game.

After several knockbacks, he self-publishes his book about life on a Queensland cattle station, the resultant reception and sales encouraging Angus & Robertson to pick it up. Jack Lindsay releases ‘Cressida’s First Lover,’ while in the US, Pearl S. Buck launches ‘The Good Earth,’ the first of a trilogy about life in a Chinese village, which will go on to win the Pulitzer Prize and be the foundation for her Nobel Prize success in 1938.

But the tough times keep relentlessly rolling on. While in the previous year the library committee has been pleased to report it is holding a credit balance of “more than One Hundred Pounds,” economies are introduced in August to offset failing revenue. There is a loss of 80 subscribers.

On her retirement as Treasurer, Miss Jones is made a Life Member and is succeeded by Mr. G. A. Pepper.

Meanwhile, on a visit to London, another former Library Treasurer, Mr. M. Wilson, begins negotiations for the importation of books at reduced prices. Previously 160 books had been indented at a cost of 3/2 per copy, and he seeks to lower that price to help out in the tough times.

As a sign of the times, more than 450 unemployed men gather at Parkdale Recreation Reserve, appealing for the State Government to create more jobs and if not increase the sustenance payouts – now reduced to the ignominious word “susso”.

Mentone Grammar is also suffering, with student numbers starting to struggle. Wealthy founding member and trustee Frank Jones continues to help financially, including the

purchase of Frogmore House to be used as boarding quarters and the headmaster's residence. His loan of £500 literally prevents the school from closing, and Jones House is later named after him in gratitude.

In New York, a considerably larger construction is completed and will go down in folklore – the 102-story, art deco Empire State Building.

On the racetrack, Phar Lap cannot continue his contribution to the morale of the Australian populace by adding to his 1930 win. Lumping a huge 10 stone 10 pounds (68 kg) set by the handicapper, he finishes eighth behind White Nose in his last Australian appearance before setting off on his fatal trip to Mexico and the US.

1932

By now a common sight is the more than 300 men who line up each Tuesday at Parkdale's Progress Hall to collect their "susso" payments. Similar queues will later gather outside the Mordialloc Council Chambers, winding all the way down the street.

Despite the straitened economic circumstances, the library is busy enough to require extra space, and an extension is made possible by taking over the passageway leading from the front of its building to the adjacent Mentone Miniature Rifle Club Rooms.

The additional shelving provided accommodates a further 800 books, bringing the total to 4000, while the general appearance of the library is much improved, and provision is made for future extensions.

The Mordialloc City Council grants 20 Pounds towards the cost, and their practical assistance is very much appreciated by the newly elected President, Mr. H. P. Peterson. Thanks are also given to the rifle club for sacrificing space in the interests of the library.

The secretary is further pleased to report that throughout the 250 open sessions for the year, the requirements of members "were catered for in a thoroughly satisfactory manner, there being an entire absence of complaints."

Book exchanges total 18,750, a falling off of 2250 compared with the previous year, but considering the Depression is still being severely felt by the community, this result is viewed as "satisfactory".

During February, the electric light equipment is overhauled, and the higher standard of light is much appreciated. But failure of the electric supply occurs on one occasion and the emergency gas supply is employed so business can go on as usual. Although this provision against light failures is costly, due to the charges imposed by gas authorities, its retention is justified by the Committee.

Nevertheless, the annual stocktake reveals that among the members exists "a negligible few" who continue to be "unscrupulous if not actually dishonest" by taking out books without them being recorded.

"There is no escape from the conclusion that some members indulge extensively in free reading, but stop short of actually retaining the books in their possession, and for this consideration, the Committee has to try to feel grateful," the secretary reports.

"Still, some books are never returned, about 50 a year.

"To check against this practice would involve the adoption of means which might be unfavourably regarded by some members generally."

The conclusion is that the Committee "can only deplore the matter and hope that the offenders may in due course rise superior to such petty tactics."

There are glimmers of hope. Aged just 15, Nancy Wynne of Florence Street, shows the benefit of five years of tennis coaching when she wins two double events on grass courts at the Mentone Oval.

Poetry continues to be a strong thread in the Australia literary tapestry, the famed C. J. Dennis jumping on the bandwagon to honour the nation's biggest event of the year, the official opening by New South Wales Premier Jack Lang of a certain "harbor causeway", with 'I Dips Me Lid To The Sydney Harbour Bridge.'

Further poetic works come from Dulcie Deamer with 'Messalina', Mary Gilmore with 'The Men of Eureka', and Katharine Susannah Prichard with 'The Earth Lover and Other Verses', while on the international scene, Aldous Huxley warns of what is to come with 'Brave New World.'

In Oklahoma, the world's first parking meter is installed while in Australia, innovation in communication continues. A tradition has been that the incumbent Prime Minister attends and officially opens the very successful and much-loved Mordialloc Carnival.

This began with Stanley Melbourne Bruce, whose seat of Flinders included Mordialloc, in 1927 and 1928, followed by James Scullin in 1929 and 1931.

This time, the voice of Bruce, now residing in London as Australia's Resident Minister in the UK, and holidaying in Nice, France, is relayed to the awe-struck crowd at Mordialloc via a live ABC wireless broadcast

1933

For the first time, a feeling of unrest begins to spread as to the future of the library.

Persistent rumours float that the Council intends to compulsorily acquire its building for municipal purposes and move the library on.

The Council has expanded and re-modelled the Mentone Skating Rink in Brindisi Street into the Mordialloc City Hall and Council Chambers and is looking to rationalise other properties. While it is expected that the Council will provide the library with a new location, the cost of moving is considered a concern.

"Should the proposal eventuate, the transfer of fittings and furnishing to re-create in another location, together with the removal and replacement in proper order of more than 4000 books, will constitute a work of considerable magnitude," the secretary reports.

He also warns that it may involve closing the library for a week, "in which case, subscribers must be prepared to make the best of the matter." Some fear any transfer may even be beyond the library's financial resources and it will have to close.

It is acknowledged that the existing premises, together with its furnishings and fittings, have been maintained in good condition, but only just meet "present day requirements."

The year is described as being "one of the least eventful in the history of the Library," the major highlights being Mr. J. Adams being elected President, and the Mayor, Cr Edwards JP, presenting a certificate of life membership to Mr H. L. Dickinson, Secretary since the library opened in 1925.

"Work has proceeded smoothly, and complaints have been negligible," reports the secretary, although the "much to be deplored" practice continues of a certain few subscribers removing books without paying for them and, in some instances, without returning them.

Six hundred new books are added, a total of 100 more than the previous year, and 100 books that have received negligible interest from borrowers are happily accepted by the Moorabbin Library. This makes for a total catalogue of 4330 books.

The library is open on 253 occasions, but the economic times mean that book exchanges are down by four per cent and membership reduced by six per cent, and so the Committee is forgiving of people who are “up against it” by extending their membership privileges until they again become financial.

A clear example of the national situation is the continuing construction of the promenade behind the sea wall adjacent to Mentone Pier, it being built with “susso” labour.

To take people’s minds of the depressing circumstances, and raise both morale and donations, dances, concerts, picture evenings, and euchre nights are employed. ‘Community Singing’ becomes popular at Mentone Baths the City Hall and the Skating Rink, sometimes police being called to control the crowds. As well as donations of firewood, funds are raised, although sometimes there are just as many buttons in the collection tins as coins.

The concept of communication moves further forward with FM radio developed, the stereo record being invented, and the first drive-in movie theatre being opened in the US.

Appropriately, the foreboding ‘The Shape of Things to Come’ by H. G. Wells is released.

Despite the gloom, a significant publishing event occurs – the release of ‘Blinky Bill: The Quaint Little Australian’ by author and illustrator Dorothy Wall. It is the first in a series that will become lovingly imbedded in Australian literature.

Indeed, the Depression continues to spark morale-lifting endeavours. On December 31 one of Australia’s top cyclists, Ossie Nicholson, completes a world record-breaking ride of 43,966 miles (70,756 km).

It is the longest cycle ride in a calendar year, done in 100-mile stints and mainly along the road from Melbourne to Portsea.

He sets the new mark by pedalling into the Mordialloc Carnival grounds and crossing the finish line just before midnight to the roars of a rapturous New Year’s Eve crowd.

1934

The original Stock Books record system, which has served the library so well for its first ten years, is superseded by a card system, the changeover resulting in “greater accuracy and simplification of this very necessary record.”

The library as an ongoing operation is valued at £407, consisting of £315 for the stock of 4500 books and £92 for furniture and fittings. But a proposal by the City of Mordialloc - which had moved into a new hall and administrative centre in 1933 - to vacate the library’s existing premises and shift to the old council chambers is rejected.

It is felt that despite its limitations, the current, rented location - built by the Recreation Reserve Committee for the library in 1926 next door to the Mentone Miniature Rifle Range – remains suitable and convenient, and that the cost of shifting and getting the new premises into working order will be too onerous. The additional wall space on offer is considered not sufficient enough to warrant the inconvenience and expense of a change-over.

Operating figures are encouraging - the library is opened on 252 occasions, upwards of 16,000 books are exchanged, books purchased total 600, while 250 books are written off. Despite there being 163 paid-up subscribers, “the lack of interest in the actual working of the Library” is regrettable, underlined “by the poor attendance of subscribers at annual meetings.”

“For years, members of the committee have given freely of their time and services in the working of the library for the residents of the district, and have by doing so relieved the ratepayers from what is regarded elsewhere as a municipal obligation,” the Secretary reports.

“The committee feels that the library is entitled to be accorded the interest and support of those residents and business people whose welfare depends on the progress and attractiveness of the district.”

Once again, sport proves a distraction from the tough times, with wrestler Dick Garrard, well-known locally for family connections and his love of swimming, which sees him compete in events in Mentone, Parkdale and Mordialloc, wins the first of his three British Empire Games gold medals, competing in London.

winning the gold medal in the lightweight division at the Empire Games in London.

Significant as these aspects are, they are overshadowed by ominous events on the world front with Adolf Hitler becoming the Fuhrer of Germany, Mao Ze Dong beginning the Long March, and the USSR joining the League of Nations.

Graham Kennedy, Barry Humphries and writer David Malouf are born, Agatha Christie releases ‘Murder On The Orient Express’, Christina Stead publishes her first novel, ‘Seven Poor Men of Sydney’, and ‘Strike Me Lucky’ starring Roy Rene draws huge audiences to the cinemas.

The first of a series of eight children’s books is released with little fanfare but which will go on to huge international sales and heavily influence both the literary and film scene.

They are written by a strong-willed Queensland-born author who has moved to London, changed her name from Helen Lyndon Goff to Pamela Lyndon Travers, and who writes under the pen-name P. L. Travers. The book is ‘Mary Poppins.’

OUR SECOND DECADE - 1935 to 1944

The library begins to hit its stride

1935

The seeds of a revolution that would later shake the world are sown with the birth of Elvis Presley on January 8 and Johnny O'Keefe eleven days later. On the literary front, Thomas Kenneally is born, a portrait of Banjo Paterson wins the Archibald Prize, and Penguin Books is launched in England.

The library is running with similar energy, total loans up by 3700 to 19,800, membership increasing by 17 to 200. Fully paid-up subscribers, paying 10 shillings a year, are allowed one book daily on their subscription plus three additional books. With a strategic drop in price from 3d to 2d a volume, the number of the 'extra' books loaned jumps by 40 per cent.

Long serving Secretary Mr. H. L. Dickinson writes to the Melbourne daily newspaper The Argus advising of this growth, pointing out that a key element is that the librarians are not dictating to members what they should read, but asking them to outline their preferences and then doing their best to source the books for them.

The library enters into a contract with Robertson and Mullens, bookshop owners and publishers, to supply the educational Readwell Unit of 200 books, 40 of which are to be exchanged each month. To accommodate the increase, a new bookcase holding 800 titles is installed.

At the Free Journals desk, the demand for the London 'Punch' is proving not up to expectations, and it is replaced by the upmarket Sydney-based magazine, 'The Home', featuring quality pictures and articles on art, design, fashion and home furnishing.

Acknowledging the first decade, the library awards Life Memberships to Messrs W. Riley, W. Croker, G. Pepper, H. Petersen and A. Lemmon, and Mrs. Richardson and Miss Phillips.

Patrick White's name enters the literary scene for the first time with the release of 'The Ploughman and Other Poems,' Winifred Birkett publishes the highly praised 'Earth's Quality', and Ngaio Marsh employs a theatrical instruction for the title of her detective novel, 'Enter A Murderer.'

Meanwhile, at Mentone Girls' Grammar, Miss Jeannie McCowan is appointed Headmistress, a position she will hold until 1955. And a horse trough - which still stands at the Mentone Railway Station gardens - is officially presented by the Purple Cross Society, commemorating the tragic 'Garryowen' incident a year earlier when Violet and Bill Murrell were killed attempting to rescue horses from their burning Latrobe Street stables.

Nothing can ameliorate the national shock when Charles Kingsford Smith's aircraft disappears off the Burma coast during an England to Australia record attempt, the bodies of the charismatic 38-year-old aviation hero and his co-pilot Tommy Pethybridge never to be found.

1936

The year gets off to a solemn start with the death of King George V on January 20, slumps to a low point at the Berlin Olympic Games, where Adolf Hitler snubs four-time Afro-American gold medallist Jesse Owens, and finishes on a sensational note when Edward VIII abdicates on December 11 “for the woman I love.”

Indigenous rights leaders Eddie Mabo and Charles Perkins are born, while Torres Strait Islanders conduct a four-month general maritime strike in an effort to take control of their own affairs.

The library has its own challenges, too, dealing with the continuing practice of “certain members who remove books irregularly from the Library, thereby occasioning the Committee unnecessary concern and work, to say nothing of the loss of income incidental to this practice of free reading.”

“In view of the fact that these readers take without payment what the majority of members pay for, it is obvious that the practice is dishonest ... and not appreciated,” reports the Secretary.

On a happier note, the seven recently rewarded Life Members are presented with their emblems at an “interesting and enjoyable” ceremony and supper for members and friends at City Hall, presided over by the Mordialloc Mayor Cr. Benwell and the Mayoress.

As well, the library receives its first ever Government Grant of £4, given on the basis of £1 for each £1 provided by the Council. A most welcome boost, although it could have been more if an additional Council donation of £10 had arrived earlier and been included in the application form.

It is noted that in future these types of grants will preferably go to “libraries employing a paid Secretary or Librarian,” ruling out the all-volunteer Mentone operation.

Nevertheless, the library continues its free distribution of discarded books in fair condition to non-municipal libraries and to individual distributors in remote districts.

Mr. Pleasants is made a Life Member, in honour of his contribution, including a term as President.

At Mentone Grammar, Bessie Johnston becomes the first full-time female member of staff, going on to be an outstanding French teacher. Journalist and author Will Lawson - no relation to Henry Lawson, but inspired by him, just the same - publishes the best known of his 16 novels, ‘When Cobb and Co Was King’, and in ‘The Citadel’, A. J. Cronin attacks the contentious subject of media ethics. But nothing matches the sales and impact of Margaret Mitchell’s American Civil War epic, ‘Gone With The Wind’.

The last thylacine, or Tasmanian Tiger, dies in Hobart Zoo, but across Bass Strait the Victorian Government shows some concern for the environment, establishing a coastal erosion control authority, the first project being the construction of a sea wall running from Charman Road beach to Mentone.

1937

One of the Spanish Civil War’s most shocking incidents, the bombing of the non-strategic town of Guernica by German air forces supporting General Franco, kills hundreds of civilians in April. Two months later artist Pablo Picasso completes his famous painting capturing the raw emotion of the slaughter of the innocents.

Locally, the “susso” numbers are beginning to diminish, draper Harry Mansour lifts Mentone’s business profile by opening a two-story emporium, and the coronation of King George VI is celebrated with verve. Every Mentone school student receives a medal, a bag of lollies, and an afternoon at the ‘flicks’, with the Mayor Cr H. C. Edwards shouting.

Mentone tennis player Nancye Wynne, now five foot ten inches tall, confirms her prodigious talent by winning the Australian Women's Singles for the first time, and the second of 10 doubles titles with good friend Thelma Coyne.

A dramatic change in local newspaper publishing is flagged with the appointment of a new manager-editor at the Mordialloc News, E. J. Trait. With a keen eye for modernizing publications, fearless in his opinions, scathing of politicians lacking leadership, forward thinking as to how Mentone should be shaped, and a rare critic of the treatment meted out to Aborigines by colonization, he will go on to a magnificent career as managing director of Standard News.

The metropolitan papers are ablaze with Wallis Simpson marrying the Duke of Windsor in France. The library has more important matters to deal with, the Secretary reporting that the overall management of Victoria's library system "is somewhat chaotic."

The problem is that development of the overall structure is being handled by three corporations, the Melbourne Public Library, the Library Association of Victoria, and the Free Library Movement, "which do not function with a united front."

The Mentone Public Library Secretary says that while the government-financed Melbourne Public Library claims to attend to the needs of outer districts, it caters largely for the Melbourne area. Although the Library Association of Victoria set out an excellent and ambitious programme when it began ten years earlier, the amount of headway it has made is "almost negligible."

As for the third group, the Free Library Movement, while it has an impressive committee, "fourteen of whom are in possession of University Degrees and four are of political fame," including the President the Right Hon. Sir John Latham, GCMG, it is "of very recent origin" and yet to make any impact in its aim "to bring home to the people a realization of our backward position in the matter of library work."

The library's annual report shows that 50 new members enrolled, replacing a similar number who had retired, levelling the membership at 180, while 21,500 books were circulated.

As is the usual practice, the children of subscribers are issued books free of charge, and to meet the extra demand owing to the ongoing polio epidemic - an outbreak that is particularly severe in Melbourne in 1937-38 and a forerunner to the 1950s epidemic - an immediate purchase of 45 books is authorized.

On opposite sides of the world, two varying author pseudonyms are employed. 'Out of Africa', the brilliant and enduring memoir is released by Danish author Baroness Karen Christenze von Blixen-Finecke. But she goes under the name Isak Dinesen.

Similarly, a first novel, 'The Young Desire', is released by a 23-year-old Perth-born author with the impressive birth name of Kenneth Ivo Brownley Langwell Mackenzie. The book jacket has him titled as the much simpler Seaforth McKenzie.

The novel, based on his experiences in a Western Australian boarding school, is described by one reviewer as "baffling ... yet stamped with a certain genius."

Despite this promising start and further works written, Mackenzie's own life will unravel and in 1955, shortly after an incident involving alcohol and the police, he dies by drowning in mysterious circumstances aged just 41.

1938

January 31, 1938, goes down in local history as Black Monday when at approximately 5.30 pm, the Mentone Hotel runs out of beer!

"Kings have lost their thrones for less reasons than this," a disappointed and very thirsty local reporter muses.

Things strike a more buoyant note just across the paddock as, after many years of discussion and effort, St Bede's College is opened, catering for a parish that runs from Moorabbin to Aspendale, and from Keysborough to Beaumaris.

Meanwhile, the library premises are upgraded, with "the exterior repainted, electric light switches renewed, an additional powerful central indirect light installed, the floor coverings removed, and the typewriter overhauled."

Mr. A. K. Lemmon, a member of the original 1925 committee, is elected as President, and Life Membership is awarded to Mr. Harold.

Written-off books are gifted to remote country libraries as well as the local Boy Scouts Club, the State School Library, and the Mordialloc RSSILA, bringing the number of books passed on during the previous ten years to 4023.

Despite this long-running program, so beneficial to other citizens of Victoria, relationships with the State Government are becoming strained. Payment for book lending is still the foundation of the library's existence, but this year the library is not able to participate in the distribution of Government grants, because it has not "placed the whole of our books at the disposal of the public for reading free of charge."

"That this condition was fulfilled by 235 libraries, which participated in the grant scheme, strains credence to the breaking point," the Secretary points out.

"That libraries which merely permit passers-by to use a section of their facilities to while away an hour or so are seen to be rendering a service superior to that of a library which annually donates hundreds of books to institutions and libraries in need of assistance, is a remarkable viewpoint of the State Government, against which there is apparently no appeal."

No matter the politics, libraries everywhere have a wealth of talent to choose from with Xavier Herbert making his debut with the epic 'Capricornia,' based on his life in the Northern Territory, Norman Lindsay coping with his sensational 'Age of Consent' being briefly banned, and Evelyn Waugh engaging readers with the antics of William Boot, the accidental foreign correspondent sent to cover "a very promising little war" in 'Scoop.'

Daphne du Maurier releases 'Rebecca', a novel that will keep on giving, in both book and film form, throughout the coming years, while heavily influencing the parental choice of a name for baby girls around the world.

The polio epidemic is spreading, an after-care centre for victims is set up in City Hall, and after the Mentone Beach Garage declares it can no longer manage the ambulance it has run for more than a decade, locals have to call on a city-based service.

1939

Mentone is flourishing as a beach-side holiday spot, with record numbers of visitors recorded, and the prudish laws regarding swimming costumes being largely ignored.

Victoria's Black Friday bushfires rip through two million hectares, killing 71 people, torching 1300 homes and 69 sawmills, wiping out five townships, and severely damaging or destroying 3700 buildings in many other locations.

Doing its part, the library distributes 500 books to country libraries that suffered during the fires, sent off by rail freight in pre-paid parcels. It is the beginning of a program that will be sustained through the war years.

After 14 years of excellent volunteer work, Mr H. L. Dickinson resigns as Secretary. He is one of the 25 people who attended the initial meeting in 1925 that elected a foundation committee, being appointed to the committee and as the library's first Secretary.

He is a tower of strength, not only handling the customary duties with aplomb, but publicising the library's efforts where possible, particularly via *The Argus*. As well, he is a member of the Executive of the Library Association of Victoria, an increasingly sensitive and difficult position, with the Association, the Melbourne Public Library and the relatively new Free Library Movement all continuing to jockey for influence over the management of the State's library structure.

Mr Dickinson is succeeded by Miss Noonan, but with unsettled times looming, membership drops a fraction from 178 to 164.

In a tribute to idiosyncrasy combined with determination, 'Finnegan's Wake', James Joyce's epic final work is released, the result of 17 years' effort.

Miles Franklin and Dymphna Cusack combine to write 'Pioneers on Parade', while 'The Young Cosima' is the last novel to be released by Henry Handel Richardson.

Raymond Chandler sets a new bar for hardboiled private detective fiction with hero Philip Marlowe in his first novel 'The Big Sleep,' later to become a hugely successful film featuring Humphrey Bogart. At the Academy Awards honouring the best films of 1939, movies based on popular books vie for best picture, with 'Gone With The Wind' pipping 'The Wizard of Oz' and 'Wuthering Heights.'

Woodlands Golf Club is established out of Mayfair Golf Club, named after the grounds upon which it was established, work begins on bringing sewerage to Mentone, and moves are made to control ever-increasing traffic, following several pedestrian deaths on Nepean Road. The community is shocked when the old Mentone Recreation Hall, the scene of numerous dances, meetings and speech nights since the 1880s, is burnt down, believed to be the result of a wayward Guy Fawkes Night cracker.

This pales into the background when, twenty-one years after the "war to end all wars", the world is back at it ... again.

On September 3, Prime Minister Robert Menzies broadcasts that it is his "melancholy duty" that, following Germany's invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war, and "as a result, Australia is at war."

The Nazi propaganda broadcaster, Lord Haw-Haw, an American named William Brooke Joyce, begins his transmission, aimed at denting morale amongst the allies.

In an intriguing prelude to what is to come, Albert Einstein signs a letter written by physicist Leó Szilárd, urging US President Franklin D. Roosevelt to pre-empt German scientists and develop a nuclear weapon.

This sparks a program ultimately titled the Manhattan Project and by the time the first bomb is dropped on Japan six years later, almost a million Australians, both men and women, will have served in World War 2.

1940

At the library, a 'segregation' scheme of dividing the entire stock of books into six sections is completed by Messrs Dickinson, Hatcher and Adams.

It is a monumental, time-consuming effort, the Annual Report concluding quixotically that "although many subscribers cannot now find their favourite authors, the plan on a whole has been a success ..."

Library membership consists of 120 paid-up subscribers, 47 non-subscribing members, and eight honorary life members, a total of 175, up from 164, a slipping but nevertheless comforting figure as the war begins to affect daily lives.

A report in the Frankston Standard outlines how, as the library did with the 1939 bush fires, "the provision of reading matter for the soldiers in the various camps has engaged the attention of the committee, and at the March meeting it was decided that for the duration of the war, all books which were selected for disposal to make room for new purchases are to be donated to the soldiers in camp."

The paper says that the books are in very good condition and eagerly sought by country libraries after the bush fires, concluding, "the contribution will be a very creditable and appreciated one."

Life does not entirely stand still. Most households have enough land to tend a vegetable garden and run some chooks, while cows and goats are kept on numerous spare blocks. The local baker continues to deliver bread by horse-and-cart three times a week, the bonus being the droppings are collected to put on the garden and help make the vegies grow. Meanwhile, enterprising housewives gather seaweed from Mentone Beach, wash the salt out of it, and use it as mulch.

'Forty Thousand Horseman', the ground-breaking Australian movie about the Australian Light Horse in World War 1, directed by Charles Chauvel and starring Chips Rafferty, is premiered. The Jeep makes its debut, and Moorabbin Football Club wins its seventh Federal League premiership.

Australian writer Martin Boyd releases 'Nuns in Jeopardy' about a group of sisters of the cloth who are washed up on an island, while Christina Stead's 'The Man Who Loved Children' will go on to become her signature work. Henry Bellaman's fifth novel 'King's Row' is also set for great success and later to become a movie.

A collection of autobiographical short stories by a young Welsh poet named Dylan Thomas is cheekily titled 'Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog,' the author claiming it has nothing to do with James Joyce's 'Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.'

F. Scott Fitzgerald dies, aged 44, a broken alcoholic convinced that his life's work as a novelist, screenwriter and magazine contributor has not amounted to what he envisaged, particularly by now as 'The Great Gatsby' is all but forgotten.

With the war causing the rationing of fabric, women's dresses become shorter, and in tandem, their hair tighter cut. With the young men off to fight and someone needed to take their spot working the machines and driving the trucks, a whole generation of women is about to discover the possibilities of life outside the home and inside the workforce.

1941

The war escalates rapidly, with Australian troops involved in a siege in northern Africa, confounding Germany's 'Desert Fox', General Erwin Rommel, and famously becoming known as the Rats of Tobruk.

The action hits locals hard with the death of James Baldwin, who had worked on the Mordialloc News prior to the war, and had been keeping readers informed of the Tobruk situation via his weekly column, 'From The 2nd A.I.F.'

In the Mediterranean, George Young of Mentone and George Sutherland of Parkdale are reported killed in action while Ron Lister of Mentone is listed as a Prisoner Of War.

Marine casualties are enormous, particularly at sea. Off the WA Coast, the cruiser HMAS Sydney and the German raider HSK Kormoran go toe-to-toe in a battle that sees them both

sunk, with the loss of 645 Australians and an estimated 77 Germans. The German battleship Bismarck is sunk in the North Atlantic killing 2100, while the Soviet hospital ship Armenia is attacked by German planes, 5500 people dying as it disappears below the waves.

Closer to home, an example of the dramatic impact the war has on people is underlined by the experiences of local resident, Stan Hawken.

Stan joins the RAAF, but because of his lack of educational qualifications, has to argue strongly before an interview panel that he is a suitable candidate for air-crew selection. They are impressed and after extensive training at various Australian air bases Stan goes on to qualify as a wireless operator and air gunner.

He is posted to England with 630 Squadron, Bomber Command, which flies Lancaster aircraft out of Lincolnshire on raids of Europe, and assigned to the crew of P for Peter, made up of two Australians, two Englishmen, a Scotsman and a Rhodesian.

The squadron flies 202 raids causing immense damage, but it is dangerous business, losses are heavy, and Stan's plane is shot down over France, where he will go underground, working with the French Resistance until liberation.

It is a remarkable story, but his experiences broaden his horizons, provide him with better prospects, and prompt him to work hard for his local community after the war. His two stints later as Mayor of Mordialloc and other civic-minded contributions will long be remembered by locals.

Tennis star Nancye Wynne marries RAAF pilot George Bolton and will later give birth to a baby girl, Pam. Tragedy will strike when he is killed when his plane is shot down over Germany in 1942.

The library volunteers keep doing their bit to provide detachment from the war, the Secretary regularly pointing out that during these "hard and anxious times," the subscribers "have cause to be grateful to the Committee for their work." The children love the joyous adventure of 'The Swiss Family Robinson' and 'Robinson Crusoe', while comics bought from the newsagents are coveted. They are swapped up and down the street and read and read. And re-read.

1942

For three years, the Australian public has lived under the dark shadow of war, the only slightly comforting thought being that the fighting remains on distant shores.

On February 15, Singapore falls to the Japanese, with approximately 15,000 Australian troops taken prisoner. And four days later, Darwin is attacked in the first of a series of bombing raids that shatter the vital Northern Territory port, sending shockwaves across the nation.

"We saw the planes coming in and just stood there and looked at them," a Digger later reports. "Then, 'crikey', said one of my mates, 'they're Japanese!' We could see the bombs shining in the sun as they left the planes."

More bad news comes with the sinking of the HMAS Perth in the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra. Japanese midget submarines cause havoc in Sydney and Newcastle, the battle along the Kokoda Track becomes an emblematic fight to keep Japan at bay, and construction begins on the Burma Railway via the forced labour of 15,000 Australian prisoners-of-war.

The Battle of the Coral Sea is fought across five days in May, combining the forces of Australia and the US.

Most people have no telephone, with the nearest one being in the shopping area near the Mentone Post Office. Other than that, communication is by ordinary mail or telegram if it is

urgent. It is also life long before television, so the wireless is the main way of keeping up with the dire war situation.

Meanwhile at the library, Mr Dickinson, having earlier resigned as Secretary, continues to take an interest by becoming a Trustee, taking the place of the late Mr C. Maloney.

New officers come, such as Mrs Farrant, who endears herself to other volunteers with "her gentle ways and knowledge of books," while others go. Miss Campbell resigns, although for a while the library continues "making use of her services."

Distribution of unused books to organisations in need continues, where possible.

The business of publishing continues, and during this period there are some hallmark releases beginning with 'The Last Tycoon', the unfinished final work by the late F. Scott Fitzgerald, and 'Strange Inheritance', one of an astonishing 400 novels written by Georges Simenon, the prolific Belgian writer and creator of fictional detective, Jules Maigret.

Sydney journalist Lennie Lower, known for his humorous columns in daily newspapers and national magazines, amuses readers with 'The Bachelor's Guide to the Care of the Young and Other Stories,' while Ernestine Hill's 'My Love Must Wait', a novel based on the life of navigator Matthew Flinders, will later become a radio play featuring a young British-born Australian actor named Peter Finch.

By now army camps have been established on the Mornington Peninsula to house American troops and excitement is stirred in Mentone when trains carrying them pass through the town en route.

Not even the war can prevent the running of the "race that stops a nation."

Eight-year-old Leo Gamble, later to become a favourite son of Mentone, is swept up in the romance of the Melbourne Cup, run under the "austerity" terms designated by Prime Minister John Curtin.

This includes the race being transferred from its traditional Tuesday to Saturday, November 21, by government regulations banning mid-week racing, considered as a distraction from the war effort.

Leo recollected: "All morning, rain tumbled down from dark grey skies that produced a dull atmosphere resembling dusk. The air-raid shelter my father had dug in our backyard was filling up like a small dam and the trenches in Mentone State School playground near our place contained half a metre of yellowy, muddy water."

For a local trainer and his horse, this is propitious.

Leo continued: "As Mum chose a loaf from the bread basket, the baker said words like this: 'Just been at Manning's stables and they say they have a mudlark in the Cup'."

Trainer Frank Manning's racing stables are in Barry Street near the Warrigal Road railway crossing, only a few hundred metres from where the Gambles live. Leo's parents listen to the baker's tip but make comments that are "non-committal", suggesting any horse could win.

The baker insists: 'Colonus is the horse. They say he'll win.'

If trainer Manning and owner L. O. Menck are hoping to keep everything under wraps and maintain the odds at a juicy level, they are not helped by that ultimate spreader of local gossip, the baker. Colonius, described as a "speedy squib", opens on the course at 66/1, before shortening to start at 33/1.

A four-year-old carrying only 7 stone 2lb, Colonius takes to the wet track and leads all the way to victory by a massive seven lengths. His rider, H. McCloud, is just 18 years and still an apprentice.

It might be a small war-time crowd of only 40,000 that day, but there is at least something to celebrate that night in Mentone.

Whether Leo's father backs it or not remains unclear, as off-course betting is illegal. But he admits his dad did make regular Saturday visits to the barber's shop in Mentone Parade, opposite 'the triangle' real estate offices. "Inside the shop, with its three chairs for haircutting, a staircase led to a mystery room upstairs where, rumour had it, a bookie was set up. In a similar way to John Wren's Collingwood tea shop, the barber seemed to have a huge clientele on certain days but with little evidence of any increase in hair being shorn ..."

1943

Mr Peterson continues to save the library money by his careful selection of the Readwell stock while Mrs Harrold helps with the repair of stock. Books continue to be distributed where they can be to help out the war effort and struggling communities.

Knitting is proving very popular, with local women churning out squares to make rugs for soldiers, Miss Prince continues to teach piano in the large family house on the Mentone side of Como Parade, Parkdale, and local ladies employed by Prince's Laundry in Warrigal Road walk the two miles there and two miles back every day, working from 8 am to 5 pm, five days a week.

For the kids, the big issue is that chewing gum is very scarce and they ride their bikes for long distances to any shop it is rumoured has received its ration of the precious sweet.

Australian author Kylie Tennant completes 'Ride On Stranger' while US playwright Betty Smith releases the enormously successful semi-autobiographical 'A Tree Grows in Brooklyn,' later to go on the big screen starring Dorothy McGuire.

Enid Lyons and Dorothy Tangney become the first women to be elected to the Federal Government. Lyons, representing the United Australia Party, secures the Lower House seat of Darwin in Tasmania, while Tangney wins a position as a Western Australian Senator for Labor.

The war with all its ugliness rages everywhere, with consequences primarily intentional but every now and then "accidental". An American bomber raid causes more than 900 civilian deaths, including 209 children, at the Belgian town of Mortsel, when it misses a targeted factory by a kilometre. And in London 173 people are killed in a crush while trying to enter an air-raid shelter at Bethnal Green tube station.

There is nothing accidental about the bombing of the German port of Hamburg when 42,000 civilians are killed in an RAF attack with the deathly title of 'Operation Gomorrah.'

With good news emerging from the Pacific, such as Australian and American forces gaining the upper hand in Papua, the Mordialloc ARP (Air Raid Post) Social Committee holds a dance in the Masonic Hall.

Fred Holland and his band provide the music while other artists give their services to entertain between dances. All this with no cost! Supper was provided by the local Red Cross and the First Aid Post, and the profit of £60 was a fine outcome for a worthy effort.

Meanwhile, football enthusiasts are invited to watch a match between a combined local Under-18 team and the 'Kittens' from VFL club Richmond. The attendance of several prominent Tiger players, including prolific goal-scorer Jack 'Skinny' Titus, in his last season with the club, and legendary skipper, Jack 'Captain Blood' Dyer, is an added attraction for the war-weary crowd.

1944

During these times, Miss Paling does odd jobs around the library, including tidying the shelves, and Miss Phillips and Mr Lemmon carry on with their Monday night work in “their own cheerful way.”

It is generally accepted amongst the community that that Mr and Mrs Thompson, who run the butchers in Como Parade, Parkdale, are “the largest, roundest, jolliest people you could ever meet.” The floor is covered with fresh sawdust and the meat is cut on a large pine chopping block after the carcass is brought up from the cool room. All done with a smile, to help alleviate the gloomy times.

Lamb is a popular purchase with ration coupons – lamb’s fry, shanks, chops and cutlets. A Sunday lamb roast is stretched as far as possible, the leftovers turned into cold meat and gravy on Monday, Shepherd’s Pie on Tuesdays, and rissoles on Wednesday.

In Marvel Barnes Haberdashery Emporium in Parkdale, a cylindrical tube continues to mesmerizingly shoot the cash and the docket from the counter across to Mr. Barnes, sitting aloof and aloft in control of the office. Tough as things are, practically anything can be bought in this “treasure house of bits and bobs.” Providing of course, you have the money and/or the coupons.

Zane Grey, American fisherman extraordinaire and prolific master of the Western novel, puts the experiences gained from his many trips Down Under into ‘Wilderness Trek: A Novel of Australia.’

Alan Marshall launches his career with ‘These Are My People’, while film success will later come to American author Charles R. Jackson’s ‘The Lost Weekend’ about an alcoholic writer, starring Ray Milland and Jane Wyman.

F. Scott Fitzgerald finally, but alas posthumously, receives the plaudits he felt he deserved in life. When the US entered the war, it formed a ‘Council on Books in Wartime’ that distributed paperbacks to troops to help maintain morale. The 155,000 free copies of ‘The Great Gatsby’ renewed interest in the work, and from this point on, it becomes a critical and commercial triumph with Fitzgerald, who died in 1940, being recognized at long last as one of America’s truly great writers.

The big literary story of the year is when Max Harris, editor of the ‘Angry Penguins’ magazine, is duped by a selection of poems contributed by one Ern Malley.

Harris publishes them with enthusiastic praise, only for it to be revealed later that they have been concocted by writers James Macauley and Harold Stewart as a hoax to send up the modernist literary movement championed by Harris.

Reg Saunders becomes the first Aboriginal commissioned officer in the Australian Army, while US General Dwight D. Eisenhower oversees the Allied invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944, the significant first step in the downfall of Germany.

More than 1000 Japanese prisoners-of-war attempt to escape from Camp 12 near Cowra, NSW. The breakout results in the death of 231 prisoners and four Australian soldiers, although the Government keeps the story under wraps for as long as it can. The official reason for the secrecy is that authorities fear reprisals against Australian prisoners in Japanese camps.

In Queensland, aspiring politician Fred Paterson wins a State seat, to this day still the only member of the Communist Party of Australia ever to be elected to an Australian Parliament. A pointer to a significant shift in the post-war political scene comes with the formation by Robert Menzies of a new party to take over the ailing United Australia Party. He calls it the Liberal Party.

OUR THIRD DECADE - 1945 to 1954

Peace at last and the library is on a roll

1945

The tide of war is turning. Optimism is spreading. With football slowly resuming, the Mentone community is buoyed further by a remarkable backs-to-the-wall performance by its local side.

Struggling in the lower reaches of the Federal League, the Tigers are typically six goals down half-way through the last quarter in a match against Chelsea. But inspired by Mick Beckwith and captain Ted Cusack, Mentone slams on seven goals in 10 minutes to get up by three points, to the joy of a rapturous home crowd.

The library has plenty to be joyful about too. It fittingly celebrates its 20th anniversary on May 6 with a membership of 190, a remarkable figure considering the toll taken on the community by the war effort.

It is acknowledged that to their credit, foundation members Messrs Dickinson, Petersen, Pepper, Lemmon, and Mrs. A. Richardson, have rendered continuous service through these good and not-so-good times and are thanked for their great contribution.

So too is Cr. H. C. Edwards, the committee's all-important Council representative, who has worked hard to gain support and opportunities from the local administration.

Two very active members, Miss A. Anderson and Mrs. I. Hocking, will join the committee and remain library stalwarts right through into the 1960s.

Indeed, life has to go on. An advertisement for a local tourist company offers a "Saturday Sunset Special Tour to see the fascinating Penguin Parade from the Southern Ocean to their burrows on Phillip Island!"

It is further described as "A most remarkable sight. Leave 2 pm, fare 31 shillings, including excellent dinner at San Remo and return in the evening."

An auction is advertised for "a quarter to nine o'clock at the Mordialloc Hotel for sale by auction" for an astonishing 5000 lots of "magnificent old English imported rosewood, walnut and mahogany furniture." And the first performance of the newly formed Mordialloc Philharmonic Society's 100-strong choir, takes place at the Mordialloc City Hall to rapturous applause.

All this, combined with the library making good use of a Government grant, points to a bright future. What will turn out to be the remarkable writing career of Morris West is launched with the release of his first novel, 'Moon In My Pocket'. Published under the pseudonym Julian Morris, it sets him off on a literary trail of, as the Sydney Morning Herald describes it, "moral crusading," ultimately highlighted by 'The Shoes of the Fisherman' and the non-fiction 'Children of the Sun.'

Norman Lindsay's extraordinary career as an artist and writer continues with 'The Cousin From Fiji', award-winning Eleanor Dark publishes 'The Little Company' and Dal Stevens reveals his unique talent with a short story titled 'The Man Who Bowled Victor Trumper'. Epic novels are released internationally - George Orwell's 'Animal Farm', Nancy Mitford's 'The Pursuit of Love', John Steinbeck's 'Cannery Row', and Evelyn Waugh's 'Brideshead Revisited'.

With peace on the horizon, the harsh reality of it all is summarised in the casualty lists in The Argus. Among the young men mourned on March 14 is Flight-Lieutenant J. P. Garrard, killed in a Sunderland aircraft over Northern Ireland: "Loved son of Mrs E. Garrard, 410 Como Parade, Mordialloc, RIP; loved brother of Dick, brother-in-law of Kath; loved son-on-law of Mrs Bolger, brother-in-law of William, Roy, Wally. Ever remembered." Only a few weeks until the end of the fighting and two families are ripped apart.

Victory is finally declared in Europe on May 8, but sadly, with the Japanese yet to fold, Australia's Prime Minister John Curtin succumbs to the debilitating impact that leading the nation has had on his health and dies in July, the reins being taken up by his long-term deputy, Ben Chifley.

A month later the final cessation of hostilities is achieved in the most shocking of ways. The nuclear idea floated by Szilárd and Einstein in their 1939 letter to President Roosevelt comes home to roost in the devastated streets of two Japanese cities.

On August 15 the news that Japan has surrendered spreads like wildfire. Mentone paper boys selling The Herald with the glorious headline, 'Peace – World Hails Jap Surrender', receive generous tips from elated buyers.

Leo Gamble, Mentone historian and author recollected: "My parents were talking about the coming of peace and the return home of relatives who were in the Army, while neighbours called over the fence to chat about the good news. But later that day I had a VP Day (Victory in the Pacific Day) experience that remains indelibly marked on my memory.

"A schoolboy friend, Neil Pickles, lived near us and he called around to say he was about to sell Heralds at his usual spot in Mentone Parade not far from the railway station. I decided to go with him, having time on my hands on this welcome holiday.

"Around 4 p.m. I witnessed an amazing episode in Mentone's main street. From the direction of the beach and the hotel there appeared a group of people walking about eight or ten abreast in the middle of Mentone Parade. They were singing and doing an occasional kick of the legs as they sang 'Knees Up Mother Brown' and other ditties."

There is a free dance at the City Hall, every school student gets a Victory Medal, and the Mordialloc Carnival, normally an end of year event, opens early.

At last, it is over, and the staunch volunteers of library can look forward to picking up the pieces and optimistically taking it into its third decade.

1946

Peace may have been declared throughout the nation, but it has not spread entirely throughout Bayside environs.

There is an ugly demonstration at the Mentone Turf Club races, when scores of infuriated backers hurl threats and abuse at the judge, Mr S. Shannon, after he declares Stormy Sea the winner over the favourite, Golden Buddy, in the Bass Juvenile Handicap.

The Argus reports that this, the third such incident in 18 months, is further argument for Mentone to install the "camera eye", the photo-finish device newly developed by well-known photographer Athol Shmith and Mr B. A. Pearl, which is backed by the Victorian Racing Club.

Meanwhile the Grand Final of the Federal Football Association, played at Brighton Beach between Cheltenham and Murrumbeena, erupts into an argument at half-time about the ball. The practice is for the competing teams to provide a ball each, one being used for the first half, and the other for the second. Before they run out for the third quarter, the Cheltenham captain objects to the state of the proffered Murrumbeena ball. He says that

they can continue to use his club's ball, but only if half of its cost, seven shillings and sixpence, is paid up. This re-ignites the blue, but eventually after discussions described as "protracted" play is finally resumed with the Murrumbidgee ball.

The library sets about getting the stock on the shelves and creating a welcoming space for the post-war community. Forty-five years after the 1901 release of 'My Brilliant Career', her ground-breaking novel about a single-minded girl growing up in rural Australia, Miles Franklin publishes a follow-up "corrective" novel with the delightful title of 'My Career Goes Bung'.

Kenneth Fearing releases 'The Big Clock', later to be the inspiration for three movies, Nikos Kazantzakis' 'Zorba the Greek' will also eventually receive film treatment, and the Rev. W. Awdry starts young readers out on a seemingly eternal railway journey with 'Thomas the Tank Engine'.

Another book comes from a surprising source – Errol Flynn. Not a biography outlining his experiences as a Hollywood star, rather an adventure novel titled 'Showdown', based on his life after he left Tasmania and worked in New Guinea. Coincidentally, the United Nations grants Australia trusteeship of the Territories of New Guinea and Papua.

After the peace celebrations die down, the reality of getting back to life sets in.

Despite having done an admirable job, the women are now being taken back out of the workforce and returned to "domestic duties". The joy and relief of peace time is further tempered for many wives by the realisation that they are now living with a man they no longer really know.

Many who served struggle on their return to 'civvy street', bringing back with them dark secrets and horrible memories, which they subsume with alcohol and developing the persona of the silent husband who "never talks about it."

After ex-soldiers appear in court following brawls at the Mentone Hotel and the Mentone Races, the Mentone RSL raises the issue of the need for rehabilitation of Diggers.

Around the world, things are moving at a hectic pace. French designer Louis Reard launches his modern day, more revealing take on the two-piece swimsuit. For a name, he is inspired by an event held just four days earlier in the Pacific - America's first nuclear weapon test held on a Marshall Islands outpost called Bikini Atoll.

The high-IQ Mensa Society is created, Tupperware is launched in department stores, and the first programmable, general-purpose electronic digital computer is introduced at the University of Pennsylvania.

Eight hundred Aboriginal pastoral workers walk off the job in Northwest WA, starting one of the longest industrial strikes in Australia, while the Federal Government determines that Foundation Day should be renamed Australia Day.

Moulded Products purchases a farm property on the Nepean Highway, formerly owned by Kilbreda College and the source of milk and vegetables for the nuns and boarders. The new owners build a manufacturing operation and after a name change, the legend of Nylex and its famous Nepean Highway and Richmond signs is launched.

As the year comes to a close, the birth is announced of a person who will go on to use the Bayside waters as the training ground for one of Australia's greatest sporting achievements. His name is John Edwin Bertrand.

On the cricket field, a new addition to the Mentone Cricket Club's roster will go on to make headlines all around the world. He comes from a very respected community and sporting Mentone family and is so good with his wristy spin bowling that he goes straight into the Under 16s at aged just 11. His name is Ian Meckiff.

1947

Mr H. P. Petersen is elected President and will continue to serve diligently in that role until 1959. He is a member of the original committee of 1925, as are Messrs Dickinson, Pepper and Lemmon, and Mrs A Richardson, who continues to volunteer.

This underlines the consistency of the library leadership, reflected in the solid membership and strong turnover of books lent.

Other organisations are not faring so well, and the Mordialloc Carnival's annual distribution of funds is becoming a necessary bonus for local institutions. Local primary schools and organisations including the life-saving club, the yacht club and the bowling club all receive grants. Sporting clubs and the RSL are helped out too, in some cases their members being allowed to run gaming sideshows at the Carnival in return for a percentage of the takings. The Carnival has been such a success that donations are made to the 'Food for Britain' appeal in recognition of the need to help those in the UK still deprived of basic needs after the war's destructive effects.

The Grace Leven Prize for Poetry, worth £50, is awarded for the first time, going to Sydney poet and editor Nan McDonald, for her collections of poems under the title 'Pacific Sea' and praised for their "essentially Australian" qualities."

Jon Cleary launches what will become a remarkable career with his first published novel, 'You Can't See Around Corners', about a trouble-prone Paddington bookie who gets drafted into the Army during World War 2 and deserts.

In another debut, James A. Michener releases the Pulitzer Prize winning 'Tales of the South Pacific', based on his World War 2 experiences as a naval officer, spawning the musical 'South Pacific' and two films.

'The Diary of a Young Girl' by Anne Frank is published, two years after the writer's death in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, while the Exodus, a 20-year-old US steamship packed with Jewish refugees from Europe, is captured by British troops and refused entry into Palestine at the port of Haifa.

A remarkable 18 goals are kicked by Melbourne full-forward Fred Fanning against St Kilda in the last home-and-away round of the VFL season. Even though he is only 25 and has won the VFL goal-kicking for the fourth time, he leaves to coach Hamilton in the Western District Football League, taking up a more attractive financial deal. Despite the later efforts of Jason Dunstall, with 17 goals, and Tony Lockett and Peter Hudson, with 16 each, Fanning's record still stands.

Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh are married, Australian workers are granted the 40-hour week, and the Government assumes control of Qantas.

The Woomera rocket range is established in South Australia as a missile testing site, and having enjoyed barely two years of post-war peace, the populace wakes up one morning to hear that the world has now been plunged into something called the 'Cold War', a deadly game of military and political brinkmanship between former allies the US and the USSR. The chilling name has come from an earlier 1945 essay in The Tribune by novelist George Orwell, and further inspired by a 1946 Winston Churchill speech in which he coins the additional phrase 'Iron Curtain'.

This fear-driven atmosphere will continue until 1991. To ensure that no one sleeps well after putting down their library book for the night, the Doomsday Clock, counting how close the world is to nuclear disaster, is introduced by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists.

1948

Mentone Racecourse hosts its final meeting. There is no real celebration, just the acceptance of the inevitable. Considering race-day used to draw thousands of punters, it is a blow to the community.

Mentone has thrived on its association with racing since the course was opened in 1888, locals proudly pointing out to visitors the Balcombe Road home of three-time Melbourne Cup winning jockey Jack Purtell, known affectionately as 'The Schnoz' for his long Jimmy Durante like nose, and the area near Prince's Laundry where Frank Manning trained Colonus, which had slogged through the mud to win the 1942 Cup.

But Mentone is not entirely about sport, with internationally recognised ballet mistress and theatre producer Minnie Everett and singing coach Stephanie Guy encouraging local talent. A highlight this year is their production of Jerome Kern's musical comedy 'Sally' at City Hall, featuring Harry Luscombe, Frank Hahn, Billy Libbis and Don Cameron. The local performers are well drilled, as Minnie is a no-nonsense theatrical force, having once told a then 16-year-old Robert Helpmann, "You'll never be any good as a dancer."

The library is pleased to display on its shelves what will become a seminal Australian work, Ruth Park's 'The Harp In The South', a breakthrough novel on the life of the Darcy family in the inner Sydney slum of Surry Hills.

Another welcome addition is Norman Mailer's debut novel 'The Naked and the Dead', about his experiences in World War 2, which will set the 25-year-old on to a remarkable literary journey as an author, journalist, playwright and film maker.

The library is further encouraged by negotiations with local and state authorities in relation to grant money and buoyed by having 250 people signed on in the membership categories using the facilities.

The Summer Olympics are held in London, the first since 1936, with gold to Australia's John Winter in the high jump and Mervyn Wood in single sculls rowing, and Shirley Strickland gaining a silver and two bronze in sprints and hurdles.

The musical 'Kiss Me Kate' opens for the first of 1077 performances in New York City, while the Puma sports goods brand is founded in Bavaria, West Germany, by Rudolf Dassler, having had a nasty split from his brother Adi, who continues on with their original Adidas brand. The English-built Land Rover is unveiled at the Amsterdam Motor Show, while inspired by World War 2 fighter planes, American manufacturer Cadillac unveils a car with massive tail fins - the classic 'Yank Tank'.

Not everything is sunny. On May 29 a massive cloudburst occurs in Mentone resulting in a rainfall of more than 40 millimetres. Fervent is the hope that the library roof doesn't leak.

1949

Mrs. W. E. Boston is elected the library's new Secretary, her skill and devotion to the cause seeing her holding the position right through until the late 1960s.

Membership increases to a very healthy figure of 255, and the committee is pleased when the much-anticipated Grants come through - £25 from the State Government and £21 from the Mordialloc Council.

Post-war change is in the air, with the Moorabbin Airport officially opening, the Snowy Mountains Hydro project beginning, and Federal Legislation establishing Australian Citizenship, with the population no longer being identified as British subjects. People line the pier and cliffs overlooking Mentone Beach to watch the Life Saving Club host

championship tournaments, teams from all around the bay competing in events including the reel-and-line contest to rescue a 'drowning' swimmer.

indigenous Australians who are eligible to vote in the State elections of NSW, Victoria, SA and Tasmania are given the right to also vote in Federal polls. Significantly, Judith Wright, poet and a strong campaigner for Aboriginal land rights, releases an award-winning book of verse, 'Woman to Man.'

ASIO is launched, and further indications of where the brave new post-war world is heading materialise in Nelson Algren's 'The Man With The Golden Arm', about drug addiction, and George Orwell's '1984' about a dystopian world of 'newspeak', 'doublethink' and 'thought crime' ruled by a controlling but distant figure called Big Brother. Arthur Miller's play 'Death of a Salesman' wins the Pulitzer Prize.

Americans are buying 100,000 television sets a week, the world's first commercially available computer, the Ferranti Mark 1 is released, and 'Pyramid Clubs', in which participants send each other money in the hope of receiving a large amount of money in return, are becoming a fad.

While the Mentone Race Course has lost its status, having been reduced to a training track and ear-marked for housing, local connection with horses is not lost. Kids can still admire the big, well-groomed horses as the strappers take them by for afternoon walks, stopping occasionally to eat the nature-strip grass.

Top trainer Fred Hoysted and his sons, Bob and Bon, have several stable sites, Fred's being near the railway between Collins Street and Patty Street, while Sid Ferguson has his base next door to St Bede's in Palermo Street.

Meanwhile the Soviet Union detonates its first atomic bomb, South Africa makes Apartheid official Government policy, and the People's Republic of China is proclaimed under Mao Tse Tung. The beaten Nationalists under Chiang Kai-Shek flee to Taiwan, a story that will never be put to rest.

1950

The literary world is rocked on January 21st with the death of George Orwell.

Only seven months after the release of his ground-breaking, hugely successful '1984', Orwell, real name Eric Arthur Blair, succumbs to the ravages of the tuberculosis – and his love of a cigarette - that has dogged him for years. He is just 46, leaving behind a thirty-year-old wife, a five-year-old son, and one final quote: "At fifty, everyone has the face he deserves ..."

It is the dawn of a new decade, destined to become the rock 'n' roll Fifties, and two powerful Australian works are released – Nevil Shute's 'A Town Like Alice', a romantic novel about a young English heiress and an Australian soldier who meet in a prisoner-of-war camp, and Frank Hardy's 'Power Without Glory', seen by some to be a thinly-veiled attack on the family of political, bookmaking and business identity John Wren. Hardy will be charged with criminal libel, and faces a jail term, but is acquitted by a jury.

In its laid-back style the library is happy to report that the year has been one of "steady progress."

Grants are becoming a regular source of income, this time with £21/15/- from the State Government and £25 from the Mordialloc Council, which "have helped the Committee to give better services to the subscribers."

"Although books have advanced considerably on prices, the subscription of ten shillings per year is still the same as when the Library opened twenty-five years ago," the Secretary notes.

This is due, it is pointed out, to all the work of the committee being voluntary, and so nothing is changed. But all members are saddened to hear of the passing of Mr J. O. Thomas, a Life Member, and Mr Chenney, the Honorary Auditor.

In September, North Melbourne reaches its first ever VFL Grand Final, the line-up including former Mentone Tiger Bob Brooker, who will go on to become club captain and a best-and-fairest winner.

In October the library is closed for three days to undertake a stock take, the checking of more than 5000 books revealing that 166 have been lost since the previous audit was done. Australian powerhouse cyclist Sid Patterson wins the world amateur pursuit cycling title in Belgium, Diner's Club issues the world's first credit card, the transistor radio arrives to change teenage taste in music, and cartoonist Charles Schulz introduces Charlie Brown, Lucy, Snoopy and all the other loveable character in Peanuts.

In the next Cold War step, NATO is created as a military alliance of Western countries, while Albert Einstein, having signed a letter to US President Roosevelt in 1939 urging America to create the atom bomb, now warns that nuclear war could lead to mutual destruction.

For Mentone-based Frank Manning, trainer of 1942 Melbourne Cup winner Colonus, it is more a matter of 'implosion.'

His wife Myrtle, described by Truth newspaper as a "glamorous blonde" sues him in court for maintenance, branding him "a fighting drunk, callous wife-beater, family stirrer, lover of all women, and so good a nocturnal hider of big rolls of money involving hundreds of pounds that he forgets next morning where he had planted them!"

Myrtle wins.

1951

A total of 29,755 books are taken out by subscribers during the year, an increase of 2900 on 1950, indicating that the library is very much part of the post-war re-birth of the nation.

The total of 331 people who use the library – consisting of 279 Subscribers, 42

Non-Members, and 10 Life Members - is an increase of 66 on the previous year's numbers, further underlining that the library is being used and much appreciated by the community.

Frank Hardy emerges from the smoke and clamour of the 'Power Without Glory' battlefield, clutching a collection entitled 'The Man From Clinkapella And Other Prize-Winning Stories', while Australia's long-running appreciation of poetry is on full display with the publication of collections by no less than 16 writers, including Judith Wright, Hal Porter, Christopher Koch, Eve Langley, A. D. Hope, Elizabeth Riddell, Rosemary Dobson and Roland Robinson.

On the world scene, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Ray Bradbury and others continue to feed readers' growing fascination with the burgeoning genre of science fiction, boosted by the premiere of the classic sci-fi film "The Day the Earth Stood Still". With the commercial computer, UNIVAC, being installed at the US Census Bureau and the world's first nuclear power plant beginning operation in Idaho, life is beginning to imitate art.

Amid all this activity, the Librarian, Miss McDonald, reports that 369 new books have been added during the year. These include children's books as well as 'gift books' from Captain Lloyd Jones of the USA, the Institute of Archaeology, and Mr E. J. Trait, the livewire and very community-minded Managing Director of the Cheltenham-based Standard News group.

'Popular Mechanics' magazines are presented by Mr Woinarski, and the office of the Premier of Victoria, John McDonald, provides 'Golden Years, 1851-1951', outlining the centenary of the discovery of gold in Victoria, and 'Jubilee', honouring the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Commonwealth of Australia.

In turn, 309 books are written off, with most of these being sold at 6d each, while a donation of £25 is received from the State Government, and the Mordialloc Council repairs and paints the library building, a spruce-up which is much appreciated by the committee and members. On the cricket field, Mentone's Under 16 side finishes champions, having gone through the season undefeated, their prospects enhanced by the skills of bowler Ian Meckiff. Bowling spinners at this stage, his talent is so prodigious that he has started with the side at age 11, and in this season his figures include 9/1 in one innings, complete with a hat-trick. The post-war boom is underlined with Mentone Primary School, having a registered capacity of 400 students, enrolling a total of 499, forcing it to occupy space at City Hall until pre-fab classrooms arrive.

A new way that educational books can be used comes into play when the first lessons of the School of The Air are broadcast from the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Adelaide.

The ANZUS Treaty, between Australia, New Zealand the US, is signed, Francis McEncroe sells his first Chiko Roll at the Wagga Wagga Agricultural Show, and Jean Lee becomes the last woman to be hanged in Australia, when she, Robert Clayton and Norman Andrews are executed in Melbourne for the murder of a 73-year-old man.

Meanwhile the release of 'The Catcher In The Rye' by J. D. Salinger becomes the go-to guide for those enduring real or imagined teenage angst. And with American disk jockey Alan Freed dubbing an emerging music genre as "Rock 'n' Roll", the revolution is coming.

1952

The library is on a roll. Twenty-seven years of devoted work by the volunteer committee combined with the public's ever-increasing post-war thirst for information and entertainment is ushering the Mentone Public Library into its own Golden Years.

Books taken out this year jump by 11,600 on the previous year, for a whopping record total of 41,355. Membership also reaches stratospheric heights, the total of 438 being a huge increase of 107 on 1951.

The library is fulfilling the notion visualised after World War 1 that "if peace were to be maintained, a close and sympathetic understanding of the way in which people of other nations lived must be achieved" with travel and reading being "a means to this end."

It is noted with some satisfaction also that in those early years "Government assistance was negligible," but now both the State Government and Mordialloc Council are regular contributors to the library's coffers, this year with £25 each.

The Readwell section, first introduced in 1935, continues to be a popular element of the library's offerings. Robertson and Mullens, bookshop owners and publishers, supply the educational books, 40 of which are exchanged each month. A stock-taking of this section conducted by the Secretary, Mrs Boston, along with Mrs Hocking and Miss McDonald, reveals that out of the 400 books in stock, only five are missing. "We have since paid for these and obtained replacements," the Secretary reports.

In Mentone, the RSL moves its headquarters from its hall in Balcombe Road to the splendid 'Riviera', a fabulous old home whose origins hark back to Mentone's 19th century glory days. World focus is on England, where King George VI dies and the British crown is passed on to his daughter Elizabeth, and across four days The Great Smog of London causes an estimated 4000, and probably many more, fatalities.

Australia has plenty to celebrate, with Marjorie Jackson and Shirley Strickland winning three of Australia's six gold medals at the Helsinki Olympics, and Nancye (Wynne) Bolton, who first showed her tennis skills as a 15-year-old on Mentone Oval, winning the last of her 10

Australian Doubles Champions with Thelma Coyne. Along with her six singles wins and four mixed double victories, she ranks second only to Margaret Court in Australian women grand slam success,

Gifts to the library include copies of the magazine 'Australasian Post', at one time edited by novelist George Johnston, and positioning itself as the premiere recorder of tales of the Outback and stories about quintessential Aussie life and characters.

This is in tune with the release of Jon Cleary's 'The Sundowners', about the Carmody family traversing the Outback in their horse-drawn wagon, Nevil Shute's 'The Far Country', in which a young Englishwoman comes to stay at Merrijig sheep station, and Dal Stivens' short story collection headed up by 'Ironbark Bill Meets The Bunyip'. Nettie Palmer releases her biography of one of the great chroniclers of the Australian way of life, Henry Lawson.

Ernest Hemingway proves that a book doesn't necessarily have to be long to be good, his novella 'The Old Man And The Sea' about a Cuban fisherman going on to win its famed author the Pulitzer Prize. It is just 26,531 words.

On the movie scene, the iconic musical 'Singin' In The Rain' premieres at Radio City Music Hall, but the film that draws most local interest is 'Million Dollar Mermaid', starring Esther Williams as Mentone's famous daughter, Annette Kellerman. Super swimmer and daredevil superstar on the Hollywood screen and world stage, particularly in mermaid costume, ultimately becoming one of the most famous women on the planet, young Annette honed her skills at the Mentone Baths, after the family moved from Sydney to Palermo Street in 1902.

1953

The good times keep rolling. A total of 50,029 books are borrowed during the year, an increase of 8774, and once more setting a new library benchmark.

Membership is up again, this time by 59, consisting of 441 Subscribers, 44 Non-Members and 12 Life Members, making a total of 497 people who visit the library. Not to be seen to be getting too cocky, the Secretary once again describes this progress as "steady."

With Queen Elizabeth being crowned in Westminster Abbey, a special Coronation gift is given to all library committee members and special officers "for their untiring attention and work that they have done for many years." A book outlining the 'Life and Times of King George VI, 1895-1952' is also purchased.

The library continues to be a 'clearing house' for product. Donations of 13 adult books and 13 children's books are received while 37 books are sent to Bundoora Hospital via committee member Mrs Hocking. Gifts of books come from Cr Wier, Mr Lloyd Jones of the USA, Mr Stanley of Traralgon, and the library's Miss McDonald, plus magazines from members. Of the 526 new books purchased, 48 are children's books, which are given out free to children of members. Stocktaking of the children's books in July shows that 11 books are missing, while overall a total of 157 books are written off.

Cheques of £25 from the State Government and the Mordialloc City Council are again gratefully received, and new insurances are taken out on the contents and fittings.

Kilbreda adds a new wing to accommodate growing numbers, the Principal, Mother Margaret Mary Bourke maintaining leadership of the Brigidine and lay staff well into her third decade.

But the times are changing. Josef Stalin dies and is replaced by Nikita Khrushchev, a CIA sponsored committee gathers for the first time to officially discuss UFOs, Hillary and Tenzing

conquer Mt Everest, England's football team is embarrassed 6-3 at Wembley by Hungary, and Iran's democratically elected Government is overthrown and replaced by the Shah. African American author Stanley Baldwin releases the ground-breaking 'Go Tell It On A Mountain', and Aldous Huxley tries out the mind-altering drug mescaline, leading to his book 'The Doors of Perception'. Thus inspired 12 years later, a Los Angeles rock band will launch themselves on an unsuspecting public as The Doors.

Above all, television is on the move and in the US on January 19, a record-setting 71.1 per cent of all sets are tuned into watch 'I Love Lucy', in which Lucy and Ricky Ricardo's son Little Ricky is born. It will turn out to be a bigger viewing audience than next day's inauguration of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President.

Boxer Rocky Marciano retires undefeated with 49 wins and no losses, Hugh Hefner launches Playboy magazine with Marilyn Monroe on the cover, and Arthur Miller's play 'The Crucible', an allegory of McCarthyism, opens on Broadway.

Suffering from poor health and a determination to fulfil all his drinking appointments, Dylan Thomas dies not long after declaring to a New York barman, "I've had eighteen straight whiskies, I think that is a record!"

Food rationing from World War 2 days is finally ended, with the UK lifting its rationing on sugar. Sweets are finally flowing freely again, and there is much excitement when G. J. Coles opens its Mentone store in the main street near the Balcombe Road end.

1954

Can the library get any busier? A total of 54,987 books are taken out, almost 5000 more than 1953, yet another record.

This turnover involves about 530 people who regularly use the facilities, with all the sessions ably attended by the hard-working voluntary committee and special offers.

Missing books are proving a problem, so much so that of the 120 letters mailed out during the year, most of them are about stock gone AWOL. A collector is brought into help and over six weeks manages to retrieve 60 books, worth more than £22, which the Secretary describes as a "very satisfactory result."

An extra 100 books are added to the Readwell Library for a total of 500 in this section.

The library notes the passing of Cr H. C. Edwards, one of its longest serving and most dedicated members, appreciated for his work as the library's diligent Mordialloc Council representative.

On the literary front, the big news is the launch of J. R. R. Tolkien's 'The Fellowship of the Ring,' the first volume of his fantasy trilogy, while Australia mourns the death of Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin, her last book being 'Cockatoos: A Story of Youth & Exodists'. Her will contains a bequest establishing an annual literary award that will go on to be the pinnacle of Australian writing.

Roger Bannister becomes the first person to run the mile in less than four minutes, Footscray wins its first VFL Premiership, and a US band named Bill Hayley & His Comets introduces a sound not quite like anything heard before with two huge songs, 'Rock Around The Clock' and 'Shake, Rattle & Roll'. The revolution is gathering.

All of Australia is agog with the arrival in February of the newly crowned Queen Elizabeth and her husband the Duke of Edinburgh for the 58-day Australian leg of their Commonwealth tour. Mentone shops, streets, schools and the library are awash with commemorative books, posters, flags and coins.

A punishing and well-organised schedule does not include Mentone, but one night a rumour rapidly takes flight around town that the couple are going on an unofficial visit to Frankston, and so hundreds of locals line the Nepean Highway in the hope of getting a glimpse as they speed pass.

Sadly, the royal car, a meticulously presented black Humber Super Snipe, never materialises and eventually everyone goes home disappointed.

Ironically, a few months later the immaculate Humber is spotted for sale at Mentone Railway Garage!

It is priced at £3000, which is \$125,000 in today's money. And sold within a couple of weeks.

OUR FOURTH DECADE - 1955 to 1964

Books, plays, art, TV and rock 'n' roll

1955

The Australian post-war cultural scene is rapidly blooming in all directions.

On the literary scene, Alan Marshall's childhood biography 'I Can Jump Puddles' is published, as is the first novel of D'Arcy Niland, 'The Shiralee'. A quintessential tale about a swagman taking his daughter on the road with him, it is described by The Argus as a "great Australian novel" and by the New York Times as a "fine story".

American reviewers also rave about 'The Tree of Man', Patrick White's fourth novel, but as is customary, local critics are not impressed, some calling his work "un-Australian."

On stage, Ray Lawler's play 'Summer of the Seventeenth Doll' lifts local theatre to a whole new level, while the world is yet to realise what it is in for when a revue called 'Return Fare' features a character named Edna Everage, portrayed by a quirky up-and-coming performer named Barry Humphries.

In the art world, artists, art lovers and critics alike are mightily impressed by John Brack's stark but incisive depiction of city workers leaving for home at the end of the day with his painting 'Collins St., 5 pm'.

The impetus flows to the library, with another bumper year, 58,594 books taken out, more than 3500 than the previous year. It is a tribute to 30 years of endeavour, a situation that is further recognised when the library shifts to a new location – a room at the Mordialloc City Council Chambers. A total of £200 is spent on moving from the shared Rifle Range Club Room set-up and refurbishment of the new locale. The library's Secretary W. E. Boston describes the shift as "very satisfactory in every way."

The State Government and the Mordialloc Council chip in with £25 each, and 654 new books are purchased, while 63 cancelled books are taken by volunteer Mrs Couper to the War Veterans' Home Trust, which has hostels at Cheltenham, Frankston and Heidelberg.

Not all is flourishing in the publishing world. A fortnightly Standard News publication, 'Australian Boy', launched in 1952 and described as a "thrill-packed comic magazine", succumbs to commercial pressures and is closed after three years. The brainchild of indefatigable Standard News boss E. W. Trait, developed as an antidote to the major publishers' more racier comics for the emerging post-war teenage market, it concentrated on healthier activities such as scouting, fishing, snorkelling and constructing model planes and trains.

It has had its moments with colour covers, a Boys Club, a weekly radio program named 'Boy Time' on 3AW, and in Issue Number 65 a six-page comic strip submitted by "13-year-old Max Gillies, of Caulfield," who will go on to great things as an actor and satirist.

The young girls of Mentone and district are presented with a great education opportunity. Mentone Girls' School, as it is known in its first year, is officially established at the corner of Balcombe and Charman Roads. Its first Principal is Nina Carr who has earlier impressed visiting Inspectors at Colac High School, not only for her skill as a teacher of English and

French there, but also her declared determination that “girls’ education was equally as important as boys.”

She sets a foundation that will flourish for decades.

1956

Melbourne is the host of the 13th Olympic Games. The whole nation is absorbed, their interest doubly fuelled by a new information processor, television.

TCN-9 Sydney goes to air first, on Sunday September 16 at 7.00 pm, with Bruce Gyngell, a former ABC presenter and record company executive, as Australia’s first-ever host. Gyngell reveals years later that his famous words, “Good evening, and welcome to television,” were suggested by the make-up lady when he was sitting in the chair nervously ruminating on what to say.

Within weeks HSV-7 and GTV-9 in Melbourne, the ABC, and ATN-7 in Sydney follow. One of HSV-7’s interviews on its first day is with Edna Everage, an early example of Barry Humphries’ uncanny ability to play the media game.

In Mentone, a mid-year demonstration of TV sets is held in City Hall, followed by local shops putting them on display and then for sale in time for the Olympic Games.

HSV-7, TCN-9 and the ABC all cover the Games, starting on November 22, and from the moment the image appears of young middle-distance runner Ron Clarke carrying the sparking Olympic torch into the MCG packed with 103,000 people, Australian viewers are hooked - most of them peering at these wondrous devices through the windows of the retailers.

The Games are both a viewer’s and a sports fan’s delight, Australia winning 13 gold, 8 silver and 14 bronze medals and coming third of 67 nations, with Betty Cuthbert, Shirley Strickland, Dawn Fraser, Lorraine Crapp and Murray Rose headlining many inspiring performances.

Despite a combative Hungary versus USSR water polo contest, which becomes known as the “Blood in the Water Match”, the 1956 Olympics are forever known as the “Friendly Games.” Mentone cricketer Ian Meckiff, having displayed his skills at District level with South Melbourne, attracts the attention of State and Test selectors and is selected for Victoria. By now his wristy spinners have lost their impact and he has taken to fast bowling. His seven wickets against New South Wales help to create the first ever tie in Sheffield Shield history. The word “tie” will come back to haunt him.

Of course, life has to go on, and 70,515 books are borrowed at the library, a charge of one shilling for expensive books is introduced, boxes of cancelled books are taken to the Cheltenham Old People’s Homes, the Mont Park Mental Hospital and the Mission of St James & St John, and seven books are donated, one being ‘Under the Southern Cross’, gifted by Mordialloc City Council.

Having moved into the Mordialloc City Chambers, a room heater is purchased to make life more comfortable, and another local creative opportunity is launched with the official formation of the Mentone Mordialloc Art Group.

But the mood is saddened by the passing of two Life Members, Mr Pepper and Mr Dickinson who have done so much for the organisation since its inception.

Mavis Thorpe Clark releases her tenth children’s book, ‘The Brown Land Was Green.’

Ironically, the biggest flood ever recorded on the Murray River causes widespread damage.

Internationally, Grace Metalious shocks the establishment with 'Peyton Place', a tale of sex, abortion and murder, set in quiet New England, while Kathryn Hulme looks at the other side of the coin with 'The Nun's Story'.

On July 26, Egypt's President Gamal Abdul Nasser causes a political sensation when he orders the nationalisation of the Suez Canal. This is not looked on very favourably by the company operating it, particularly the majority British and French shareholders, and soon the world is on edge.

In the US a young man with slicked back hair and naughty sideburns named Elvis Presley is introducing songs with titles like 'Hound Dog' and 'Heartbreak Hotel'. And a 'duck-walking' guitarist named Chuck Berry has followed up his 1955 hit 'Maybelline' with an anthem titled 'Roll Over Beethoven'. As has a piano-thumping, heavily made-up performer named Little Richard with 'Tutti-Frutti' and 'Long Tall Sally.'

Don't look now, but the revolution is here.

1957

The music keeps rockin'. Crooners such as Pat Boone with 'Love Letters in The Sand' and Marty Robbins with 'A White Sport Coat' uphold the old traditions.

But have you seen that Jerry Lee Lewis guy? Pounding the piano and singing 'Great Balls Of Fire'? No wonder they call him The Killer. From now on, it is no holds barred.

Having entered the Rock 'n' Roll Age, the world has another new distraction, the Space Race.

On October 4, the Soviet Union launches Sputnik 1, the world's first satellite. It is a speck of light just visible to the naked eye as it crosses the sky, with awed people standing out on the streets of Mentone to gaze at it in wonder.

It is a tiny, at just 58 cm in diameter not much bigger than a beach ball. And it is in a low, elliptical orbit. And its name is not some exotic, sci-fi moniker, rather the Russian word for "companion."

But, it is up there. And it is the first. And every time it completes its 98-minute trip, all that can be heard from Cape Canaveral in the US is, 'Those damn Ruskies!' Especially on November 3 when Sputnik 2 is sent up, this time containing a dog named Laika. And particularly on December 6 when America's first attempt to put a satellite up fails spectacularly. The rocket's fuel tanks rupture and it embarrassingly blows up in a ball of flame on the launch pad.

The library is going well, too, albeit in its own quiet way, with 587 members and a record 79,442 books borrowed.

Sadly, the passing of Mrs Newell is recorded, again a stalwart who has done much as a special officer. Mrs Bone, Miss Roche, Miss Illott and Mr Williamson become special officers and local solicitor Mr McDonald draws up the Constitution, which is to be checked and revised. Mrs Couper resigns as Treasurer and Mrs Dowsett is appointed in her place.

The original Mentone Fire Station, initially located on the corner of Brindisi Street and Mentone Parade, is relocated to the western suburb of Lalor, Mentone's cricket hero, Ian Meckiff takes eight wickets in a splendid Test debut for Australia on the tour of South Africa, and a coffee lounge is opened in Mentone, dispensing cappuccino via the 'wonder of wonders', a machine brought all the way from Italy.

Robins Stores, the famous grocery and produce outlet, is caught up in the social changes, too, and after an arduous process to get a liquor licence, opens a Bottle Shop.

'On The Beach', Nevil Shute's apocalyptic novel, later to be made locally into a film, is released. Centred on a submarine journey from Melbourne to Seattle after a horrific nuclear

war has all but destroyed the planet, British-born Shute draws on his World War 2 experiences for the voyage, with the title, "on the beach" being a Royal Navy term for retirement from active service.

Boris Pasternak releases his controversial 'Doctor Zhivago,' needing to smuggle the text out and have it printed in Italy. Dr Seuss turns writing for children on its head with 'The Cat In The Hat', Patrick White at last gets local appreciation with 'Voss' winning the inaugural Miles Franklin Award and John O'Grady, under his pen name of Nino Culotta, beautifully captures the puzzlement of the Italian migrant with 'They're A Weird Mob'.

Television continues to make heavy inroads, led by a cheeky radio personality named Graham Kennedy who takes to the new medium with aplomb, hosting 'In Melbourne Tonight'. A mixture of song, comedy, vaudeville and anything-goes commercials, it will become must-see viewing.

But the year belongs to Slim Dusty, his recording of 'A Pub With No Beer' becoming the first Australian single to reach Gold Record status and ultimately the first to enter the British charts, peaking at number three.

1958

Extra, extra, read all about it. The library gets an electric kettle!

It is a significant move for the establishment, as is the installation of a letterbox. Plus the purchase of several new chairs.

And why not? It follows the arrival of a cheque for £63/13/9 from the State Government. But while these acquisitions indicate belief in a continuing rosy future, sadly, the annual figures do not confirm the expectations.

After a monumental streak of annual growth, book lending drops for the first time in many years. From the previous year's record of 79,442, loans go down to 73,337.

This is a significant reduction of 6105, the Secretary, W. E. Boston phlegmatically reporting: "Television seems to be the cause of this ..."

It indicates that between the rapidly growing introduction of television sets around the nation and what is happening on the municipal library scene throughout the State, the future could be challenging.

An indicator of where the world is heading is the opening of the Thrift Park indoor shopping mall at Lower Dandenong Road with 8000 people crowding around to see this new retail wonderland officially launched by TV star Princess Panda.

This begins regular visits by celebrities, including IMT host Graham Kennedy in 1964.

The library is sombre with the passing of Mrs Richardson, one of its oldest Life Members, and a wonderful contributor to the running of the place.

Boris Pasternak, having released "Dr Zhivago" in the previous year, now finds himself at the centre of Cold War theatrics, with the USSR loudly condemning his book, especially its interpretation of the 1917 October Revolution.

Sensing an opportunity, the Americans promote the work, with the CIA buying up copies and distributing them to its embassies around the world to circulate to unwary locals.

It also discreetly hands out Russian-language copies to visitors to the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels. Enraged, the Politburo forces Pasternak's fellow writers to denounce him, instructs Russian media to bag him as a "literary weed", and blocks him from accepting the Nobel Prize for Literature.

No such angst for Arthur Mailey, writer, cartoonist, and a brilliant Test bowler for Australia, who releases his autobiography titled "10 for 66 And All That."

Bowling leg breaks “like a millionaire”, he has achieved remarkable figures. At his best, an amazing 9/121 in one Ashes innings, a record which still stands. At his worst, a soul-destroying 4/362 bowling for NSW against Victoria on their way to an astonishing 1107. Although, he hastily points out, in his typical self-deprecating style, that those figures would have been much better had not three sitters of catches been dropped, “two of them by a man in the Pavilion wearing a bowler hat ...”

Typically, when he retires from cricket and journalism, he takes up a mixed business in southern Sydney that includes a butcher’s shop, so he summarises his career with a notice in the window:

“Arthur Mailey – he used to bowl tripe; he used to write tripe; now he sells it ...”

1959

It is three years since the flame was extinguished at the MCG, but the Olympics live on and the library purchases a book about the Melbourne Games to add to its stock.

This - combined with 710 books purchased, four donated, 724 written off, over 300 donated to the Brotherhood of St Lawrence, the University Appeal and the Kew Mental Hospital, 25 replaced after a stocktake revealed they had gone missing, some sold off at 6d each, some destroyed because they were too badly damaged, and 210 outstanding books recovered - shows how the volunteers work hard to ensure that stock is refreshed each year to offer an up-to-date and broad range of books to members.

But the worrying aspect is that loans have again dropped. This time by a whopping 8018 on the previous year, taking turnover back to 65,319. It underlines that social change is impacting on the library’s efforts.

It is quite a year of massive change, in fact. In January, Alaska becomes the 49th state of the USA, and in August, Hawaii becomes the 50th. Barbie makes her debut at the American International Toy Fair, Disneyland launches the Monorail, and 'Bonanza' premieres in the US, the first ever regularly scheduled TV program presented in colour.

The Sidney Myer Music Bowl is officially opened by Prime Minister Robert Menzies, construction of the Sydney Opera House begins, and American evangelist Billy Graham tours Australia, setting a record crowd at the MCG yet to be beaten.

Westfield open its first shopping centre, Westfield Plaza, located in in Blacktown, NSW. With 12 shops, two department stores and a supermarket, it is modest by today’s mega-standards, but people flock to see what newspapers describes as “the most modern American-type combined retail centre.”

‘The Big Fellow’ by Vance Palmer wins the Miles Franklin Literary Award, while the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction goes to Morris West with ‘The Devil’s Advocate.’ In the US, Robert Bloch releases ‘Psycho’, destined to become a classic movie.

Speaking of film. ‘On the Beach’, based on Nevil Shute’s novel and starring Gregory Peck, Fred Astaire and Ava Gardner is released, ‘Variety’ describing it as “solid”, but with the final impact being “as heavy as a leaden shroud.”

For years, Gardner is credited as having said that Melbourne was “the perfect place to make a film about the end of the world.”

It is eventually revealed that it was a quote conjured up by journalist Neil Jillett when describing a dull Sunday during which there was no filming, no story to write, and Melbourne was its usual staid self.

But this is nothing compared to the reporting in the sports pages. Mentone's favourite son, Ian Meckiff, crashes through England in the New Year Test at the MCG, taking 6/38, routing the Old Enemy for 87 and spearheading Australia to a comfortable win. England complains about the left-armers' wristy action. The word "chucker" is thrown about. As is the phrase "whinging Poms."

1960

The library is closed for 10 days to be repainted. The opportunity is taken to reorganise the grouping of the books into new sections, carried out by "the untiring work of the committee."

It is a sign of confidence in the future, but turnover drops again, this time by more than 2000, with 63,700 books given out during the year.

Significantly, the Readwell Unit, part of the daily operations since 1935, where the library entered into a contract with Robertson and Mullens to supply books, some of which were exchanged each month, comes to an end.

Meanwhile, council and community discussion about the establishment of a Free Library Service in the municipality - which would be in opposition to Mentone Public Library - are ramping up. Initially the idea is to locate this new library in Mordialloc or Mentone, with most councillors favouring Mordialloc. But these are not considered central enough, and other voices began suggesting Parkers Road, Parkdale, as the location.

With all this on its mind, the library is also saddened with the death of Miss Grace Phillips, whose untiring work resulted in her becoming a Life Member.

The derelict blacksmith's shop on Balcombe Road is replaced by a court hosting the emerging game of squash, while Ian Meckiff cannot keep out of the headlines. In a thrilling Second Test in Brisbane against the West Indies, he scrambles for the winning run, but is run out by fieldsman Joe Solomon, who has miraculously hit the wicket side-on. This results in the first ever tie in Test cricket history. For Meckiff, it is déjà vu, having earlier also played in the first tied Sheffield Shield match.

On the Cold War front, US pilot Francis Gary Powers is shot down over Russia in his CIA-managed U2 spy plane, ramping up tensions, while more than 100,000 demonstrators gather at a "Ban The Bomb" rally in London.

In one of the first instances of skyjacking/hijacking, a man attempts to take over TAA Flight 408, Sydney to Brisbane, on July 19. Armed with a sawn-off .22 rifle and a home-made bomb he demands the Lockheed Electra be flown to Singapore. But he is courageously overcome by the crew, with First Officer Tom Bennett punching the hijacker and pulling the bomb wires from his hand.

The world's first female Prime Minister is elected with Sirimavo Bandaranaike taking over the leadership of Ceylon/Sri Lanka.

The Summer Olympics are held in Rome, with Herb Elliott streeting the field in the 1500 metres, Latvian-born John Konrads covering the same distance in the pool in Games record time, and Dawn Fraser winning her second consecutive 100 metres gold.

Television's 2nd Annual 'Star of the Year' Awards, sponsored by TV Week, are presented with the winner Graham Kennedy coining the name the 'Logie Awards', after the Scottish developer of television, John Logie Baird. The awards are held at the Savoy Hotel in Brighton and are not televised.

Joan Lindsay captivates readers with 'Picnic at Hanging Rock,' the cry of "Miranda, Miranda," still resonating after all these years, while Thea Astley publishes 'A Descant for Gossips', and Elizabeth O'Conner wins the Miles Franklin Award for 'The Irishman.'

The classic American novel, 'To Kill a Mockingbird', by Harper Lee is published, Tim Winton, destined to become an acclaimed novelist, is born on August 4, and the suspenseful horror film 'Psycho', based on Robert Bloch's book and directed by legendary film maker Alfred Hitchcock, premieres in New York City.

Alan Seymour's acclaimed play 'The One Day of the Year' makes its debut as an amateur production by the Adelaide Theatre Group. Right off the bat, its criticism of Anzac Day engenders death threats.

1961

Discussion rages throughout the year about the City of Mordialloc's plans for its first free municipal library, movement being held up by a very public Council and community spat over where it should be located.

It's appropriate, 1961 being what the Chinese call an "Upside Down Year", reading the same way when it is inverted. The previous one was 1881 and the next will be 6009.

In September a fresh Council is elected, and it is decided to drop the original proposal for the new library to be located at either Mordialloc or Mentone, and that it will be developed on the former Lincoln Mills factory site in Parkers Road, Parkdale.

Mentone Public Library, now in its 36th year, decides the best thing to do is get on with the job and after three years of turnover plummeting, it is rewarded with an increase in book lending - up by 1246 for a total of 64,946. This is encouraging news, although the Committee is saddened with the passing of two valued Life Members - Mrs Farrant, and the Librarian Miss L. McDonald, who have both made splendid contributions.

Mrs Hocking is appointed to the Librarian's role, with Mrs Foster as her assistant, and everyone is "very pleased to see Mrs Couper, after her illness, taking over Mrs Farrant's place on Tuesday afternoons."

In a breakthrough, Shirley Burke is elected Mayor of Mordialloc but expresses her displeasure when Melbourne's Lord Mayor leaves her off the invitation list for the annual dinner for all metropolitan mayors, as it is a 'men only' gathering.

'The Agony & The Ecstasy', the biographical novel of Michelangelo by Irving Stone, is released, 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' by D. H. Lawrence is banned, and 'Riders In The Chariot', by Patrick White, wins the Miles Franklin.

'Four Corners', the award-winning current affairs program makes its debut on ABC TV, the first regional television station is launched in Traralgon, Victoria, as GLV-10, and the last electric tram service runs in Sydney.

The world scene continues to be grim. Virtually overnight, a massive wall is built splitting the German city of Berlin into East and West sectors, the USSR tests massive nuclear weapons, and petrified Americans keep digging fallout shelters in their backyards.

American-financed anti-Castro forces attempt to invade Cuba at a swampy area on the island's south coast known ominously as the Bay of Pigs, a disastrous CIA-devised attempt to overthrow Fidel Castro that newly-elected President John F. Kennedy will come to regret, while 'Freedom Riders' push for enforcement of a US Supreme Court decision decreeing that segregated buses are unconstitutional.

Still, there is room for light relief. Students at Fresno State College claim a world record for stacking 73 people all at once on a dormitory bed. Say goodnight, Dick.

1962

The first free municipal library in the City of Mordialloc is opened in Parkdale with Vida Horn from the Footscray Library appointed as its Chief Librarian. At the end of the first fortnight the Mentone Public Library's worst fears become a reality when it is reported that 1976 adults, 600 teenagers and 953 children have joined and borrowed books from the new Parkers Road operation.

The impact becomes clear in Mentone's figures, the previous year's healthy turnover of 64,946 dropping by 5433 to 59,513. But it does not stop the energy or enthusiasm, with the Secretary commending the special officers for their "wonderful work at the counter during all sessions." Nine hundred and ninety-two old books are cancelled, donation of books to charities continue, outstanding books are chased down, and 933 new books are purchased. There is turnover amid the volunteers, with the passing of Mrs Lindsay, "one of our oldest special officers," and the resignation of Mrs Bates and Mrs Phillips. Things are balanced out with the appointment of Mrs O'Neill and Mrs Harvey as special officers.

A connection with Mentone's famous daughter, Annette Kellerman - movie and stage star, long-distance swimmer, fashion designer, including her ground-breaking one-piece costume, women's advocate and healthy living proponent - is irretrievably lost when the now dilapidated Mentone Baths, where she developed her skills in the early 1900s, are destroyed by fire.

'The Well Dressed Explorer' by Thea Astley and 'The Cupboard Under The Stairs' by George Turner jointly win the Miles Franklin, while 'One Flew Over The Cuckoo Nest', the debut novel by Ken Kesey, is published by Viking Press.

The British Royal College of Physicians brings out the first report warning of the dangers of smoking, while Australia wins 38 gold medals at the British Empire and Commonwealth Games held in Perth.

Bishop Burke of the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo, New York, bans Chubby Checker's evergreen hit 'The Twist' from Catholic schools, declaring it "impure", while the Vatican warns that 'Dr No', the first of the James Bond films, is a "dangerous mixture of violence, vulgarity, sadism and sex."

It features the famous scene of Swiss-born Ursula Andress materialising out of the Caribbean waters in a white bikini, her pale skin sprayed with tan to make her supposedly appear more 'Jamaican.'

Time magazine calls Bond, played by Sean Connery, "a blithering bounder" while other critics say the film is "fun all the way" and "full of submerged self-parody."

Either way, it is a box office success, but the Academy Awards are scooped by David Lean's 227-minute epic, 'Lawrence of Arabia,' starring Peter O'Toole.

On October 5, an EMI Parlophone single with the pleading title of 'Love Me Do' is released on the UK market to little fanfare, but its engaging harmonies and dockside harmonica steadily drive it up the charts to Number 17. Not a bad first-up effort for four lively lads, who had earlier been knocked back by Decca Records because "guitar groups are on the way out." Besides, there is something about their floppy-fringe haircuts. And their name. The Beatles.

1963

Mentone's cricketer hero Ian Meckiff is sensationally no-balled for throwing in the First Test against South Africa in Brisbane. It is the result of months of speculation that the ongoing debate about his wristy action would be summarily brought to an end.

Ironically, he is called by umpire Colin Egar, such a good friend of Meckiff's that they had won a lawn bowls pairs competition only a few months before, and who had passed his action in five previous games.

Having observed Meckiff called four times in the eight-ball over, captain Richie Benaud is heckled by the crowd for not bowling his strike bowler at the alternative end to see how the other umpire, Lou Rowan, would assess him.

A dazed Meckiff - who will state later he has no memory of the emotion-charged over - retires from all forms of cricket, while fans across Australia are left to debate the issue. Many feel that he has been made the scapegoat of a conspiracy to placate English cricketing authorities who have whinged about Meckiff since he cleaned them up at the MCG four years earlier.

While this is hurtful to the Meckiff family - well-known and respected in Mentone - the library has to keep on going on, the number of books on the shelves now numbering 8230, with 879 adult books and nine children's books purchased the library's buyer, Mrs Hocking. The library is run by five office-bearers, seven committee members and three special officers. Life Members number eight - Mr Adams, Miss Anderson, Mrs Baks, Mrs Boston, Mrs Couper, Mr Hatcher, Mrs Hocking and Mr Petersen.

Hal Porter, known for his short stories, releases his best-known novel, 'The Watcher On The Cast Iron Balcony,' recreating his boyhood in the Gippsland town of Bairnsdale, while Sumner Locke Eliot publishes 'Careful, He Might Hear You,' a fictionalised account of the custody battle fought over him following his mother's death the day after he was born.

Alan Hopgood's ground-breaking play 'And The Big Men Fly', brings football to the stage, while Mentone Ten Pin Bowl is launched on the site of the former Nepean Timber Company, at the intersection of Warrigal Road and the Nepean Highway, opening a new avenue of recreation for the locals.

Australia becomes gripped by the death of CSIRO scientist Dr Gilbert Bogle and Mrs Margaret Chandler by the banks of Sydney's Lane Cove River, while Dr Martin Luther King Jr. delivers his memorable "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to an audience of 250,000.

E. J. Trait, editor and managing director of Standard News dies suddenly while in Canberra for a function, ending an amazing career of expanding the company, bringing in new ideas, and wading into politics.

But all the triumphs and tragedies of daily life are obliterated on a late November day when shots ring out as the motorcade of President John F. Kennedy travels through downtown Dallas, and the world is plunged into shocked mourning.

1964

Copies of the National Geographic magazine, issued free of charge, continue to be popular among library members, especially the edition with the cover story 'Australia: Vigorous Young Nation in the South Seas.'

Sporting a double-page map titled 'Terra Australis Mapped Anew' and a feature on the 'Strange Animals of the Island Continent,' it is a glowing report by Melbourne-born writer, photographer and adventurer Alan Villiers. His career includes being an advisor to the

Marlon Brando version of 'Mutiny On The Bounty' and as captain of the Mayflower 2, which recreated the 1620 trans-Atlantic voyage of the English Pilgrim families to the New World. The library's collector, Mrs Harvey, reports on how the job of collecting overdue books can be difficult. At times there are up to 100 books needing chasing up, and she reports that people "seldom open the door" when she calls. She sticks to the task.

There are big changes at the library, too, with Mr & Mrs Dowsett resigning as President and Treasurer, and Mrs Hunter quitting the Committee due to having left the district.

Mrs Couper, who has done some great work across the years in various roles, is elected President and Miss Garner as Treasurer.

In significant move, famous Aboriginal singer and activist Harold Blair is endorsed by the Australian Labor Party to contest the State Parliament seat of Mentone. Although he cuts into the Liberal party majority, Democratic Labour Party preferences end his run.

Tokyo hosts the 18th Summer Olympics, the flame being symbolically lit by Yoshinori Sakai, who was born in Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, the day the American nuclear bomb destroyed the city. Dawn Fraser completes a magnificent treble, adding gold to her Melbourne and Rome victories in the 100 metres freestyle. Later hi-jinx involving the removal of an Olympic flag from outside the Japanese Emperor's Palace will bring her amazing career to a controversial end.

On the other hand, Canada shows that changing a nation's flag can't be all that difficult, a Multi-Party Parliamentary Committee replacing the long-held Union Jack-based ensign with the simple and instantly recognizable maple leaf design.

Donald Horne tackles the nation's larrikin and philistine approach in his ground-breaking book 'The Lucky Country', concluding that Australia is "a lucky country mainly run by second rate people." Journalist Douglas Lockwood takes readers on a breezy journey through the Centre and Top End via 'Up The Track', while in the same locale, Donald Campbell sets a new world land speed record of 403 miles per hour (649 km/h) in his jet-propelled car Bluebird at Lake Eyre.

Ruth Park releases the second of her wombat series, 'The Muddle-Headed Wombat on Holiday,' and on the international scene, Saul Bellow publishes the critically and reader acclaimed 'Herzog', about a twice-divorced man undergoing a forties-something mid-life crisis.

The Beatles tour Australia to the adoration of screaming fans, television police drama 'Homicide' begins a 12-year run, and The Australian, the nation's first national daily newspaper is launched by News Limited. In England, the editors of the satirical Oz magazine - Richard Neville, Richard Walsh, and Martin Sharp - are charged with printing an obscene publication.

On a tragic note, the aircraft carrier HMAS Melbourne and the destroyer HMAS Voyager collide, with the loss of 82 lives. And in a significant decision that will have long-term implications, South African anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela is sentenced to life in prison on sabotage and conspiracy charges.

OUR FIFTH DECADE - 1965 to 1974

Yet another move, as storm clouds gather

1965

It is the 40th year of the library, a reason to celebrate, and on the surface, numbers are holding, with 282 people using the facilities, 648 new books being purchased, and several boxes of cancelled books sent to the Methodist Mission at Port Melbourne. Mordialloc Council provides its now regular £25 grant to help finances.

On the horizon, dark clouds are gathering. With the continuing impact of municipal and mobile libraries, plus television now being virtually part of every home, the library runs at a loss.

The situation is so precarious it has to withdraw £150 from money on deposit at the State Savings Bank and transfer it to the general account at the ES&A Bank to help pay expenses. Change is in the air, too. At the Melbourne Cup, where fashion plays an all-important role, guest British model Jean Shrimpton shocks the race-going establishment by turning up in a short skirt, no stockings, simple shoes and little make-up.

“Well, I just thought we were having a day at the races,” she says. A picture of her, showing shocked Melbourne fashionistas standing behind her tut-tutting, goes around the world. Ironically, her boyfriend at the time, actor Terence Stamp, plays a low-key role, but will cause his own fashion sensation 30 years later when he returns to Australia and frocks up for a key role in ‘Priscilla, Queen of the Desert.’

The building of the Westgate Bridge begins, indigenous Australians gain the right to vote in Queensland, Linda McGill become the first Australian to swim the English Channel, and USSR’s Alexei Leonov makes the first spacewalk.

Margaret Forster releases ‘Georgy Girl’, and Arthur Hailey, ‘Hotel’, while Graham McInnes publishes ‘The Road to Gundagai.’

With a disarming bush drawl, un-tainted by his years at Sydney University, a young poet named Les Murray releases his first work, *The Ilex Tree*, with Geoffrey Lehmann.

1966

Having acted as Treasurer while Mrs Dowsett was travelling overseas, Mr H. S. Bryant is appointed to the position full-time, one of his first jobs being to provide the encouraging news that after a difficult previous 12 months, a small profit has been recorded from the year’s activities.

He points out that this is due to a small increase in charges for extra books and a reduced outlay for book purchases.

Calculation of the profit has to be processed in a new-fangled way.

“In come the dollars, and in come the cents,” sings Dollar Bill in a Government-funded cartoon, backed up by singer Ian Turpie with a more poppy tune called ‘The Decimal Point’, as the pounds and shillings of yesteryear are cashed out for the final time on February 14.

Whether it played any role or not, after his proposal to call the new currency the 'Royal' is rejected by the public, Sir Robert Menzies retires as Australia's longest-serving Prime Minister and is succeeded by Harold Holt.

Morris Lurie releases 'Rappaport' and Alan Moorehead dares to scratch at the sheen of the British Empire with 'The Fatal Impact - An Account of the Invasion of the Pacific.'

As well as these books, the library has to find space for some big-selling international works, including Isaac Asimov's 'Fantastic Voyage,' James Clavell's, 'Tai-Pan', and Jacqueline Susan's eye-opening 'Valley of the Dolls', as well as 'The Magus,' by John Fowles and Truman Capote's breakthrough fictional novel, 'In Cold Blood.'

Despite the improvement in finances resulting from economies effected, the position is still not considered satisfactory. Further, there is the matter of where the library is to be sited, as the Mordialloc City Chambers currently housing the library are set to be demolished.

The committee requests that the Council provide a new building for the library, the appointment of Cr. H. R. Ward as its Council representative greatly assisting in having its views pushed forward.

The committee is also wise enough to read the signs and proposes that a Regional Library be established as soon as possible, giving an undertaking that Mentone Public Library will cease to function as soon as it comes on stream.

It is a heavy topic, but the harsh realities of an emerging modern world are underlined when on Australia Day, January 26, the Beaumont children, Jane, aged 9, Arna, 7, and Grant, 4, disappear from Adelaide's Glenelg Beach, never to be seen again.

It still haunts the nation.

1967

The library is once again on the move, with demolition commencing of the Mordialloc City Council buildings, where the library has occupied a room.

After five months of investigations the shift is not to the most salubrious of accommodations - a 40-foot by 20-foot prefabricated steel shed hastily erected in the Mentone Recreation Grounds.

The move is not without political controversy, either. Cr Mal Buxton opposes the idea, dismissing it as a "tin shed."

"We're replacing one unattractive building with another more unattractive building," Cr Buxton says.

Cr Stan Hawken is more pragmatic, remarking, "We either put this up, or the library goes out of existence."

The committee figures it is wise to stay out of the dispute and make the best of what it has been given.

"We packed all our books, about 8000, into cases," reports the Secretary. "Cr Roy Ward was very kind and helped us to do this. The transfer of books, equipment and re-erection of the fittings was all handled by the Council. It stored all our books in the Council rooms until we were able to find somewhere else."

Grateful for Council assistance, library committee members form working bees, get the place efficiently operating to their satisfaction at negligible cost, and settle down to business, with the first committee held in the new building on May 22.

Everyone is saddened by the passing of Mr Adams, a Life Member, and of Mr H. Peterson, President for 34 years, and whose selfless service will always be remembered. For most of that period, he was the driving force behind all the library's activities.

He is acknowledged as one of the three key foundation members, the others being Mr. G. Maloney, foundation President, who conceived the idea of the library and successfully met all opposition to its establishment, and Mr. H. Dickinson, whose ability as an organiser ensured the success of the library for 14 years.

Meanwhile, the shelves are being packed with ground-breaking works, including Joan Lindsay's absorbing 'Picnic At Hanging Rock,' Thomas Kenneally's 'Bring Larks and Heroes' and Gabriel Garcia Marque's 'One Hundred Years of Solitude.'

Out of the US comes 'The Outsiders', written by Susan Eloise Hinton, just 17 and still at high school, about two rival gangs in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It is credited with spawning the 'Young Adult' genre.

The Six Day War in the Middle East reverberates around the world, while in South Africa, a progressive surgeon named Dr Christiaan Barnard takes medicine into a brave new zone with the world's first heart transplant.

Australia comes to a standstill on December 17 when the Prime Minister, Harold Holt, disappears while swimming at Cheviot Beach near Portsea, never to be seen again.

1968

While the library is pleased to be housed after the demolition of its former location, the new spot - a "tin shed" in a park - has sparked a new difficulty. Security.

So, to prevent theft and vandalism, the committee is grateful when the Council encloses the whole building inside a six-foot Cyclone wire fence, with padlocked gate.

"This has proved most beneficial," reports the Secretary, W. E. Boston.

Nevertheless, library leaders are pragmatic about the future, their view on the future best summarised by this regularly repeated statement:

"The committee has not departed from the original proposal of its founders to provide reading material for the entertainment of adults and children. In this way it supplements the fine efforts of the Parkdale Free Library which provides fiction, reference books and a wider range of children's books.

"The good relationships existing between the two libraries within the municipality has ensured efficient continuous service to the local community.

"The aim of the present committee is to maintain efficient library services at Mentone until a Regional Library is established. Because of limited finance, it is recognised that this will be a very difficult task, but, with a little outside assistance, this can be done provided the Regional Library is established in the near future."

It is a world in turmoil, with civil rights leader Martin Luther King and Presidential candidate Robert Kennedy assassinated, and an El Al airliner hijacked by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, dramatically stepping up a Middle Eastern situation that continues to this day.

Morris West, Thomas Kenneally, Norman Lindsay and John O'Grady continue to publish, but nothing rivals the impact of a work written by a Scottish-born home economist and released by publisher Paul Hamlyn.

'The Margaret Fulton Cookbook' sells 200,000 copies in its first year, makes a star of its author, and changes Australian cuisine forever.

1969

It is the library's 44th year, heralding another 'changing of the guard' moment, and a very significant one at that. Mrs W. E. Boston retires as Secretary, after 20 years devoted to the role.

She was appointed in 1949, made a Life Member in 1960, and only poor health has forced her decision.

In her resignation note she says, "I would especially like to thank all Committee Members who have willingly carried on the work of the Library during the past year, when I have been unable to do full justice to the position I hold due to indisposition." She is replaced by M. B. Foster.

Further change comes with the resignation of Mrs Harvey from the Committee, having moved from Mentone to Mornington, and a note of appreciation is recorded in the minutes recognizing the good work she has done over seven years.

Kay Brooker is welcomed on to the committee, she and Mrs Smith opening the library on Tuesday afternoons, while Mrs Walters joins to assist Miss Anderson on Thursdays.

Change is on a broader front, too, with the Australian production of the rock musical 'Hair' premiering in Sydney. The cast recording of the show, featuring nudity and language that shocks the faint-hearted, is banned in Melbourne.

The world is propelled into a new era, Apollo 11 landing on the Moon, with astronaut, Neil Armstrong, not known as a writer of significance, devising the words, "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." The argument of whether he meant to say "a man" still rages.

Renowned author-artists Norman Lindsay and May Gibbs die, George Johnston wins the Miles Franklin with 'Clean Straw For Nothing', and the Booker Prize is launched in the UK, the first winner being P. H. Newby, with 'Something To Answer For.'

But the US publishing world, riding high on sex-laced books by the likes of Harold Robbins and Jacqueline Sussan, is shocked when it is revealed that the highly successful 'Naked Came The Stranger', by one Penelope Ashe, is in fact a hoax book written by 24 journalists in a ruse organised by Mike McGrady, a columnist for the Long Island newspaper 'Newsday'.

He felt that literature had become so cheapened that any book full of sex could sell, no matter how badly the text or how disjointed the storyline. Sales of more than 400,000 copies go a long way to prove his point.

1970

The literary world is challenged - as are many elements of society - by the publication of 'The Female Eunuch' by Germaine Greer, a revolutionary feminist book proposing that the traditional family represses women sexually, reducing them to eunuchs.

Candid, provocative, humorous, and supported by Greer's powerful public appearances, it will become an international best-seller and launch her career as an author, academic, commentator and charismatic talk show guest.

In Switzerland, women get the vote ...

Numbers of library members continue to decline, with 49 calling it quits, 19 having left the district, and six passing, as well as the libraries in Parkdale and Cheltenham continuing to lure people away. Twenty-two additions bring the number who use the library regularly up to 198.

While the Children's Section contains more than 200 books, the Secretary reports "it is not patronised very much now, owing to the wonderful children's section in the Library at Parkdale."

Mr Bryant resigns as Treasurer because of ill-health, and is replaced by Mrs Dowsett, who formerly held the position for several years.

In her first year as Secretary, M. B. Foster reports: "To those people - Miss Anderson, Mesdames Hocking, Smith, Brooker, Smyth and O'Neil - who regularly conduct their sessions at the library each week, I say thank you, for without you the library would not function as it does, and although we have fewer subscribers now, I feel we are giving a section of the public a service which is very necessary."

Barry Oakley's novel about a country recruit trying to make his way in league football, 'A Salute To The Great McCarthy', is published, later to be made into a movie, while Judy Blume's young adult novel, 'Are You There. God? It's Me Margaret' proves irresistible to buyers.

Melbourne's new international airport opens at Tullamarine, Pope Paul VI visits Australia, and Queen Elizabeth attends celebrations of the 200th anniversary of Captain Cook's landing. Victorians are shocked by the collapse of a 367-foot span of the Westgate Bridge being built across the Yarra River, killing 35 workers, while more than 200,000 people participate in demonstrations against the Vietnam War.

1971

On a winter's night in early July, people all over Australia crowd around their television sets to watch a 19-year-old-tennis player with the delightful name of Evonne Goolagong cause a major upset by defeating the all-conquering Margaret Court at Wimbledon.

One of eight kids of an Aboriginal family from the small NSW town of Barellan, she captivates with her brilliant play and smiling, graceful, easy-going manner.

It has not been easy, she later relates, having been lucky "not to be taken away by the stolen generation because I've had to hide a few times under the bed."

Life is not easy at the library, either, the halcyon days of massive loans rapidly disappearing, down by 2500 to 17,137 books – nearly 60,000 down on its peak.

Nevertheless, things must go on, including some fine tuning. "The Friday night hour session was changed towards the end of the year," reports the Secretary, "to start at 7 pm, instead of 7.30 pm, and this is proving satisfactory."

'The Poems of Dorothea McKellar' is published three years after her death, including her famous 'My Country' which she first began writing in 1904 when living in the UK and feeling homesick.

It is a big year for playwright David Williamson, with 'Don's Party' examining middle-class values via the ALP loss of the 1969 Federal Election, and 'The Removalists', which addresses domestic violence. Frank Hardy releases 'The Outcasts of Foolgarah,' a political satire that is variously described as scurrilous, outrageous, and quite possibly libellous.

Unemployed English journalist Frederick Forsyth, "skint and stony-broke", figures the only way to make a dollar is to write a book. Drawing on his days of reporting in France, including an attempted assassination of President Charles de Gaulle, he comes up with 'The Day of The Jackal' and never looks back.

Xaveria Hollander relies on her prior experiences, too, in a more colourful role as a call girl and madam, to create 'The Happy Hooker.'

But it is the year of William Peter Blatty. With a Masters in English, a stint in the US Air Force, and a successful foray into writing screenplays, he puts all his skills and energy into a book that leads to many sleepless nights for readers.

'The Exorcist.'

1972

The Parkdale Library is drawing more subscribers away, resulting in book loans dropping to 14,476, and membership down to 149.

The situation is not helped by the arrival of an additional challenge to the library's future.

"As the Mobile Library started its weekly round in our district a couple of months ago, no doubt some have left us to get books from it," declares the Secretary.

The report adds that 51 members have left - 17 gone from the district, four deceased, four too ill to carry on, and 26 others departing "for various reasons not stated."

Bumping lending prices up to 5 cents a book boosts cash returns, but time is also proving an enemy.

"During the year, we were saddened by the sudden passing of Mr Phillips, our President who has given sterling service in many ways, and had been doing so for seven years," reports the Secretary.

"I regret also having to record the death of Mrs I. Dowsett, a trustee of the library since 1962.

"Mrs Dowsett and her husband worked on the counter for a few years, and she was also a most efficient and able Treasurer."

Thomas Kenneally releases 'The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith' and Thea Astley wins the Miles Franklin with 'The Acolyte,' while Hunter S. Thompson continues his "gonzo journalism" style with 'Fear & Loathing In Las Vegas'.

Queensland discontinues daylight saving, sparking a long-running gag suggesting the source of the tropical state's renowned sunlight is a combination of the unabashed self-belief of its Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen and his posterior ...

Ironically, the Anglo-French supersonic *Concorde* touches down in Darwin just as widespread protests grow against French nuclear tests in the Pacific.

Swimmer Shane Gould, aged just 15, becomes the first, and still the only, woman to hold all world freestyle records at once, for the 100, 200, 400, 800 and 1500 metres, plus the 200 metres individual medley. She wins three gold, a silver and a bronze at the Munich Olympic Games, an astonishing record-breaking effort, but not good enough for some critics, and retires, still a baby-faced teenager, in the face of intense media and public scrutiny.

US President Richard Nixon visits China, Sir Henry Bolte steps down after 18 years as Premier of Victoria, while the first Labor Federal Government for 23 years is elected under the leadership of Gough Whitlam.

1973

Hooray! After many years at being set at £25, and then converted to \$50 when decimal currency came in, the Secretary is glad to report that "the annual Grant from the Mordialloc Council was doubled and we received \$100, for which we are truly grateful."

Thanks are offered to Cr Stan Hawken, a popular and very active local identity, "for his efforts, on our behalf, in this direction."

But personnel changes continue, with former Treasurer H. L. Bryant resigning as he has moved to Windsor for health reasons, Mr B. Campbell also leaving the district, and Mrs A Smyth, a loyal helper and committee member, resigning.

A bright spot is the return of Mrs B. Harvey, a former committee member, to help out on Thursdays.

"We trust she will continue to give her valued assistance to us," the Secretary notes. It is around this time that the Turkish community finds that Mentone is a great place to call home, a focal point being a restaurant and coffee house in Balcombe Road, opposite Safeway.

Patrick White becomes the first Australian to win the Nobel prize for Literature for a body of work that the Swedish Academy describes as "an epic and psychological narrative art which has introduced a new continent into literature."

Continuing his output, White releases 'The Eye Of The Storm,' while Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn's revealing and at times horrifying 'The Gulag Archipelago' is released.

Kit Denton, father of TV host Andrew Denton, releases 'The Breaker, A Novel,' introducing the powerful, colourful story of Harry 'Breaker' Morant, a larger-than-life soldier of fortune who incites the wrath of British officers when serving in the Boer War.

In 1978, a theatre piece by Kenneth G. Ross titled 'Breaker Morant: A Play In Two Acts' will be produced on stage. This will be used as the basis for the script of a Bruce Beresford film, 'Breaker Morant', starring Edward Woodward, released to great acclaim in 1980.

The Wrest Point Hotel-Casino opens in Hobart, eighteen-year-olds get the Federal vote, and Australia pays \$1.3 million for Blue Poles by American artist Jackson Pollock. Despite the controversy it goes on to be one of the nation's most valuable acquisitions.

1974

A decision is made to close the library on Friday nights during the winter months. It is not taken lightly, but ultimately the Secretary, M. B. Foster, reports that "it does not seem to have caused much inconvenience to any subscribers."

Prudence is shown in another matter: "Because of ill health, our cleaner had to resign at the end of last year and, not being able to obtain another, the ladies on the Committee arranged to carry out the cleaning on a monthly roster system. This has worked very well."

In her last report in the role of Secretary, she finishes by saying: "My work has been made easier by the Members of the Committee who regularly and efficiently carry out their duties on the counter. My thanks to them and to all for a smoothly functioning year, my last as your Secretary."

The Patrick White Award is presented for the first time, the celebrated author having created it out of his Nobel Prize for Literature earnings, providing a cash prize for a writer who has been highly creative over a long period but who has not received adequate recognition.

With a typical White approach, he directs that it be announced on the Friday after the Melbourne Cup is run, to steer public attention away from the Australian obsession with sport and back towards literature. The first winner is Christina Stead, whose career ultimately produces 12 novels across 50 years, the best-known being 'The Man Who Loved Children', along with numerous short stories, film scripts, letters and translations.

The Age Book of the Year is also presented for the first time, David Foster winning the fiction prize with 'The Pure Land', and the non-fiction going to Manning Clark for 'A History of Australia, Volume 3.'

Matthew Reilly, best-selling thriller writer, Caitlin Johnstone, internationally-recognized political blogger and commentator, and Aravind Adiga, Man Booker Prize winner, are born. Stephen King releases his debut novel, 'Carrie', about a loner schoolgirl with disturbing powers, setting him on a brilliant literary path.

President Nixon resigns over a political scandal involving a pre-election break-in at Washington's Watergate Hotel. As expected, the new President, Gerald Ford, pardons him. On the national scene, Bankcard is introduced, taking us on the first tottering step towards becoming a cashless society, while TV and radio licences are abolished and 'Advance Australia Fair' becomes our national anthem.

Brisbane is badly damaged by floods and in an astonishing display of nature's force, the rest of Australia wakes up on Christmas morning to the news that the city of Darwin has been totally devastated by Cyclone Tracy.

OUR SIXTH DECADE - 1975 to 1984

50 years celebrated, but time moves on

1975

Time for celebrations. It is the library's Golden Jubilee, 50 years of service to the community, a remarkable effort as it began with such optimism in the Roaring Twenties, survived the Depression, provided a welcome service under difficult conditions during World War 2, not only for those at home, but for those in uniform, and then took on the challenge of an emerging post-war world, including the development of the municipal library concept. The latter situation tends to dampen celebrations.

"Although forty-four new members were enrolled, due mainly to the publicity we received through our participation in the Mayor's Community Festival Day and the Jubilee article in the Mordialloc News, we had forty-one cancellations, mainly for reasons unknown," reports the new Secretary, Max Taylor.

Membership is up by three to 132, "but a recent review of the lending pattern reveals that twenty-four members use the library very spasmodically, so we have only about one hundred regular subscribers."

The Mordialloc Council provides their usual \$100 grant, but the good news is that the Town Clerk has asked to see the Balance Sheet "to examine our expenditure and determine whether we need increased Council support."

The library's future location is also under Council review, with the Secretary stressing "that any new accommodation must be in the immediate vicinity of the Mentone Shopping Centre."

The cleaning issue is resolved, with a new cleaner being appointed, and thanks are accorded to the ladies who did the job on a monthly roster. Former Secretary Mrs Foster is given a well-deserved Life Membership for her services.

A great link with Mentone's colourful past is finally broken when Annette Kellerman, swimming, movie and stage superstar, dies aged 89 in Southport, Queensland.

The bakery building in what is now known as Old Bakery Lane off Florence Street comes on the market for \$12,000 and at the suggestion of Cr Michael Buxton is bought by the Council and turned into the Mordialloc and District Historical Society Museum. Meanwhile Mayor Peter Scullin initiates a Community Day, initially at Mentone Oval, bringing together groups, tents and food, local residents enjoying the carnival atmosphere reminiscent of the 1940s. Xavier Herbert sets the record for Australia's longest work of fiction with 'Poor Fellow My Country', about three social outcasts in the Northern Territory. Totalling 1463 pages, one newspaper executive refers to it as 'Poor Bugger My Typewriter.'

'The Odd Angry Shot', by Vietnam veteran William Nagle, about the mate-ship, brutality, fear and boredom of the South-East Asian war is released. TV host Graham Kennedy, who will later appear in a film version of the book, is banned from appearing live after using what he says is a "crow call" during a Cedel advertisement with Rosemary Margan. It coincides with TV stations converting to full-time colour transmission.

Hobart's Tasman Bridge collapses after a bulk ore carrier runs into it on the Derwent River, killing 12 people and creating an unforgettable image of a car suspended right on the edge of the missing span.

'No fault' divorce is introduced, five Australian TV newsmen are killed in East Timor, and Steve J. Spears has a hit with his beautifully titled play, 'The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin.' But no story is bigger than the dismissal of the Labor Government by Sir John Kerr, with a shocked Gough Whitlam predicting that "nothing will save the Governor-General."

1976

With membership slipping to 121, and book loans reducing by a further 972 to 9837, library Secretary Max Taylor says it is time to face facts.

"It is evident that this library depends very largely on the support of people who developed recreational reading habits before the introduction of present-day distractions," he reports.

"We apparently have little appeal to the youth in the community.

"We are living in a rapidly changing world with changing values and life patterns, and it appears to be a sad fact of life that we can continue to expect diminishing community support."

He adds that the library's existence depends on the "untiring voluntary services of the ladies who staff it on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays", and that "while we can be assured of their support, this library can continue to function."

"We thank them for their continuing efforts."

It is felt the library should continue to "strive to give a necessary public service within the funds available," but that no further advances should be made to the Council during the year regarding moving to new accommodation.

Meanwhile, Whitlam's prediction begins to solidify, with protest mounting against Sir John Kerr. Veteran ALP politician Fred Daly adds his views, via his biography, 'From Curtin to Kerr' while John Edwards' political profile of new Prime Minister Malcom Fraser is titled 'Life Was Not Meant To Be Easy.' Perhaps the whole scenario is best summed up by the autobiography of Sir Paul Hasluck, former journalist, ex-Liberal MP and Kerr's predecessor as Governor-General. Its title is 'Mucking About ...'

The road across the Nullarbor Plain is finally sealed, cigarette advertisements are banned on TV, and Australia's film renaissance continued with 'Storm Boy', 'Don's Party', and 'The Devil's Playground.'

Significantly, the Federal Parliament passes the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, enabling First Nations peoples to claim land rights for Country where traditional ownership could be proven.

1977

Success! Things have suddenly taken a turn for the better.

"It is with pleasure that I present this report in our new library location," says Secretary Max Taylor.

After years of negotiations that varied in intensity, the library is shifted to the Council Offices in Mentone Parade.

The successful negotiations and move are due to the "untiring efforts of our President, Mr Norm Walmsley," reports the Secretary.

The transition is achieved during the last week of August and the first week of September “without any serious disruption to our lending service.”

“Our thanks are extended to those who contributed to the smooth operation,” says Mr Walsh.

“Members of the Council staff assisted with the removal of the furniture and fittings and our thanks are extended to the Town Clerk and others responsible for this service.”

Careful use of available funds and the annual Council grant of \$200 enable the library to maintain “a satisfactory cash balance.”

The library re-commences on a “much more optimistic note with a three-year year lease on our new premises and the first signs of renewed public interest.”

There is also optimism amongst beach goers, with action being finally taken to restore the sand at Mentone Beach, which has all but disappeared over the previous 15 years. With a combination of dredging by a boat named the ‘Matthew Flinders’ and pipe work, sand is transferred successfully to revive the famous holiday spot.

Two of the country’s most significant books are released, Helen Garner’s ‘Monkey Grip’, about sex, drugs and yes, rock ‘n’ roll, in seedy share-house living, and Colleen McCullough’s ‘The Thorn Birds,’ an epic saga centring on the relationship between a young girl and a priest, causing the Catholic Church to insist that parishioners not read the book or watch the subsequent TV mini-series.

Television takes a big step forward when the Seven Network broadcasts the VFL grand Final live for the first time, only having to come back and do it again when Collingwood and North Melbourne draw.

Comedy writer Lawrence Leung, multi-tasker and educationalist Tessa Johnstone Wilson, and American writer Jonathan Safran Foer, author of ‘Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close’, are born.

Donald McKay, anti-drug campaigner is murdered in Griffith, a train is crushed by a collapsing bridge in Granville, Sydney, killing 81 people, and Sir John Kerr concludes that being vilified in public is not worth wearing the top hat and medallions, and quits as Governor-General.

1978

“It is with pleasure that I can report a very successful year,” reports Secretary Max Taylor reports. Membership reaches 145, and book borrowings jump to 10,299, the first positive turnaround for many years.

“There is no doubt that the increased interest is due to our improved premises and the better presentation of books,” he reports.

Stock is kept in better condition mainly due to the efforts of indefatigable President, Norm Walmsley, who spends long hours in the preparation of new books and the repair of old ones. In addition, he keeps the room spick and span with the broom and paint brush. He is supported by Librarian Mrs I. Hocking, along with K. Brooker, N. Smith, B. Harvey and A. Anderson.

Office-bearers are re-elected except Mrs M. Porter, who resigns after an amazing 40 years of service, holding positions including being Treasurer. Her achievements are recognised, but the continuing illness of the Treasurer, Fred Hobill, is a concern. His role is covered by the Secretary keeping the books and the President doing the banking.

The Secretary notes that an upsurge in members quitting without giving a reason appears to be a reflection of "the transient nature of our community, with its changing population pattern."

This is shown on a broader scale with the increasing number of refugees arriving on Australian shores, particularly from Vietnam.

Nancy Cato releases 'All The Rivers Run' and as does Jessica Anderson with her Miles Franklin winning 'Tirra Lirra By The River', while Christopher Koch delves into Indonesian politics of 1965 with 'The Year Of Living Dangerously.'

And while a new era of creativity is opening up with John Irving's quirky 'The World According To Garp' and an engaging BBC Radio Play titled 'The Hitchhikers' Guide To The Galaxy' by Douglas Adams, another era is closing entirely.

On October 8 it is announced that rock 'n' roll singer Johnny O'Keefe, Australia's original Wild One, is dead, aged just 43.

1979

It is a challenging time all round with Treasurer Fred Hobill succumbing to his illness, and dedicated Secretary Max Taylor dying suddenly later in the year.

As well, long-time Librarian Mrs Hocking has to resign because of deteriorating health.

"These three people have given many individual years of dedicated and efficient service, for which we are deeply appreciative," records Acting Secretary, Mrs Cutter.

Mrs Marg Taylor, the wife of the late Secretary, is granted Life Membership as "some small token" of recognition of his work.

Mrs Cutter further notes that "diehards" Mrs Harvey, Miss Anderson, Mrs Smith, Mrs Brooker and Mrs Hocking have chalked up a total of 110 years of service between them.

"In view of the length of service given by Mrs Harvey, who for years, not only worked as a roster person, but spent hundreds of hours as honorary collector visiting people who could not, or would not, return books - a most unenviable job indeed - I would recommend that she receive a Life Membership," she proposes.

In the outside world, two young Sydney writers, Kathy Lette and Gabrielle Carey, are storming the ramparts with 'Puberty Blues', Channel 9 is re-shaping television current affairs with the launch of 'Sixty Minutes', and Daniel Johns, singer/songwriter, Chris Johnstone, percussionist and educator, and Emily St John Mandel, author of 'The Sea of Tranquillity', are born.

But Mrs Cutter adds that serious consideration must be given to the future of the library, pointing out that the price of books is rapidly escalating, the average now around \$11.

"If one checks the number of times each book is issued throughout its presentable life, it will be realised that not one book in the library returns a profit, or indeed, earns fifty per cent of the initial outlay," she says.

"Another item of consideration is that the one dollar per annum membership fee charged hasn't changed since fifty-five years ago."

She points out that in 1925, the fee of ten shillings (later converted to \$1 in the decimal year of 1966) was then approximately 12.5% of the average wage of the day.

By 1979 it has been reduced to approximately 0.5% of the average wage.

"These figures are truly remarkable when one considers that over the fifty-five years, as costs have consistently increased, our charges have remained static," she says.

"I would suggest that there are very few organisations in the world who could make such a claim."

Finally, she goes on to answer the oft-asked question, 'Why do we battle on?'

"It is because we derive a certain amount of individual satisfaction in our contribution to community interests," she says.

"But more particularly we provide a service to the elderly citizens of the municipality who come to the Library to receive a warm, personalised welcome and to obtain books that are not overly arty-crafty, from easy-to find areas on the shelves, and at pre-inflation fees."

1980

Having raised the matter of there being no increase in membership fees since the library's foundation 55 years previously, Secretary, Mrs Cutter, announces a bold change.

The fee will still stay at \$1 - but for six months' membership only, not 12 months.

It is a doubling of membership revenue, but hopefully seen to be painless.

"To have continued with the same subscription for 55 years must constitute something of a record in these days of rapidly increasing prices," she comments.

In another move to reduce costs, Mrs Brooker is appointed to the task of purchasing books, mainly from the Melbourne office of Whitcomb & Tombs, a New Zealand-based printer, publisher and bookseller.

"It is very gratifying to see a steady stream of new books being added to the library," Mrs Cutter reports.

"Many of the new books are paperbacks, and although they must necessarily have a much shorter life span than the hard-cover book, the price difference is so great that we can purchase three or four paperbacks for the price of one hard-cover."

The earlier proposal that Mrs Harvey be made a Life Member in honour of her role as book collector is carried unanimously, although she has been unable to carry out her duties in recent times due to ill health. The committee hopes she will be well enough to soon return. Clive James unveils his 'Unreliable Memoirs', Umberto Eco releases 'The Name Of The Rose', and Jessica Anderson wins the Miles Franklin with 'The Impersonators.'

International affairs crank up with Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser announcing sanctions against the USSR following its invasion of Afghanistan, with US President Jimmy Carter going further and declaring that American athletes will not be sent to the Moscow Olympic Games.

Fraser's preference for a similar Australian ban is bypassed, the nation's results including the 'Mean Machine' swimming quartet sensationally breaking the American hold on the 4 x 100 metres medley relay.

Deborah Wardley becomes Australia's first female pilot, and Candice Elizabeth Reed our first 'test-tube' baby.

The nation is rocked in August by the disappearance of nine-week-old Azaria Chamberlain from the family's Ayers Rock (Uluru) campsite, and the world is further shocked in December with the murder of John Lennon.

1981

Not much call for reading matter around July 29, or anywhere else in Australia for that matter.

A significant portion of the nation is glued to their TV screens watching the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer, live from St Paul's Cathedral.

The colourful event is supported by a flood of cloying, devoted books, far removed from the outrageous content of Peter Carey's debut novel, 'Bliss.'

Focusing on an advertising executive, Harry Joy, who on being resuscitated after a heart attack realises his otherwise sanguine life is actually a living hell - with his wife and children variously involved in affairs, drugs and political anarchy - it wins the Miles Franklin Award and sets Carey off on a magnificent literary career.

At the library, things are stable, with book turnover holding at 11,321, just 31 less than the previous year, and 50 members leaving and 57 new ones joining for a total of 173.

Further good news comes when the Mordialloc Council bumps up its annual Grant, so long set at \$200, by 10 per cent to \$220. A letter of thanks is sent.

Gratitude is also extended to the Roster Ladies, "who have kept the desk 'manned' each library day, despite illness and holiday disruptions."

A new name is gathering interest in literary circles, with Blanche d'Alpuget releasing her third book, 'Turtle Beach', about ethnic Chinese fleeing Vietnam after the war, while a former Gallipoli soldier, Perth trolleybus driver and poultry farmer named Albert Facey has "no idea what the fuss is all about" when his autobiography, 'A Fortunate Life' captivates readers, ultimately to the tune of one million copies sold.

South Melbourne plays its last VFL game at the Lakeside Oval, before being sent to Sydney. Alas, it is a loss to North Melbourne.

1982

After some solid figures in previous years, book borrowings start to decline again, down from 11,321 to 9793, and membership slumping to 100.

Fortunately, forestalling the impact of illness and death on the volunteer ranks, the next generation is on the way, with Mrs Paterson's daughter, Mrs Borthwick, running the desk on Saturdays.

There is plenty to do, with the system of cataloguing books by re-using the number of a lost or damaged book in the standard library listing, the Accession Record Book & Register, no longer being considered satisfactory. To save further complications, a new accession book is started with 346 books re-numbered.

The rostered ladies are once again thanked for their consistent and generous use of their time to operate the desk on open days.

Thomas Keneally breaks new ground with 'Schindler's Ark,' later to be filmed as 'Schindler's List', while American author Alice Walker wins the Pulitzer Prize for her powerful expose on sexism and racism, 'The Color Purple.'

A young Western Australian writer, Tim Winton, reveals extraordinary talent with his first novel, 'An Open Swimmer', while Sue Townsend gets inside the teenage psyche with 'The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, aged 13¾.'

A film version of 'The Man From Snowy River' celebrates the great talent of Banjo Paterson, the traffic is stopped and thousands of people walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge to celebrate its 50th anniversary, and after 26 years in power, Victoria's Liberal/National Coalition is voted out of Government and replaced by Labor.

1983

The Mordialloc Council shows its continuing support by opening up the purse strings a little further and bumping up its annual grant to the library by \$30 and handing over \$250.

This is graciously received, bringing the day-to-day working bank balance to \$431.47. The library has one eye on the future with a further \$1500 tucked away for a rainy day, gathering interest in Australian Saving Bonds.

Thanks are publicly noted to Mr Brooker for his services as Auditor of the annual financial statements.

Paradoxically, with comings and goings, membership actually goes up by 12 to reach 112, but loans drop considerably to 8342. Of 260 books added to the catalogue, eight are titles re-numbered under the revised system of cataloguing in the new accession book.

"During part of the year, we were without the services of Mrs Paterson and Miss Dunne because of ill-health," records the Secretary. "But are pleased they are now back on duty."

The longevity and power of the written word is displayed when a message in a bottle is found on a Queensland beach, written 73 years earlier and thrown overboard by a passenger on the SS Arawatta in 1910 as it sailed between Cairns and Brisbane.

Words are distributed via more conventional means by Jackie Collins with 'Hollywood Wives,' as well as Elizabeth Jolley's collection of short stories titled 'Woman In A Lamp Shade,' Fay Weldon's 'The Life & Loves Of A She-Devil', and the chess based 'The Queen's Gambit' by Walter Tevis, which will much later become a Netflix hit. Young readers are delighted with Mem Fox's 'Possum Magic' and 'Hairy Maclary From Donaldson's Dairy' by Lynley Dodd.

Malcolm Fraser calls a double-dissolution election on the same day Bill Hayden is replaced by Bob Hawke as ALP leader, with the charismatic ex-union boss going on to lead the party to success.

Dick Smith completes the first solo helicopter flight around the globe, the High Court blocks construction of Tasmania's Franklin Dam, and Australia II wins the America's Cup, breaking the New York Yacht Club's 132-year iron grip on one of the ugliest trophies in sport.

On the cricket field a Mentone Grammar student proves he might have a future as a handy spin bowler and useful lower order batsman in the Victorian Cricket Association's select Under-16 Dowling Shield competition.

His name is Shane Warne.

1984

The resignation is regretfully accepted of Anne Anderson due to illness, an active committee member and roster lady for more than 40 years, a wonderful record much appreciated by members.

A coffee morning is held at the home of President Norm Walmsley and Mrs Walmsley, where appreciation for Anne's work is complimented by a small gift and flowers.

"A photograph of Anne and an article on her work for the library was published in the local paper," reports the Secretary.

"A group photo was also taken and these two photos, with a suitable inscription, were framed by Mr Walmsley and now hang in our library."

Mrs Ness Smith, on the Committee since 1967, and Mrs Brooker, since 1969, are made Life Members. They are both Tuesday roster ladies, with Mrs Smith travelling from Mt Eliza on her duty day, and Mrs Brooker occupying the role of Librarian and book buyer.

"Both ladies surely deserve the honour of Life Membership," reports the Secretary.

The printing on the signboard in front of the building is repainted at a cost of \$65 and the records of the library are passed over to the Mordialloc Historical Society.

Tim Winton underlines his talent by winning the Miles Franklin with 'Shallows', while Robin Klein hits the teenage mark with 'Hating Alison Ashley', and English writer J. G. Ballard generates both plaudits and sales with his wartime epic 'Empire Of The Sun.'

Aware of rising costs, Mordialloc Council adds \$25 to its annual library Grant, making it \$275 for the year.

Another example of how life is changing comes when a 115g jar of Vegemite is the first product in Australia to be electronically scanned at a checkout.

OUR SEVENTH DECADE - 1985 to 1994

Borers infest the shelves, in a 'rather difficult' year

1985

In a somewhat restrained comment, the Secretary reports that it has been "rather a difficult year." The casualty list includes five committee members in hospital, a resignation, an extended holiday, and the death of Audrey Doune.

Audrey joined the committee in 1980, worked the desk on Saturday mornings, and is sadly missed by members of not only the library, but the many other associations she volunteered for.

The resignation, for family reasons, is that of Mrs Scarfe, who also joined in 1980, and her help is also much appreciated.

But there is an upside. "We are pleased to welcome Miss Jensen to the Thursday roster; also Mrs Foster, a Life Member, who has kindly returned to help us out of our difficulties," reports the Secretary, Mrs Cutter.

Membership and books loans remain static, "but the price of books continues to rise steadily each year." As a guide, the price of petrol has jumped from 32 cents a litre in 1980 to 52 cents in 1985. Nevertheless, 130 books are purchased for \$934.

Speaking of finance, the merger is announced of two great names in Australian retail, Coles and Myer merge, Treasurer Paul Keating introduces Capital Gains Tax, and Bob Hawke describes privatisation as "the height of irrationality."

Christopher Koch's book, 'The Doubleman' wins the Miles Franklin, John Byson releases 'Evil Angels' examining the Lindy Chamberlain case, while Kate Grenville's debut novel, 'Lilian's Song' is based on Sydney eccentric Bea Miles. Margaret Atwood receives critical acclaim for her dystopian masterpiece 'The Handmaid's Tale.'

'Neighbours' debuts on the Seven Network but only lasts one year before it re-appears on Network Ten.

In pointers to the future, the Domain Name System is introduced, Mikhael Gorbachev becomes USSR General Secretary, and Mohamed Al-Fayed buys Harrods.

1986

A Book Reservation List is working well, "except for the fact," reports the Librarian, Kay Brooker, "that most of the books on it are taking about a month to read, thus subscribers reserving books are not receiving them for some months."

It is decided to increase the annual subscription from \$1.00 per six months, or \$2.00 per 12 months, to \$1.50 per six months, or \$3.00 per 12 months. "We had no complaints from members and feel the subscription is very good value," reports the Secretary.

Further boosting the finances is the receipt of two Grants from Mordialloc Council, one which had not come through the previous year and one for 1986, each for \$275. As well, a \$20 donation from Mr Rispin, and one of \$10 from Mrs Finlayson, are both appreciated.

The most significant moment occurs on August 25, when Mordialloc City Mayor, Cr Bill Nixon, signs a three-year contract giving the library access to a room at the rear of the Council Chambers in Mentone Parade. The peppercorn rent being set at \$10 a year, "payable on demand."

Another important and positive local event is the "turning of the sod" of a new nursing home in Brindisi Street, with members of local organisations, including the library, invited to attend. But in the broader world, things are not so rosy, with Victoria's Russell Street police headquarters bombed, the Space Shuttle Challenger disintegrating 73 seconds after launch, and the world's worst nuclear disaster at Chernobyl spewing radioactive material across Europe.

Halley's Comet turns up but is a distant disappointment, Pablo Picasso's 'The Weeping Woman' disappears from the National Gallery of Victoria, and a mass uprising by Palestinians against Israeli military occupation begins in Jabalia refugee camp, spreading to Gaza.

Joan Child, the ALP's first woman elected to the House of Representatives, puts another crack in the political glass ceiling by becoming the first female Speaker of the House of Representatives. It is also a year of big-selling books, with 'Forrest Gump' released by Winston Groom, 'It' by Stephen King, and 'The Bourne Supremacy' by Robert Ludlum. Elizabeth Jolley's novel 'The Well' wins the Miles Franklin Award, and Robert Hughes opens many eyes to the truth about the British convict transportation system, while author and illustrator Graeme Base puts his unique and ever-lasting stamp on children's literature with the brilliant 'Animalia'.

1987

The Wall Street stock market crashes, starting with Black Thursday on October 24, followed by Black Monday on October 28, and Black Tuesday on October 29, wiping out stock prices, banks, businesses and in some cases lives.

Typically, markets around the globe follow and by the end of the month, the Australian exchange is down by 41.8%.

The situation at the library is not as grim, but not all that encouraging, either. For the first time in many years, membership has dropped below the 100 mark, to 93, with 37 members leaving and 29 joining. Book loans drop similarly, down to 6840.

Nevertheless, cash donations total \$120 from Mrs Finlayson, Mrs Paterson, Mrs Borthwick and Mr Nixon, while the annual Grant from Mordialloc Council is boosted by \$25 to \$300. "But we were sorry to lose the services of Mrs Ness Smith for the latter part of the year," reports the Secretary. "Ness has been a Committee Member since 1967, and a Life Member since 1984. She has served on the desk for many years and is well-known to all our borrowers."

A significant name is finishing up at Mentone Grammar, too, with the retirement of Headmaster Keith Jones, after 27 years at the helm where he preached determination and self-discipline, advising parents "not to mollycoddle their children, at least not at THIS school."

Meanwhile, down the road at Kilbreda, visiting Prime Minister Bob Hawke not only tells the students how important it is for them to continue their education, but takes to the volleyball court to show that his interest in sport is not just limited to football, cricket and racing.

John Marsden's debut young adult novel, 'So Much To Tell You,' is an instant award-winning success, while Glenda Adams, whose political views are at odds of those of her more famous

cousin, Liberal politician John Howard, wins the Miles Franklin with 'Dancing On Coral,' a coming-of-age narrative set in Sydney. In the US, Toni Morrison wins the Pulitzer for 'Beloved'.

The breakthrough of the year is that of nineteen-year-old former Neighbours star, Kylie Minogue, who hits number 1 on the local charts with her debut single, 'The Locomotion', and follows it up with international success, via 'I Should be So Lucky.'

And a short cartoon is shown on the Tracey Ullman Show, which TV executives feel is worth taking a punt on. It is called 'The Simpsons.'

1988

Amid the gloom and doom of the world recession, the library decides to raise prices again "because of our precarious position."

Subscriptions for six months are increased by 50 cents to \$2, and the yearly charge is raised by a dollar to \$4. The minimum borrowing cost for a book is raised to 10 cents, with the overdue fine upped to 10c per book per week.

"This move has been quite successful," reports the Secretary, "and the library is running smoothly, thanks to the efforts of all our roster people, who are always ready to help our borrowers."

In July the new Municipal Offices of the Mordialloc City Council are opened and several members attend, as well as taking up the invitation to the Mayor's annual Christmas party in December.

The majority of the year is devoted to the Bicentennial, marking the arrival of the First Fleet on Australian shores in 1788. The magnificent vision of a fleet of tall ships entering Sydney Harbour, associated with vibrant celebrations, is counter-balanced by indigenous protests at the brutal loss of their lands, lives and dignity.

The Internet and the World Wide Web start to materialise and Stephen Hawking tries to explain everything in 'A Brief History of Time', only to be overshadowed by 'Home & Away' being launched by the Seven Network.

One of the early 'how-to' books, 'The Seven Habits Of Highly Effective People', is published, while Veronica Roth, author of the 'Divergent' trilogy that will go on to sell 35 million copies worldwide, Eloise Johnstone Seddon, journalist and policy writer, and Ocean Vuong, Vietnamese-American winner of the T. S. Eliot Prize for poetry, are born.

Peter Carey is on a roll, with 'Oscar and Lucinda' winning the 1988 Booker Prize, while Judith Beveridge picks up a swag of local awards with her book of 49 poems, delightfully titled 'The Domesticity of Giraffes.'

But the harsh reality of the modern-day world strikes home when a Pan-Am airliner explodes over the Scottish village of Lockerbie, due to a terrorist bomb, and two young Victorian police officers are mercilessly gunned down in an ambush in Walsh Street, South Yarra.

1989

A major Cold War symbol, the Berlin Wall, built in 1961 to encircle West Berlin and "protect the population of East Berlin from fascist elements conspiring to prevent the will of the people" comes down.

Combined with the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia and the overthrow of Romania's communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, it is the beginning of the dissolution of the once

mighty Soviet Union. Similarly, F. W de Klerk, elected President of South Africa, shocks his hard-line Cabinet by initiating the first steps towards ending Apartheid rule. Footage and photos circulate around the globe of a Tiananmen Square protester only known as 'Tank Man' bravely halting a column of military machinery. Prime Minister Bob Hawke sheds tears as he describes the massacre, as he had done earlier in the year when admitting to marital infidelity. He shows no mercy to airline pilots in their dispute over wages. No such revolutionary acts within the library, though, with the Secretary reporting that everything is running "very smoothly thanks to our roster ladies (and gentleman.)" A highlight of the year is the announcement that the annual Mordialloc City Council grant will be raised by \$50 to \$400 for the year, which will "help greatly towards the purchase of more books."

Twenty-nine new members join, but departures for various reasons bring the total down to 94, with book borrowings dropping to 5900.

Advertising guru Bryce Courtenay, creator of Louie The Fly and the Milky Bar Kid, makes a huge splash with his debut novel, 'The Power of One', drawing on his years growing up in South Africa.

The Victorian Premier's Literary Award goes to Rodney Hall for 'Captivity Captive', while The Age Book of the Year goes to Elizabeth Jolley with 'My Father's Moon'.

Jessica Anderson's 'Taking Shelter', about a disparate group all searching for redemption in a variety of forms, is described as "provocative, insightful and witty," while Kerry Greenwood releases 'Cocaine Blues,' the first of the Phryne Fisher series.

Mentone gets on the map when a stamp is released of the 1888 painting by Charles Conder, a member of the Heidelberg school of impressionists, titled 'A Holiday In Mentone.'

1990

The library turns 65 but any celebrations are subdued by the illness and then death of Mr Brooker, who has performed a great task over the years auditing the books. Sympathy is passed on to his wife Kay, who has similarly done a great job for many years as Librarian and committee member.

The indefatigable President, Norm Walmsley, takes on the additional role until a suitable auditor can be appointed.

Mordialloc City's Town Clerk Doug Corben resigns and the library receives a letter from him in appreciation of the contribution the library had made to the city during his time. One of his last acts is to oversee the \$400 Grant to the library.

The library "continues to run very smoothly", despite Membership slipping to 91, and the nation sliding into a financial abyss that Treasurer Paul Keating describes as "a recession that Australia had to have." Mentone families grapple with interest rates that will peak at over 17%, while retirees lose on their savings, and businesses shut down causing widespread unemployment.

Victoria's Pyramid Building Society collapses with debts of more than \$2 billion, Premier John Cain resigns and Joan Kirner is elevated to the position, and entrepreneur Christopher Skase's business empire crashes spectacularly and he flees to the Spanish island of Majorca. East and West Germany are re-united, and Nelson Mandela walks free, but Mikhail Gorbachev's "perestroika" reforms flounder as queues for food basics lengthen.

The Commonwealth Writers' Prize goes to Robert Drewe for his short story collection, 'The Bay of Contented Men', Tom Flood wins the Miles Franklin with 'Oceana Fine', and Glenda Adams snares The Age Book of the Year, with 'Longleg.' Tom Clancy continues his remarkable

run of thrillers with 'Clear & Present Danger', William Steig introduces Shrek to the world, and Michael Crichton takes readers into the jungles of 'Jurassic Park.'

1991

Having joined in 1990, Jean Critchley is appointed to the working roster, launching a long and celebrated tenure with the library. One of her first jobs is to help Librarian Kay Brooker dispose of many old and tattered book sand reorganise the shelves. Their project is assisted by Norm Walmsley, who has made the finding of books on the shelves much easier with very neat author nameplates.

The Secretary, Mrs Cutter, points out that Mr Walmsley is now in his 20th year as President, having begun in 1972. "Congratulations Norm, and our thanks for all your help over the years," she comments.

Mrs Brooker is the longest serving committee member, having joined in 1969 and served 23 years on the Committee, Mrs Cutter has held the Secretary's position since 1979, with Mrs Scarff and Mrs Spark having joined in 1980, Mrs Paterson in 1981, Mrs Borthwick in 1982, and Miss Jensen in 1985. Mr Johnston has taken on the role of Auditor.

John Grisham gets into his stride as a legal thriller author with his second book, 'The Firm', Bret Easton Ellis shocks with 'American Psycho', and Madonna releases a coffee-table book titled simply 'Sex.'

In Australia, crime writer Gary Disher launches his character Wyatt, a professional thief, with 'Kickback', while David Marr wins The Age Book of the Year with his biography of Patrick White, and the remarkable talent of Tim Winton comes into clear focus with his sprawling outline of the life and times of the Pickle and Lamb families in a large Perth house called 'Cloudstreet.'

The real world is in turmoil with the First Gulf War accelerating, the simmering situation in the Balkans about to explode, along with renewed Provisional IRA bombings in London. A cyclone in Bangladesh kills 200,000, Queen singer Freddy Mercury and British publisher Robert Maxwell die, and heart surgeon Victor Chang is shot dead near his Mosman home. Paul Keating forces the 'Kirribilli Agreement' to be honoured and replaces Bob Hawke as Prime Minister.

1992

The Committee is shocked to discover that some of the shelving has been infested by borers and so there is much reorganisation and cancelling of books.

After a visit by a Mordialloc Council inspector, a letter is sent to the Council asking for help in providing new shelves, or if not, any excess shelves from other sources to assist in displaying the 5500-book catalogue.

At a gathering in the Mayor's Room, Council certificates for their devoted voluntary service are presented to Mr Walmsley and Mrs Brooker for 20 years, Mrs Cutter for 15 years, and Mrs Paterson, Mrs Borthwick, Mrs Scarf and Mrs Spark for 10 years.

Further good news comes when the faithful old wall clock, which has been with the library since 1927, is repaired and back in operation.

Aboriginal author, artist and activist, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, earlier known as Kath Walker, shares the Christopher Brennan Award for a lifetime achievement in poetry with poet and poetry editor R. A. Simpson. 'Looking For Alibrandi' is the debut novel of Melina Marchetta,

Marion Halligan's 'Lovers' Knots' wins The Age Book of the Year, and - as anticipated - 'Tim Winton's 'Cloudstreet' takes out the Miles Franklin.

Michael Ondaatje's 'The English Patient,' is released, described as a 'histiographic metafiction', while Robert James Waller succeeds with the more traditional 'romance novel', titled 'The Bridges of Madison County.'

Paul Keating is dubbed "The Lizard of Oz" by the Fleet Street press after placing his hand on the Queen's back while introducing her to guests at Parliament House, with a British MP further describing him as "a thoroughly rude blighter."

Independent candidate Phil Cleary wins Bob Hawke's former seat of Wills, once a Labor stronghold, the High Court decides on the Mabo case, overturning the concept of terra nullius, while the Violent Femmes and Nirvana headline the first-ever Big Day Out, held at the Sydney Showground.

The cobbled together state of Yugoslavia begins to fragment, the Maastricht Treaty, formalising the 12-country European Union is signed, while the acquittal of four policemen for the savage beating of Afro-American driver Rodney King sparks five days of riots in Los Angeles.

1993

Bad news continues relating to borers getting into the library shelving. "This year has been mainly spent waiting, waiting, on the Council's decision on the new shelves," reports the Secretary, Mrs Cutter. "It was July of last year when we first approached the Council. The state of the shelves has deteriorated considerably since then. We are hoping something will be finalised before the end of the year."

The library is further shocked by the sad passing of Norm Walmsley, President for many years, and a genuine stalwart who handled many positions, with no job around the library too big or too small. "He was always ready to help in any way and will be sadly missed," says Mrs Cutter.

Another sad passing is that of Olive Jensen, a committee member since 1985 and who did desk duties on alternate Saturday mornings. A cheque is sent to the Heart Foundation in memory of Olive.

Lyn McMeeking fills in while new President Jean Critchley is on an extended trip overseas, where much is happening, not the least being a terrorist bomb attack on the World Trade Centre in New York. The idea is that a bomb in a van placed at the base of the North Tower will bring it down, and in doing so will crash into the South Tower, making it also collapse. While killing six and wounding more than a thousand, it doesn't quite work out as a planned. This time.

Meanwhile, FBI agents raid a religious cult in Waco, Texas, which goes up in flames, a tsunami kills 202 people in Japan, and in England two 11-year-old boys are convicted of the murder of two-year-old James Venables.

Liberal leader John Hewson wrecks his party's chances in the upcoming "unlosable" election with a muddled description on A Current Affair of a birthday cake being purchased under the party's proposed consumption tax. Labor wins with Paul Keating describing it as the "sweetest victory of all."

Alex Miller's novel 'The Ancestor Game' wins the Miles Franklin Award, John Marsden's young adult novel 'Tomorrow, When The War Began' resonates widely, Bryce Courtenay releases 'April Fool's Day' and Madeleine St John engages readers with a novel about a Sydney department store in the 1950s entitled 'The Women In Black'

Roddy Doyle wins the Book of the Year with 'Paddy Clarke, Ha Ha Ha' and Irvine Welsh takes readers into the drug-infested world of 'Trainspotting.'

1994

Success! "It is pleasing to report that during the year, the new library shelves were finally installed," reports the Secretary.

The library had been requesting the shelves from Mordialloc Council for nearly two years, to replace ones ruined by a borer infestation.

It's a big job, too, the ladies first removing all the books from the old shelves, dusting them, and then returning them to the new shelves "in strict alphabetical order."

The centre shelving was replaced and extended, the library was cleaned, and Council provided "six new (to us) chairs" To add to everyone's convenience, a new fan is purchased.

"The library was only closed for two sessions, so our borrowers were not greatly inconvenienced. The final result was much appreciated by members," Mrs Cutter concludes. There is plenty of variety to put on the shelves, too, with Richard Flanagan releasing his first novel, 'Death of A River Guide', Rodney Hall's book 'The Grisly Wife' winning the Miles Franklin Award, and John Birmingham taking readers inside share-house living with 'He Died With A Felafel In His Hand.'

Louis de Bernieres' book, 'Captain Corelli's Mandolin', receives reader and critical acclaim, while Peter James' 'Host' is released by Penguin as "the world's first electronic novel." It is on two floppy disks.

James Kelman's Booker Prize win with 'How Late It, How Late' is mired in controversy, one judge storming out, describing the choice "a disgrace."

On the political scene, Sport and Environment Minister Ros Kelly resigns over a white board "sports rorts affair", John Hewson is replaced as Leader of the Opposition by Alexander Downer, and the Federal Government agrees to pay reparations to First Nation people who were displaced during the nuclear tests in the 1950s and 1960s.

The first passenger train runs on the Channel Tunnel connecting England and France, Nelson Mandela casts his vote in the election that brings Apartheid to an end, and Edgar Munch's famous painting 'The Scream' is stolen from Oslo's National Gallery. It is recovered three months later.

At the end of the year, the library finds that it is no longer part of Mordialloc City but rather of Kingston City, under the State Government's amalgamation of Victorian councils.

OUR EIGHTH DECADE – 1995 to 2004

The time to be relegated to the ‘Rear’ begins

1995

It is a happy 70th birthday for the library.

“The occasion was marked by an invitation to all members and friends to visit the library on May 6 and to share in our birthday cake, which was donated by Sunbeam Cakes of Mentone,” reports the Secretary, Mrs Phyl Cutter.

Balloons, streamers and a Happy Birthday banner decorate the library, with Tony Brooker, who has come on board as a volunteer, taking many photos, a picture of the committee framed and presented to the library by Tony and his mother, Kay Brooker, the long-time Librarian.

“We received many congratulations on the Library’s achievements over the years,” reports Mrs Cutter.

Library stock has reached 5275 books with 95 purchases and 234 donations, but not all is joy, with the death of Mrs Barbara Spark, a member for many years who ran the desk on alternate Thursdays.

Helen Demidenko wins the Miles Franklin with ‘The Hand That Signed The Paper’, a decision that flares into controversy, not only for the book’s theme, about a Ukrainian family’s loyalty during World War 2, but also whether it was fact, or fiction, or both, and paradoxically the true identity of the author, who was born Helen Darville.

Bryce Courtenay continues his run with ‘The Potato Factory’, joined by Carmel Bird with ‘The White Garden’, and Christopher Koch with ‘Highways To A War.’

English author Nicholas Evans hits the mark with his debut novel, ‘The Horse Whisperer’, selling 15 million copies, while following his successful non-fiction outing, ‘Fever Pitch,’ Nick Hornby gains more fans with his first novel, ‘High Fidelity’.

Frank McCourt beautifully recalls growing up in the flickering shadows of ‘Angela’s Ashes.’

Barings Bank, which discreetly included the Queen on its client list, collapses after a securities broker loses \$1.4 billion while speculating on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, a federal building is bombed in Oklahoma City killing 168 people, and former sports hero O. J. Simpson is found not guilty of murder.

Qantas is officially privatised, Telecom becomes Telstra, and the calicivirus, being prepared to tackle Australia’s vast rabbit population, escapes from a South Australian testing station and spreads rapidly.

1996

“It has been a year of uncertainty,” reports the Secretary, Mrs Phyl Cutter.

It certainly has, because it has been determined that, as with other organizations within the Kingston City community, the library will be moved to new premises.

After a long delay, it is finally decided the library will share premises with the Citizens Advice Bureau, later to be known as the Mentone Community Assistance and Information Bureau, at 36 Florence Street, opposite the Mentone Post Office.

"We hope that the move to such a central position will result in an increase in membership," Mrs Cutter says.

President Jean Critchley puts in many hours of measuring rooms and shelves in preparation for the shift.

"She has been in constant contact with the people concerned with our move, kept us informed of any progress, and given a great deal of thought to the setting of the library in its new location. Thank you, Jean," says Mrs Cutter.

Anticipation is high, with opening days and times to change after the move, to work in with the new surroundings. But a moving date has not been declared.

The Ned Kelly Awards for crime writing are launched, the prize for best novel being shared by Barry Maitland with 'The Malcontenta' and Paul Thomas with 'Inside Dope.'

Doris Pilkington Garimara opens many eyes to the truth about the stolen generation with 'Follow The Rabbit-Proof Fence', while Morris West's 'Vanishing Point' examines manic depression.

Helen Fielding sees life from a lighter viewpoint with 'Bridget Jones' Diary', while George R. R. Martin sets out on a long and successful journey with 'A Game Of Thrones', the first in his 'A Song Of Ice And Fire' series.

The Liberal-National Coalition sweeps into power with John Howard as Prime Minister, and US President Bill Clinton visits Australia, but the nation is shocked and thrown into a pall of grief by a gun massacre at the Tasmanian historic site of Port Arthur in which 35 people are killed,

1997

It is an unsettled start to the year as the date of the move to 36 Florence St still remains uncertain. Finally, the answer comes - the shift will be in March.

"So then came the packing of all our books in cartons," reports the Secretary. "The shelves and all furnishings were moved by Council. The unpacking of the cartons - 96 in all - and the arranging of the books on the shelves was quite a big job, but as we have such willing workers on our Committee, this was done with a minimum of fuss.

"We opened on the 27th of March."

A pleasant Morning Tea, with Cr Lesley McGurgan as special guest, is held to celebrate the move and to thank President Jean Critchley for the time and effort she put in organizing everything.

It is decided to drop the Saturday shift and open on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 1 pm to 4 pm.

The new location is not proving to be the Promised Land.

"Unfortunately, we have not had the anticipated number of new members," reports the Secretary.

Lack of signage and visibility is already proving a problem, so everyone hopes for better results when the fine weather comes.

President Jean Critchley adds that while some volunteers have library experience the main qualifications to work at Mentone are "an interest in books and people."

As for subscribers, she notes an increasing number are elderly residents, many living alone and to whom reading was important. Light reading is the preferred choice with an emphasis on popular fiction, Australian history and biographies.

While acknowledging the existence of municipal libraries in adjoining suburbs, she points out most of Mentone Public Library's members do not drive or travel by train hence the importance and justification for its operation and continuance.

British around-the-world yachtsman Tony Bullimore also knows what it is like to be isolated. HMAS Adelaide rescues him, initially presumed dead, from the remote Southern Ocean three days after his yacht capsizes.

BHP announces it will close its Newcastle steel plant, Pauline Hanson launches her own political party, One Nation, and Melbourne's Pentridge Prison is closed. Time is up too, for the 150-year-long British lease of Hong Kong, the colony being handed back to China.

David Foster wins the Miles Franklin with 'The Glade Within The Grove', the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal goes to Robert Dessaix with 'Night Letters', while Luke Davies' 'Candy' is fully explained by the sub-title, 'A novel of love and addiction.'

Candace Bushnell's collection of newspaper columns, 'Sex And The City' hits the mark, while Arundhati Roy's 'The God Of Small Things' is acclaimed.

1998

The move to Florence St is not proving beneficial for the library.

"We have been in our present location for 18 months but are not attracting as many new members as we hoped we would," reports the Secretary.

Formerly at a "conveniently situated address", the library is now "inconspicuously tucked away in the corner of a car park."

Rather underwhelming signage is not helping, and it is felt that one remedy is to perhaps "try to get more notice through the local paper."

A phrase being uttered by startled visitors is becoming all too regular: "I had no idea you were here."

Nevertheless, it is agreed that Mrs Critchley be made a Life Member for "all the time and effort she put in to getting us settled in our present address."

Thanks are also accorded to Cr Lesley McGurgan for her continued interest in the library, with four new volunteers, Sathi Marar, June Kirby, Lorna Miranda and Brenda Symons being welcomed and a grant of \$500 being thankfully received from the local traders' Village Committee Projects Program.

The resignations are accepted with regret but understanding of Mrs Denise Borthwick, a committee member since 1982, Mrs Ev Patterson, on the committee since 1981, and Mrs Cutter, after twenty years as Secretary.

On the world stage, Indonesia's President Suharto resigns, US President Bill Clinton orders air strikes on Iraq, and TV hit 'Seinfeld' ends after nine seasons and 180 episodes.

Australia's first National Sorry Day, commemorating the indigenous Stolen Generations, is observed, Fox Studios open in Sydney, and the waterfront becomes a nasty battleground between Patrick Corporation and the Maritime Union of Australia.

Thriller writer Matthew Reilly continues to show his skill with a second novel, 'Ice Station', Peter Carey scoops several awards with 'Jack Maggs', and Les Murray releases a novel in verse titled 'Fredy Neptune.'

The first of 'The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency' novels will set Alexander McCall Smith on a path that will lead to two dozen adventures involving his talented investigator, Precious Ramotswe.

1999

The library's inconspicuous location continues to be of concern and steps are taken to make the public aware of where it is now sited.

This includes a pamphlet drop, which is described as "successful", and an application to have information about the library be included in the What's On section of the local newspaper.

A Kingston Council Grant of \$500 is much appreciated, Cr Lesley McGurgan suggests the library apply for 'Community Group of the Year', inquiries are to be made about the library becoming incorporated, and the Treasurer's report shows a healthy credit of \$3088.21.

Jean Critchley is re-elected as President, along with Ivy Scarff as Treasurer, and Kay Brooker as Librarian, with June Kirby taking over from Phyl Cutter as Secretary

The catalogue totals 5116 books, and there some excellent international releases to consider purchasing, including Tracy Chevalier's 'Girl With a Pearl Earring', Maeve Binchy's latest, 'Tara Road', and 'Chocolat' by Joanne Harris.

Tara Moss releases her first book, 'Fetish', joined by Kate Grenville with 'The Idea of Perfection', and Amy Witting with 'Isobel On The Way To The Corner Shop.' The Patrick White Award goes to Gerald Murnane, who has an excellent reputation overseas as well as locally with his novels, short stories, poems and essays.

A massive hailstorm hits Sydney, causing more than \$1 billion in damages, while newly appointed Victorian Labor leader Steve Bracks leads his party to a shock electoral victory over the Jeff Kennett led Coalition.

After months of debate, a referendum on whether Australia should become a Republic is voted down.

Napster, a pirate music download service, is launched, changing the face of the music industry forever, while as a tip of the hat to the past, Woodstock '99 is held on a disused Air Force Base in the State of New York.

Instead of the peace and love of the 1969 hippy original, it is marred by shocking conditions, lack of sanitation, overpriced food, looting, violence, riots and several deaths.

2000

Not only is it the beginning of a new century, but the year 2000 is rare indeed. It's a Century Leap Year, the first since 1600, with the next being 2400.

The GST is introduced, Sydney's airport rail link is opened, and the city's Olympic Games are described as the "best ever" by IOC boss Juan Antonio Samaranch.

'Angels & Demons', the first in the Robert Langdon series is released by Dan Brown, while 'Portrait Of An Artist As An Old Man,' by 'Catch 22' author Joseph Heller, is a novel published posthumously about a writer trying to create a novel that recaptures the success of his earlier work, not unlike Heller himself.

Rosalie Hamm releases 'The Dressmaker', Arabella Edge's first book 'The Company', a historical novel about the wreck of the Batavia receives high praise, while businesswoman, activist and university administrator Wendy McCarthy makes things clear with her memoir titled 'Don't Fence Me In.'

The library Committee is saddened to hear that Ivy Scarff is resigning, her contribution, particularly as Treasurer, much appreciated over many years. "But on a happier note," reports Secretary June Kirby, "we have gained quite a few new subscribers, and two new Committee members, Mrs Maureen Fryer and Mrs Shirley Fort." Mrs Fryer is elected Treasurer unopposed.

After a lengthy application process, the library finally receives its ABN, required so that it can receive a \$200 Community Groups Grant from Kingston Council.

After amusing readers worldwide for 50 years with the adventures of Charlie Brown, Lucy and Snoopy and the gang, cartoonist Charles Schulz dies.

2001

Amongst the day-to-day running of the library - the signing up of 20 new members "many of them younger people", the problem of disposing of unrequired books as "they are not wanted so much now," and the gifting of a pot plant to Mr B. M. Johnston for his many unpaid years of auditing the books – President Jean Critchley outlines a simple story underlining the importance of the library to the Mentone community.

"Whilst the library's first purpose is the provision of reading material, it also serves another purpose," she says.

"This was demonstrated recently when Ballarat was mentioned in conversation. The only member present at the time sat down and talked for ages about her early years there.

"She and I left the library together and she said, almost in tears, how much she had enjoyed the discussion because she had no-one else to talk to.

"That says it all, doesn't it?"

Sixty new books are purchased and there is plenty of choice - Ian McEwan's 'Atonement', Amy Tan's, 'The Bonesetter's Daughter,' and Douglas Coupland's, 'All Families Are Psychotic.' Peter Cary gathers more prizes with 'The True History Of The Kelly Gang,' while Jill Joliffe releases 'Cover-Up: The Inside Story of the Balibo Five.'

Once a stock-market high-flyer, HIH Insurance goes into liquidation, while Ansett, Australia's second largest airline, goes into administration.

SIEV-X, an Indonesian fishing boat carrying 400 asylum seekers sinks with 353 lives lost, while the Government falsely claims that parents on another boat, SIEV-4, deliberately threw their children overboard. It helps the Liberal/National Coalition retain power at the Federal Election.

New York's World Trade Centre is attacked again, this time from the air, with the Twin Towers coming down, as was the plan in 1993. The world is changed forever.

2002

President Jean Critchley reports that membership remains "fairly static", with 23 joining but others leaving. "It is hard to put an exact figure on the losses, as some of them have reappeared," she says. "Sadly, a number have died."

In her role as Acting Treasurer, she adds that they must consider ways of getting more funds in, "as our expenses cannot continue to be higher than our income."

"Increasing the membership fees is one option," she suggests, "but this may backfire on us."

She adds that placing another advertisement in the local paper might help in boosting numbers, on the basis that "they put the correct phone number in this time."

She notes that it is her ambition for the library to reach its 80th birthday in two years' time, and with everyone's help, "I am confident that we will."

"The 100th birthday will be for others to achieve," she adds.

Everyone joins in to help Kay Brooker celebrate her 90th birthday, having worked for the library for more than 30 years, much of it as Librarian.

A significant worldwide moment is a total eclipse of the Sun, seen across Australasia and the Pacific, and lasting just 23 seconds at its maximum point.

The worst drought in 100 years affects most of the country, while 202 people are killed in the bombing of a Bali bar, including 88 Australians.

Markus Zusak releases 'The Messenger', Andrea Goldsmith publishes 'The Prosperous Thief,' and performer Jane Clifton moves into the literary world with 'Half Past Dead'.

Rohinton Mistry releases 'Family Matters' and Paul Auster, 'The Book of Illusions,' with Ann Patchett's 'Bel Canto,' based on a Japanese Embassy hostage crisis in Peru, receiving widespread praise and sales.

2003

If ever there is a book title guaranteed to grab a library buyer's interest it is 'The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night Time.'

It proves to be a winner for its author, Mark Haddon, who steps up into the adult fiction world after a very successful run of children's works.

His success is similarly matched by Khaled Hosseini with 'The Kite Runner', Paul Murray with 'An Evening of Long Goodbyes' and Audrey Niffenegger's debut, 'The Time Traveler's Wife.'

It is a big year for Australian authors too, with Nikki Gemmell's 'The Bride Stripped Bare' going on to be 2003's biggest selling book. Originally published anonymously - which Gemmell said was "liberating" - it is a diary-style novel about a young wife who vanishes and her subsequent sexual encounters with a mysterious man.

Shirley Hazzard releases 'The Great Fire', D. B. C Pierre wins the Booker with 'Vernon God Little,' while Gregory David Roberts creates an epic tale of life on the run in India via 'Shantaram', its veracity or otherwise a hot discussion topic at dinner parties.

Victorian MP and former world champion skier Kirstie Marshall is evicted from Victoria Parliament House while breast-feeding her baby, tens of thousands of protestors join a round-the-world movement against the Iraq War, while President George W. Bush prematurely declares it is all over, under a sign reading "Mission Accomplished."

An Italian gang raids a Belgian vault and steals diamonds, gold and jewellery worth more than \$100 million. The library can only dream of those figures, with diminishing income from Membership a continuing problem.

President Jean Critchley asks volunteers to put out notices where they can, suggesting that "there seems to be more young mothers about Mentone, so the Health Centres, or the modern equivalent would be a good place to start."

She adds that the library does more than just lend books, for many people being the only source of conversation or, "more importantly, a laugh."

Librarian Kay Brooker, now 90, is finding the job a challenge, but the good news is that her son Tony, who has gradually been getting more involved as a volunteer, retires from his employment and takes on the job of Joint Librarian, "which has been a huge help."

2004

With its 80th birthday on the horizon, Secretary June Kirby takes time out to reflect on where the library stands at after so many years devoted volunteer service to the community:

“The purpose behind and the continuance of the Mentone Public Library is to cater mostly for people who, through age and/or infirmity, find difficulty in going to the nearest big Public Libraries, these being Parkdale and Cheltenham.

“Being situated in the Car Park is very convenient for the mostly elderly people to firstly, do their weekly shopping, and then ‘pop’ into the library for a short respite, return their books, and choose other books. I am sure that for many people, a rest and a chat are pleasant at this time.”

As well as the membership fee now being \$6 per year, charges on each book range from 10c for older books up to 60c for newer ones.

“We try to keep the collection as current as possible by reading books reviews, taking into account borrower requests, and buying carefully,” adds the Secretary.

There is plenty of quality to choose from with Karen Joy Flower releasing ‘The Jane Austen Book Club,’ Colm Toibin publishing ‘The Master’, and the final work coming from the hand of Muriel Spark, titled appropriately ‘The Finishing School.’

On the local scene, Steven Carroll releases ‘The Gift of Speed,’ Gail Jones with ‘Sexy Lights’, and Nicholas Shakespeare with ‘Snowleg.’

Adam Elliot’s animated short film, ‘Harvie Krumpet’, wins an Academy Award, while powerhouse rock band, Jet, whose beginnings can be traced back to St Bede’s, scores worldwide sales and awards with its debut album, ‘Get Born’, featuring hits ‘Are You Gonna Be My Girl’, and ‘Rollover DJ.’

Also grabbing headlines, but for other reasons entirely, is the Crocodile Hunter, Steve Irwin, sensationally filmed feeding a croc at his Australia Zoo while holding on to his one-month-old son Robert. Well, you gotta teach ‘em young.

The first Ghan passenger train sets off on its three-day journey from Adelaide to Darwin, Qantas launches Jetstar, Jennifer Hawkins wins the Miss Universe contest in Quito, Ecuador, and John Howard is returned for a fourth term as Prime Minister.

But the world goes into shock with the death toll of a Boxing Day tsunami reaching more than 200,000.

OUR NINTH DECADE – 2005 to 2014

As book lending declines, a solution needs to be found

2005

With much hard work and determination, President Jean Critchley and the volunteers have fulfilled their promise that the library would reach its 80th birthday.

“For all the eighty years the library has been run entirely by volunteers, it is impossible to know just how many people have served this community during this time,” comments Mrs Critchley. “It would also be interesting to know how many subscribers have supported their efforts, and have benefitted from those efforts.”

Either way, she says, “we salute them.”

Mrs Critchley is joined at the celebrations by dedicated volunteers including Lu Rose, Margaret Walker, Brenda Symons, Shirley Fort, Joan Templar, Lorna Miranda, Sathi Marar, June Kirby, Tony Brooker and special guest Cr Bill Nixon.

Cr Nixon is thanked for his ongoing support of the library, including arranging an additional grant of \$200. This, along with the annual Council grant now at \$1000, is an invaluable boost to library funds.

Despite this, with the continuing reduction in membership, the Treasurer reports a “small loss of \$203 over the year.”

Under a birthday banner put up by Tony Brooker, who is thanked for his continuing input, the cake is cut, a toast is proposed, and everyone looks to the future.

Outside the library walls it is a much bleaker world, with a magnitude 6.6 earthquake hitting Fukuoka, Japan, Hurricane Katrina weaving a destructive path along America’s Gulf Coast, and terrorist bombs in London killing 50.

A group of Australians called the Bali Nine is arrested while attempting to smuggle heroin out of Indonesia, a former Queensland beauty therapist named Schapelle Corby is imprisoned on charges of smuggling cannabis into Indonesia, and Van Tuong Nguyen, a sometime student and salesman from Melbourne, is hanged in Singapore for drug trafficking.

There is the lighter side. A fifteen-year-old lad steals one of Melbourne’s public transport icons and drives it along the tracks for 40 minutes before being stopped by police, going down in history as ‘Tram Boy’.

Shepparton honours Joseph Furphy, author of the 1903 classic ‘Such Is Life,’ with a statue of the writer that many regard as “The Father of the Australian novel,” while Kate Grenville receives huge plaudits for ‘The Secret River’ and Markus Zusak creates a best-seller with ‘The Book Thief.’

‘The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo,’ a psychological thriller by Swedish author and journalist Stieg Larsson, is published posthumously, its original title being ‘Men Who Hate Women.’

2006

A long running problem - the difficulty for people to locate the library - is hopefully resolved with the installation of a sign on Florence Street directing people to the door at the rear of number 36.

"Since the new sign = and the arrow on it = went up, we seem to be attracting more attention," reports President Jean Critchley. "And we have gained a number of new subscribers. Once again, a younger group, which is a good thing.

"We certainly have more people coming in to check us out, and hopefully spreading information."

There is much ongoing discussion about the location issue, with further suggestions varying from placing an advertisement in the local Neighbourhood Watch newsletter, to running a letter drop, to taking up Cr Bill Nixon's offer of giving the library a mention in his regular media column.

The library has also been looking at cutting costs, the major target being the insurance bill, which is "our biggest expense by far" at \$799.22 for the year. But after investigation of alternative brokers, "they all seem to be no better than the one we have."

A "weeding out" of cancelled books, most donated to St Vincent de Paul's Opportunity Shop, provides more space on the shelves and a cleaner look for the remaining stock of 4750.

With the rising cost of books, it is disappointing that one of the library's most expensive purchases, a copy of 'March' by Geraldine Brookes, a retelling of Louisa May Alcott's 'Little Women', has disappeared with no record of it going out.

"I hate to think it has been stolen," reports an aggrieved President. "Just to rub salt into the wound, the book has recently won the Pulitzer Prize."

Nationally, calls come from opposition parties to bring Australian troops home from Iraq, Cyclone Larry smashes Far North Queensland, and two miners survive 14 days trapped in a collapsed Tasmanian pit. The nation is further shocked when two Australian icons, Steve Irwin and Peter Brock, die in the same week.

'Eat, Pray, Love,' by Elizabeth Gilbert is the book that captures the headlines for the year, while Sara Gruen's 'Water For Elephants' and John Boyne's 'The Boy In Striped Pyjamas' garner big sales.

'Carpentaria', a novel about inter-racial conflict by indigenous author Alexis Wright, is set for big things, while 'Careless', by Deborah Robertson, about death and grief, draws critical acclaim. Max Barry confirms many people's views on big business with 'Company', about a firm whose stand-out feature is that it is hard to discern what it actually does.

After a burglar breaks into the home of Bill Green, better known as the celebrated cartoonist 'Weg', the attending policeman's request for a description is answered with a rapid-fire drawing of the miscreant down to the last detail.

2007

At the tender age of 94, and having volunteered for 35 years, most of it as Librarian, the indefatigable Kay Brooker calls time.

"I am sure you agree that Kay deserves a rest," says President Joan Critchley.

She says that the Brooker family - Kay, her husband Jim, and son Tony - have been "a huge help to the library for many years."

"After arriving in Parkdale in 1964, they joined the library and soon became involved in running it," she reports. "And now, thank goodness, Tony is carrying on the family tradition."

Sadly, illness prevents Kay attending the planned celebration, so the library presents Tony with the gift for her.

It is symbolic of a year that the President describes as one of “ups and downs.” Positive comments about the books being bought are pleasing, and the roster system seems to be working well, but book lending has plateaued, and after the losses and gains are counted, subscriptions are static, although the new subscribers are “younger than those we have lost, which is promising for the future.”

She adds sincere thanks to all Committee members for, “without your help and time, the library may well have foundered.”

The world is also recognising that prudence is an important part of survival with the first Earth Hour launched, encouraging Sydneysiders to turn off their lights for an hour from 7.30 pm on March 31. On a larger scale, Sydney’s Football Stadium hosts one of the seven global legs of the Live Aid music concerts, promoting climate change action. And Labor wins the Federal election, with one of the first duties of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd being to ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

J. M. Coetzee’s ‘Diary of a Bad Year’ garners a series of essays, ponderings and diary entries on the hot-button subjects of the day, particularly Guantanamo Bay, George W. Bush and Tony Blair, while Peter Rose, of the famous Collingwood football family, enhances his career as editor of ‘The Best Australian Poems 2007.’

A character called Sooky is at the centre of a coming-of-age novel titled ‘Feather Mann’ by Rhyll McMaster, her first novel after many years of releasing poetry collections.

‘Free Food For Millionaires’ by Korean American writer Min Jin Lee outlines the challenges of someone from an ethnic background endeavouring to find their way into New York high society.

Apple introduces its first-generation iPhone. Say no more.

2008

In order to get back to coinciding the library’s operations with the Financial Year for not-for-profit organisations, which runs from October 1 to September 30, two Annual General Meetings are held, one in June and one in October.

This is accompanied by the library becoming Incorporated, which will help with administration and finances, particularly applications for Community Grants.

June Kirby retires as Secretary and is thanked for her excellent contribution, with an accompanying gift. Sue Blackford is elected to the role unopposed.

A new name appears on the volunteer list for the first time - that of Julia Reichstein, who “as a person with library experience has taken on the job of cataloguing the books,” reports President Jean Critchley. “A huge job. Thank you, Julia.”

It is also decided to return to opening on Saturday mornings, a rostered spot that had been dropped a few years earlier when opening hours were reduced to three days a week.

But the dominating news is the death of Kay Brooker after illness and hospitalization, President Jean leading the tributes outlining her wonderful contribution over the years, particularly as Librarian.

Sympathy is extended and a rose bush is gifted to her son Tony, who is now providing his own skills and experience, particularly in buying new books.

The annual \$1000 Kingston Council Grant enables the purchase of 58 titles. Between that and the donation of 71 books, along with 2353 cancelled, the inventory now stands at 4740. A major release for the year is ‘The Slap’ by Christos Tsiolkas, the sixth book of fiction for the author/playwright and the one that propels him into Australia’s literary stratosphere with its

theme of whether a backyard barbecue incident involving a grown man and a three-year-old boy is justified discipline or common assault. It will later become a popular TV series. Michelle de Kretser wins the Christina Stead Prize for Fiction with 'The Lost Dog' and Steven Carroll, the Miles Franklin with 'The Time We Have Taken.'

To end a remarkable career, John Updike releases his final novel, 'The Widows of Eastwick,' a sequel to his 1984 book, 'The Witches of Eastwick.' And after 128 years of publication, including material by some of Australia's greatest poets, journalists and storytellers, 'The Bulletin' rolls off the presses for the last time.

First-time novelist Andrew Croome wins the Vogel Literary Award with a manuscript entitled 'Document Z'.

It is a simple title but covers a dramatic story, the Petrov Affair, which saw Soviet diplomat Vladimir Petrov and wife Evdokia, once at the centre of a wild 1950s Cold War spy chase, finish their lives in relative obscurity as Sven and Maria Allyson in Parkmore Road, East Bentleigh.

2009

"All our volunteers have a history of helping out, one way or another," President Jean Critchley comments, outlining the War services of three respected volunteers - Joan Templar, Jean Kirby and the late Kay Brooker.

"Joan served as a member of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service in World War 2, and went into Japan with the troops after peace was declared," she says.

"June served in World War 2 with the Signal Corps in Queensland as a Wheatstone Girl and wrote a book about it.

"Kay and Jim Brooker went into Germany with the British Army of Occupation when peace was declared, and surprise, surprise, came home with Tony!"

June's book is titled 'A Special Job – the Wheatstone Girls, 1943-1945', outlining their role as part of the AWAS (Australian Women's Army Service) in which young women served in a variety of jobs including drivers, cooks, clerks and typists. June records the stories of 13 women who joined the Corp of Signals and worked on the Wheatstone automated telegraph system, which used punched paper tape to rapidly send and receive Morse code messages. With the library's book grant increased by \$100 to \$600, Tony has plenty of material to choose from, a stand-out being Tim Winton, winning his fourth Miles Franklin Award for his novel 'Breath', about two young surfers under the thrall of a former champion. Tom Kenneally continues his run with 'The People's Train,' Sonya Hartnett releases 'Butterfly' and Alex Miller launches 'Lovesong.'

Carol Ann Duffy is the first woman appointed Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom, Ruth Padel is the first woman to be elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford University, and Romanian-born German novelist Herta Muller is one of the few women to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Bushfires in Victoria kill 181 people including newsreader Brian Naylor and his wife, Moiree; a six-month-old baby survives when his pram rolls off Ashburton Station and is struck by a train; and a Melbourne man is charged with murder when he throws his four-year-old daughter off the West Gate Bridge.

To the astonishment of the ordinary person, some sort of currency called Bitcoin is first "mined".

2010

It's the library's 85th birthday and despite a year of ups and downs the celebrations are a huge success, "thanks to all the work by everyone involved," reports President Jean Critchley.

"Whilst it is unfair to single out any person, I am sure you will all agree that Julia and Tony did a great job," she says. "It is hard to believe that 50 to 60 people fitted in this room." Banners, bookmarks, a tent outside, and of course, a cake-cutting ceremony are all part of the celebrations.

The Mayor, Cr Steve Staikos, presents a warm speech congratulating everyone on a job well done. He is supported by guests including local MPs, Kingston City Councillors, representatives from the Mordialloc & District Historical Society and the Bayside Region of the Fellowship of Australian Writers, as well as library members, volunteers and local residents.

But a serious element has to be confronted head on if the library is to make another 85 years.

"The very cold winter affected the number of books issued," Jean later reports to the AGM, which includes guests Senator Mitch Fifield, Mordialloc MP Janice Munt, Kingston Councillors Rosemary West OAM and Ron Brownlees, and Donna Bauer, President of the Mordialloc & District Historical Society.

Total books processed from October 2009 to September 2010 number 174. The harsh reality is that in the library's heyday, that figure was over 70,000.

Jean adds that "surprisingly on the worst days we still had frail, elderly people needing books, some over 90."

Although it is a heart-warming story, she realises that it underlines the need to "make some changes to our operations to encourage a younger clientele."

Recognizing this, Julia Reichstein puts a "Clientele Recruitment Ideas" submission to the AGM, proposing four major elements - Story-time For Children, Author Talks, a Book Discussion Group, and Library Items Home Delivered To Housebound Patrons. It is a well thought out three-page proposition, even raising the concept of a "gold coin donation" at the Author Talks to bring in a new stream of income.

The initial response is lukewarm, as the meeting minutes later testify: "The four ideas were all discussed and it was agreed that they were all very good ideas, but would need further discussion and feasibility studies."

Eddie Perfect, singer, songwriter, actor and comedian, reflects on his Mentone childhood with 'Songs From The Middle', a song cycle that one critic describes as "a poignant narrative of adult reconciliation."

Sailor Jessica Watson, just 16 years old, proves the value of having a go when she completes a solo voyage around the world. Julia Gillard has a go, too, and topples Kevin Rudd to become Australia's first female Prime Minister.

An Australian Book Review poll declares 'Cloudstreet' by Tim Winton as Australia's favourite novel, while Peter Temple wins the Miles Franklin with 'Truth', the first crime novel to win the prestigious prize.

When it comes to getting the message out, few events can challenge that of journalist Julian Assange's release of footage of an American airstrike murdering a group of innocent Iraqis, sparking a 17-year saga of committed endeavour to capture, punish and silence the Wikileaks founder.

2011

Success! Success! Success! After its initial reluctance, the Committee decides to go ahead with one of Julia Reichstein's four recommendations - the author talks.

Titled 'An Author For All Seasons', it is launched on March 5, 2011, Julia describing it as "an absolute labour of love, delivering rewards I never could have imagined."

"I feel incredibly blessed to have had the chance to run this program," she says.

Conceived with the agenda of "luring members of the public back into the library, and to serve as a promotional launch pad for local authors, poets and story-tellers," it takes off.

"My expectations for this project were really quite humble," Julia says, giving an explanation for the choice of the title of the series.

"I thought at best we would succeed in attracting four published authors to speak for free - one for each season of the year."

Instead, the line-up quickly becomes monthly, with the bookings of authors extending all the way from 2011 to March of 2013.

Attendance is a welcome surprise, too. "I thought maybe, just maybe, we could attract an audience of 10 to each event," reports Julia.

"As it turns out, on average we gain a monthly average of 20 per talk, with our record being 24."

She thanks 88.3 Southern FM radio station, the Mordialloc-Chelsea Leader and Kingston Your City for help in promoting the events, and Tony Brooker, Sue Blackford, Shirley Fort, and Jean Critchley, who has been ill for part of the year, for "dedicating such a considerable amount of Saturday mornings to ensure the smooth running each talk."

Although income is not high on her agenda, the gold coin idea also proves a winner, with Treasurer Lorna Miranda reporting that there is more income for the year, "and this was due to the monthly author talks."

At the same time, REDGroup Retail, which owns Borders and Angus & Robertson bookstore chains, is placed into voluntary administration.

'Fifty Shades of Grey' by E. L. James proves a runaway success, as does 'Miss Peregrine's Home For Peculiar Children', by Ransom Riggs.

The Miles Franklin goes to Kim Scott with 'That Deadman Dance,' while it is a big year for biography and autobiography with releases including 'Her Father's Daughter' by Alice Pung, 'Hazel: My Mother's Story', by Sue Pieters-Hawke, 'Tony Abbott: A Man's Man,' by Susan Mitchell, and 'An Eye For Eternity: The Life Of Manning Clark', by Mark McKenna.

Heavy flooding spreads across the nation, particularly Queensland, Perth records a record 26th consecutive day above 30 degrees, and the ash cloud from a Peruvian volcano eruption hovers over southern Australia, causing the suspension of hundreds of airline flights.

When Fukushima Daiichi nuclear facility is severely damaged by an earthquake and the follow-up tsunami, the shocking story and amazing images reverberate around the world.

2012

After years of service, including leading the library through some very difficult times, Jean Critchley retires as President due to ill-health. Tony Brooker describes Jean as "a tower of strength in keeping things running smoothly over the year."

"We all owe a great debt of thanks for all your work," he declares. "Thanks heaps, Jean."

She is joined in retirement by Margaret Walker and Sathe Marar, and along with the passing of stalwart Joan Templer, the leadership is taking new shape. While Sue Blackford stays on as

Secretary and Lorna Miranda as Treasurer, Tony steps into the role of Acting President, Carol French becomes Vice President, and Julia Reichstein joins the committee in the new post of Media & Events Officer. She reports that 'An Author For All Seasons' is going from strength to strength, and has been joined by another of her proposals, 'Page Turners', an "intimate library discussion group" held monthly on a Wednesday afternoon and hosted by Carol French.

Tony describes Julia as "an amazing asset" and that "the amount of work she does is incredible." The additional income via Julia's new projects plus two Council grants of \$1000 and \$750 all help in "keeping our heads above water."

The rest of the nation has plenty of water to contend with, particularly around northern New South Wales and southern Queensland. The Mehi River breaks its banks, sending 1600 people fleeing Moree, while the Maranoa floods the town of Mitchell and threatens Roma downstream. In Gippsland, Omeo records 133 mm, or 5.2 inches, of rain, its wettest day in 133 years of records, while in Western Australia, once-in-a-century rains wreak havoc across the southern half of the state.

In Italy, the luxury cruise ship Costa Concordia runs out of water, when it spectacularly crashes on the rocks, the largest shipwreck in history.

The Australian Government enforces plain packaging for cigarettes, The Age is reconfigured as a tabloid, and Jeff, Murray and Greg leave The Wiggles, to be replaced by Emma, Simon and Lachlan.

On the international scene, Gillian Flynn's 'Gone Girl' hits the mark, as does 'A Man Called Ove' by Fredrik Backman and Clive James is awarded a CBE for his services to literature.

Anna Funder wins the Miles Franklin with 'All That I Am', Peter Carey releases 'The Chemistry of Tears' and Tom Kenneally 'The Daughters of Mars'.

The literary scene is to be taken by storm with the Victorian Premier's Unpublished Manuscript Award going to a debut novel by an information systems consultant named Graeme Simsion and titled 'The Rosie Project,' the somewhat awkward protagonist employing a questionnaire in his pursuit of a suitable female partner.

2013

One of the keys to the success of 'An Author For All Seasons' is Julia's efforts to publicise each event.

She reports how she has developed a range of methods and cultivated a series of outlets to get the message across, including leaflet drops, mail-outs, telephone calls, local newspapers, community radio, Council publicity, school newsletters, email circulars, author websites, the websites of community, literary and art groups, and a library blog.

Some of these efforts work well, such as leaflet drops in Florence Street and Brindisi Street letterboxes in the week leading up to the author talk. One new member from this source "was very impressed with the literary event she attended (Elsie Johnstone's author talk) and she enjoyed the ambience of the Library," Julia reports.

On the other hand, the response from 20 recipients receiving monthly posted mail-outs "was very poor, and at a cost of \$20 per month, I decided to cease this ritual."

"Five courtesy phone calls are made per literary event," she reports. "Three of the five people contacted do not use internet for communication, so they are very appreciative of the personal phone calls. The remaining two like to have the personal reminder."

She comments that this is "still proving an effective and low-cost communication and promotion method", adding that the Chelsea Mordialloc News has been "immensely

supportive of the library, and ran two major stories on us.” These are about author Cheryl Threadgold’s April appearance, and a special feature on Shirley Randles’ book launch. Gaytana Adorna’s “Write Now” on Southern FM is also very helpful, offering volunteers and authors a spot to discuss events at the library.

With the traditional book-lending slowly diminishing, President Tony Brooker thanks Julia for “the amazing amount of work” she puts in organizing and promoting the author talks, thus boosting income.

Another link with the past is to be severed with the announcement that after 50 years’ service to the community the Mentone Ten-Pin Bowl on the corner of Warrigal Road and the Nepean Highway is to be demolished and replaced with apartments and shops.

Readers of the Herald-Sun and its predecessor The Sun News-Pictorial are saddened to hear of the death of Keith Dunstan, the long-time master of morning wit and whimsy via ‘A Place In The Sun.’ Not only is he a much-loved columnist, but the author of more than 35 books, many of them examining the quirkier aspects of Australian life, including ‘Wowzers’, ‘Knockers’ and ‘Ratbags’, and a self-deprecating autobiography, the title coming from a former teacher’s assessment of him as having ‘No Brains At All.’

Michelle de Kretser wins the Miles Franklin with ‘Questions of Travel’, Fiona McFarlane introduces ‘The Night Guest’, and a critic says that Alex Miller’s voice is “never more pure or lovely” through ‘Coal Creek’, his book set in 1950s Queensland about an orphan nicknamed Bobby Blue.

J. K. Rowling publishes a detective novel, ‘The Cuckoo’s Calling’, under the nom-de-plume Robert Galbraith. But the Sunday Times reveals the author’s true identity after three months and the book surges from 4709th place to the top of Amazon’s best-seller list.

2014

Just what does the library look for in a book to be purchased, catalogued and kept on its shelves?

Julia Reichstein explains all in a ‘Rationalisation of the Collection and Development Policy’ proposed in her Library Collection Management Report at the Annual General Meeting. She suggests that a book is retained if it is any, some or all of the following: of local historical significance, has been borrowed within 10 years, promotes local authors, is rare, is in demand and requested by patrons, is relevant to the needs and interests of the patrons. The policy is moved by Treasurer Lorna Miranda, and seconded by President Tony Brooker, who are both re-elected unopposed to the Committee, as is Secretary Carol French and Media Officer Julia Reichstein. Also attending the AGM are Sue Blackford, Shirley Fort, Mr and Mrs Whiteway, Mairi Neil, Shirley Randles, Lesley McGurgan, and Dr Graham Whitehead.

An indicator that the library is being swept along the flowing waters of 21st bureaucracy is the required adoption of a Conflict Resolution Policy. The first approach under the guidelines is that any problem be discussed with the President.

The author talks are going from strength to strength, the blog is gaining numbers, but Page Turners membership is fluctuating. Grant money is put to buying 27 books and 58 are donated, but with rationalisation, the catalogue drops below 4000 for the first time, at 3947. A book that has caused great impact is ‘All The Light We Cannot See’, a World War 2 story about a blind French girl and a German boy in military school. ‘The Miniaturist’ by Jessie Burton also receives international acclaim. But Richard Flanagan’s ‘The Narrow Road To The Deep North’ scoops the prize pool, including the Booker, with its exploration of the

conflicted life of a doctor who, as a prisoner of war, is forced by the Japanese military to work on the infamous Burma Railway in World War 2.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott announces he will bring back knighthoods, Daniel Andrews leads the ALP to victory in Victoria, and staff and customers are taken hostage in a distressing, live broadcast standoff at the Lindt Chocolate Café in Sydney's Martin Place.

Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 disappears off the radar during its flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, while Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 is shot down over Ukraine, 38 Australians confirmed dead amongst the 15 crew and 283 passengers, including novelist and reviewer Liam Davison, a former St Bede's student.

OUR TENTH DECADE - 2015 to 2024

Expanding our horizons, out of necessity

2015

Happy 90th birthday, Mentone Public Library, what a great service you have provided across nine decades.

The vibrant, colourful celebrations are a “resounding success” says President Tony Brooker, special thanks going to Julia Reichstein and new member Sybbie Nicoll for the great job in setting it all up.

“I can’t let this opportunity pass without thanking Julia for all the hard work she put in organising the day to ensure it was a great success,” reports Tony.

“Special thanks to Veronica Hahn for seeking out the best value cake, which turned out to be just right and was delicious!”

Tony speaks of the challenges which lie ahead for the library’s future, and for the first time the idea of the organisation officially expanding beyond solely lending books is raised in a report by Julia titled ‘Evolving into a Library and Writers Hub.’

Former councillor Bill Nixon, a longtime supporter, is congratulatory of this concept. Lesley McGurgan, also an ex- councillor and similarly a library backer, suggests a steering committee be established, developing a plan outlining timelines, goals, guidelines and objectives. Julia says that perhaps she could set up such a committee to establish the “what, why and how of this endeavour.”

Some members express apprehension, feeling “the books are the drawcard to our continuing patronage.”

Personnel are changing, too, with Tony acknowledging the departures of Sue Blackford, “who had done a great job as Secretary over the past years,” along with Librarian Shirley Fort, “who will also be greatly missed,” and Carol French who also served as Secretary, and “who we thank for your work and your friendship.”

The committee line-up is now Tony continuing as President, but also in the additional roles of Vice-President and joint Collections Officer with Sybbie Nicoll; Julia retaining Media and Events, but additionally becoming the new Secretary, albeit for a six months ‘preliminary’ period; and Lorna Miranda continuing as Treasurer.

On a sadder note, the passing is recorded of Past President, Jean Critchley, friend and tower of strength for many years until illness ended her association, “who was loved by us all, both as a great worker for the library, and as a friend who would do anything to help out.”

British author Paula Hawkins publishes the psychological thriller, ‘The Girl On The Train,’ while in a puzzling twist, Harper Lee’s ‘other’ novel, ‘Go Set A Watchman’, the early version of what turned out to be ‘To Kill A Mockingbird’, is released. Celebrated US author Toni Morrison publishes her 11th and final book, ‘God Help The Child’, although she prefers her original title ‘The Wrath of Children.’

Sally Hepworth has a breakthrough with ‘The Secrets of Midwives’, which she writes while pregnant with her second child, while Judy Nunn releases her thirteenth novel, ‘Spirits of the Ghan’, and Magda Szubanski in her memoir ‘Reckoning’ reveals many family secrets, including the war time exploits of her political assassin father.

Queen Elizabeth's reign reaches a record 63 years and 217 days; Cuba and the US end 54 years of hostilities; and coinciding with Malcolm Turnbull ousting Tony Abbott as Prime Minister, author Paddy Manning releases an unauthorised Turnbull biography. Its title? 'Born To Rule.'

2016

An all-important discussion on a crucial Kingston City proposal is held at the library's Annual General Meeting. That the library shift from 36 Florence Street into the newly completed Mentone Activity Hub.

The idea has been suggested by Kingston Library Service officers Mauro Bolin and Trish Smyth during a sustainability meeting earlier in the year.

The advantages, in addition to those provided by moving into a new building, are that there will be "more room to host events", that the library will now be "situated in a location that is more likely to attract passers-by", and that Council would "produce, manage and distribute our printed and electronic publicity free of charge."

But it is considered that as it would be in a shared space situation, "we would be expected to surrender our collection, including our local authors' and local history publications, to the City of Kingston Library and Information Service."

"We would cease to be a traditional library outfit and would become an event brand," it is pointed out.

The Library Service suggests that surrendering the collection would, in fact, serve to take the strain off everyone "managing a collection that is currently being under-accessed."

After much discussion, including input from Councillors Geoff Gledhill and Rosemary West, and former councillor Bill Nixon, it is unanimously agreed that "the collection, especially the local authors' works and local history publications, needs to remain with Mentone Public Library," and that the current space "is perfect for our services."

"We are the group best able to represent these works and authors," it is determined.

The decision ends with Julia directed to "set up an Action Group preliminary meeting with just a small selection of people in February 2017 to start defining future directions for the library."

With membership on a plateau and total books processed hovering around the 115 mark, the writer presentations are becoming an all-important part of the library's future. Six Saturday morning sessions of 'An Author For All Seasons' attract a total of 132 people and a gold coin income of \$299.20, while book lending brings in \$250.30, with \$1000 spent on new books.

Based on the success of the 'Author' series, "following an uneven performance in 2015," a seventh season is proposed for 2017, local author Mairi Neill suggesting it be minuted that Julia Reichstein's report as Media & Events Officer is "an amazing presentation."

As well as the Media role, Julia is elected Co-Secretary alongside Tony Brooker, with Tony also handling the roles of President, Treasurer, and Acquisitions & Collections Officer. Garry Andrews is appointed Auditor, Tony thanks Sybbie Nicoll for being a great help in sorting the old books to make way for the new, while a proposal is made that a volunteer Recruitment Officer be sought.

Lorna Miranda is presented with flowers as a token of appreciation for her 19 years as a volunteer, particularly her "hard work and attention to detail" during her stint as Treasurer. Julie Flynn, also retiring, is thanked for her efforts, while two new volunteers are made welcome - Paul Karp, who will assist on the author talk events and re-open the library on

Wednesdays from 10.00 am to 12.00 pm, and Justine Gorny, who will assist occasionally with the author talks.

Change is certainly afoot in the outside world with Britain voting to exit the European community, Donald Trump becoming US President, and Lord Lucan's death certificate being officially granted, 42 years after he disappeared following the death of the family's nanny, Sandra Rivett.

Charlotte Wood wins the Stella Prize with her novel 'The Natural Way Of Things', and A. S. Patric gains the Miles Franklin for the locally based 'Black Rock White City.'

Where literature - and the world generally - is apparently heading is probably best summed up by a book written by Mark Manson subtitled, 'A Counterintuitive Approach to Living', and titled 'The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F**k.'

2017

The library begins to dip its toe into the world of the Internet, with Paul Karp publicising upcoming events on the Kingston City outlet, My Community Life. He also sets up a Blog on WordPress, where members can upload reviews of library events such as the author talks. This is a big step for an organisation now in its 94th year, although Secretary Julia Reichstein expresses concern about extending the scheme to Facebook. While acknowledging the social media giant's immense popularity, she is concerned about its ever-changing security clauses and how it is "often exploited for bullying and slander."

President Tony Brooker appreciates all this in his relaxed, phlegmatic style, reporting: "Paul is a wiz at updating our Blog (whatever that is) ..."

Indeed, as well as local input, it not only generates responses from as far afield as Brazil, Bulgaria, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Russia and Ukraine, it also inspires interest from readers in the 'other' Mentone, a community in Florida, USA, and Menton, in the south-east of France, the seaside resort that inspired developer Sir Matthew Davies to develop the township during the land boom of the 1880s.

"I may have to consider a fact-finding trip," suggests Tony. "If the Council will come up with the appropriate funds ..."

Tony also reports that they had been thinking of reviving the Book Club, a monthly literature discussion group that Carol French had run successfully in 2013-2014. So, when Elsie Johnstone, a writer and "An Author For All Seasons" presenter, said she was interested in running a program, "we thought it a great idea, as both Elsie and her husband Graeme have had many years of experience in the literary field."

Re-launched as Page Turners, it is reconfigured as a supportive workshop circle, where writers are encouraged to create material, particularly memoir, and present it in an encouraging atmosphere.

As it is held once a month on a Wednesday, Paul, running the desk on that day, joins in. With a group of between five to eight, it works so well that the sessions are soon extended from an hour to 90 minutes.

By now the annual Kingston City grant is consistently \$1000, and St Augustine's Southern Opportunity Shop is proving a most welcome supporter with regular donations, usually around the \$200 mark. But while the gold coin fee for the "Author" sessions is also proving invaluable, the annual financial statement reveals that expenditure continues to cast an ominous shadow over income.

An offer to participate in the Bayside Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning & Employment Network (BGKLEN), assisting people between 15 to 25 who have learning challenges, is

discussed enthusiastically but declined as it is felt that it is not something that the library is equipped or qualified to take on.

As a pointer to the future, member and Councillor, Tamsin Bearsley, suggest that the library space has the potential for the acting out of a fun, interactive murder mystery, a la Miss Marple style. She is on the money, as a movie version of 'Crooked House', a spy thriller by Miss Marple's creator, Agatha Christie, is released.

'Camino Island' by John Grisham is one of the biggest selling books of the year, along with 'The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo' by Taylor Jenkins Reid.

Josephine Wilson wins the Miles Franklin with 'Extinctions', among a wave of books released including 'Flame Tip' by Karenlee Thompson, 'Storyland' by Catherine McKinnon, 'No More Boats' by Felicity Castagna, 'Blindness and Rage' by Brian Castro, 'Taboo' by Kim Scott, 'Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms' by Anita Heiss, 'The Life to Come' by Michelle de Kretser, 'First Person' by Richard Flanagan, 'A Long Way From Home' by Peter Carey, and 'Whipbird' by Robert Drewe.

Schapelle Corby faces a media circus when she arrives back in Australia after 12 years in a Bali gaol on drug charges, artefacts inside a Barrow Island cave date Aboriginal occupation of Australia back to 50,000 years, and a slew of politicians suddenly find themselves out of a job when the High Court rules on their eligibility or otherwise of their citizenship, the biggest names to be temporarily put out of action being Barnaby Joyce and Jacqui Lambie.

2018

Extra, extra, read all about it! We've got a hit on our hands!

Cr Tamsin Bearsley's Miss Marple Murder Mystery proposal comes to theatrical fruition with the presentation of 'Checked Out: The Body In The Library.'

A gripping saga of death amongst the book shelves, it features crisp dialogue, hilarious set-ups, false trails, brilliant collaboration, and stand-out performances by a variety of actors, particularly Tamsin, her daughter Anna, and long-time library member and radio playwright, Judy Sullivan.

Not forgetting Tony Brooker in a fetching Miss Marple outfit. The hat is to die for.

His performance is such a tour de force that in her end-of-year report on the state of the library, Julia extends her heartfelt thanks to Tony, "our man in drag who steers our determined ship onward."

"Tony remains a steady and stoic leader," says Julia, "ready for any challenge or unconventional request."

The challenges continue. Once again, age, ill health and personal issues affect the membership, but support via community radio station 88.3 Southern FM, featuring author Graeme Johnstone hosting 'Friday Magazine' and long-time supporter Gaytana Adorna with her literary program, help bring in new members.

As well, Julia and Paul Karp continue to spread the word via the Blog, email, postal mail-outs, leaflet drops, public noticeboards, My Community Life, Kingston My City Journal, Kingston Councillors, Kingston Seniors Festival, Victorian Seniors Festival, author websites, Coffee News, and local newspapers Chelsea Mordialloc Mentone News, Mordialloc Chelsea Leader and Mordialloc Chronicle.

"The author talk program continues to be a great source of education, entertainment and fun, plus the gold coin helps to keep our head above water," reports Tony.

Special mention is made of Sybbie Nicoll for her persistent efforts in managing the collection through rationalisation, maintenance, card consolidation, and master lists updates, and of

Elsie Johnstone and Paul Karp for the growth of Page Turners, which encourages members to put their life experiences down in print.

As a further promotional idea, Julia suggests a Pop-Up Library, a re-locatable mini version of the library, set up somewhere near the Florence Street building as “a way to raise awareness about our collection, engage more locals with the library, and possibly increase membership and stimulate borrowing.”

Julia adds that her aunt had set one up outside her home just to increase neighbourly engagement. It is agreed that she should explore how this could be done, with long-time supporter Lesley McGurgan advising that she consult with the Mentone Traders Association first to gain their response and determine what, if any, regulations would be involved.

Federal politics is in the headlines with Scott Morrison toppling Malcolm Turnbull in a Liberal Party vote to become Prime Minister. The Australian Border Force conducts an early morning raid on the Biloela, Queensland, home of a Sri Lankan asylum seeker family for three years, and forcibly transfers them to Christmas Island.

Tens of thousands of protesters march in Sydney and Melbourne in ‘Invasion Day’ rallies.

The literary world veers towards the factual rather than fiction, with Alexis Wright winning the Stella Prize for ‘Tracker’, the biography of Indigenous activist and NT Central Land Council director, Leigh ‘Tracker’ Tilmouth, and the Victorian Prize for Literature going to Sarah Krasnostein for ‘The Trauma Cleaner: One Woman's Extraordinary Life.’

A big seller is Steve Biddulph’s ‘Raising Boys In The Twenty-First Century,’ his guide to helping boys become kind, open-hearted, strong men.

When it comes to real life, little can top ‘Jacqui Lambie - Rebel with a Cause’. Telling her story from soldier to Senator and beyond, its strap line reads, ‘You can't keep a bloody Lambie down ...’

2019

President Tony Brooker sums up the library’s reason for being when he reports “the past year has seen the library continue to provide a warm and welcoming place for our members to browse through the many books we have to offer, both old and new”.

Page Turners, under the guidance of Elsie Johnstone and Paul Karp, continues to go from “strength to strength” while the ‘Author For All Seasons’ presentations remain “the high point of the month and are always well represented by members of the public.”

With book lending slipping further, the income from the author talks is proving invaluable, the balance sheet being further boosted by a gift from an unusual source. Thanks to the negotiating skills of Lesley McGurgan, “we received a \$10,000 donation from the Mordialloc Nursing home, which was in the process of closing down,” reports Tony in his role as Treasurer.

“Many thanks to Lesley and the Bendigo Bank for this, which has enabled us to purchase new signage for the library, none too soon.”

Sybbie Nicoll is thanked for her continuing work rationalising the catalogue, while Tony declares that the library would “cease to function” without the tireless work of Julia Reichstein.

Julia declares: “We may be small, but Mentone Public Library has a mighty, determined heart, its arteries comprised of a diligent, dedicated and supportive team, offering diverse skills and life experience to forge a library that parallels the ‘little engine that could.’ And in time, does.”

For the first time, considering the shift in activity away from book lending to presentations, the prospect of a name change is brought up “to reflect the niche services we provide.” But it is decided to “discuss it further in 2020 or 2021.”

On a sad note, the death is recorded of Sue Blackford, a former Secretary and valued friend of the library, and of Bill Nixon OAM, who provided great assistance in his days as a private citizen and Kingston Councillor.

In a political shock, Prime Minister Scott Morrison is returned in the “miracle” election, one of his major announcements being Australia will plant one billion trees by 2050 to help combat climate change.

On the non-fiction front, Jane Caro outlines the life and times of becoming ‘Accidental Feminists’, Stan Grant furthers his crusade to make Australians seriously examine how our nation was forged with ‘Australia Day’ and ‘On Identity’, while the state of Australia’s refugee policy is laid bare by Behrouz Boochani in his memoir from Manus Island, ‘No Friend But The Mountains.’

Two fiction blockbusters scoop both prizes and readers - Trent Dalton’s ‘Boy Swallows Universe’ and Markus Zusak’s ‘Bridge of Clay’, while Margaret Atwood underlines her sublime skill with the Handmaid sequel, ‘The Testaments.’

World events show that her bleak, dystopian narrative is not far from the truth, 2019 being dubbed ‘The Year of Protests’ as turmoil flares in the streets of Hong Kong, Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Chile, Bolivia, India, Sudan, Nicaragua and Russia. And in December the first reports come in from China that a cluster of patients in city called Wuhan are showing symptoms of an unusual pneumonia-like illness that will not respond to standard treatments.

The world is about to change irrevocably.

2020

The still somewhat mysterious outbreak called COVID-19 is declared a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern” on January 30. Serious as that is for a public library, the committee and members have a more immediate, very distressing situation to face.

The health of President Tony Brooker has suddenly and rapidly deteriorated in the last weeks of the previous year to the point that at an Extraordinary General Meeting on Monday, February 17, Secretary Julia Reichstein has the sad duty to report that Tony has been diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer and is not expected to live beyond the end of the month.

His ultimate passing is tough news for everyone, but especially Julia, who has worked side-by-side with Tony since starting out cataloguing the books in 2008, taking on the Media & Events role in 2012, and becoming Co-Secretary in 2015, both striving diligently to maintain the spirit, soul and integrity of the library while at the same time seeking other allied literary avenues to ensure its continuation.

A distraught Julia nevertheless recognizes that things must go on, and many formal administrative aspects are put in place, with Paul Karp agreeing to take over as President and be co-signatory on all financial documents. The ANZ Bank, Kingston City, Consumer Affairs Victoria, the insurance broker, and the library’s co-tenants, Mentone Community Assistance and Information Bureau, amongst others, have to be advised. Administrative and financial documents have to be retrieved from Tony’s home, any outstanding payments put through, and Grant paperwork finalised.

On the suggestion of Elsie Johnstone, it is agreed that a paid obituary be placed in local papers, providing the opportunity “to comment on the strength of Tony’s good character and highlight how his tireless services to the library benefited the community as a whole.” As well as the shock of it all, Tony’s death ends a remarkable Brooker family association with the library across the decades, with his mother Kay having served as Librarian for more than 30 years while his father was also a volunteer, providing amongst other things, auditing services.

After the initial shock, the committee gets back into action, only to see that COVID-19 is changing lives, the on-again, off-again lockdowns forcing members to engage in home activities as various as gardening, knitting, cross-stitching, working remotely, doing on-line courses and reading Westerns.

Julia sets about establishing techniques that will help keep the library buoyant throughout, including setting up a Zoom account for online meetings and presentations, purchasing a laptop to handle the necessary streaming, establishing a Skype phone account, and buying a lockable noticeboard for the front door.

Out in the publishing world, ‘Where The Crawdads Sing’ by Delia Owens is the big international seller of the year, while Pip Williams not only achieves great local sales but becomes a New York Times bestseller with ‘The Dictionary of Lost Words.’

In August, Paul Karp suddenly resigns both from the library and the Presidency for personal reasons. Two Presidents gone in a matter of months. With the library in crisis, Julia contacts Elsie Johnstone for advice, and after some quick discussion, her husband Graeme steps in as President.

The written word is his world, as a career journalist, author, and alongside Elsie, not only a former proprietor of a successful writing business in Mentone, but a regular presenter at ‘An Author For All Seasons.’

So, where to now? Is there a future? Or is it best just to end it all? After all, many similar community and volunteer organisations are reeling from the effects of the virus spreading and are destined not to return.

“It is our Centenary in 2015,” Graeme declares, underlining his views outlined in a Vision Statement. “Let’s work towards that, expand as a Writers Centre, have a great celebration worthy of an institution that has served the Kingston community for one hundred years, and then see where we go from there.”

2021

With COVID-19 reaching Stage 4 Lockdown, the year gets off to a quirky start, the 2020 Annual General Meeting that should have been held on November 7, 2020, being moved on to February 6, 2021.

This - along with international events including the debut of a submarine deal called AUKUS, a disastrous departure by the US from Afghanistan leading to the return of the Taliban, and record droughts everywhere matched by record floods everywhere else - is an indicator of the strange new world that is emerging.

Secretary Julia Reichstein ensures that the necessary permission for the meeting time to be extended is received from Consumer Affairs Victoria and that all health protocols are followed. These include all attendees signing a Contact Tracing Register, applying hand sanitizer, and donning masks - the latter with varying degrees of enthusiasm.

Chairing his first AGM as President, Graeme Johnstone publicly thanks Paul Karp for the work he has done over the years and honours the contribution of the late Tony Brooker, by

saying, “Tony epitomised Mentone Public Library, with his love of books, his creation of a true library-style atmosphere, his laid-back approach imbued with a cheeky sense of humour, and his conviction that you can’t have a good time at Christmas without a glass or two of warming spirit.”

Geri Colson, local author of ‘The Soldier Who Didn’t Die’, is welcomed in an Administrative Support role, joining Julie Reichstein (Secretary, Media & Events Officer, Loans Desk), Nathaniel Davies (Cataloguing, Social Media, Content Writer, Loans Desk), Philippa Davies, (Cataloguing, Collections, Content Writer, Loans Desk), Elsie Johnstone (Community Engagement Programs, Loans Desk), Sybbie Nicoll (Cataloguing, Collections, Loans Desk), Justine Gorny (Public Events Support), Dominic McCann (Co-ordinator Community Wellbeing) and Cherry Tran (Special Displays).

The author presentations continue on a regular basis via Zoom, an application is prepared for the library to join the ACNC (Australian Charities & Not-for-profits Commission), the bonus being that any donations would be tax deductible, and Kingston Mayor Cr Steve Staikos alerts the library to the Council’s Partnership Grant scheme, a three-year program which makes attaining funding money a more consistent and less complicated process than the library’s current applications for Annual Community Grants and Quick Response Grants. In her typical style, Julia has taken on all these projects - and many more - to the point that her wellbeing is being impacted. In July, Graeme writes to her suggesting that she take a three-month break to help restore her health. Initially she decides to take that up, other than managing her ‘baby’, the author presentation programs, with a planned return in November.

Simultaneously it is announced that she has been promoted from her part-time role at the Jewish Holocaust Centre to become its full-time Head Librarian & Information Manager when the re-built and re-named Melbourne Holocaust Museum is re-opened at its Elsternwick site. This well-deserved and important commitment, which will occupy most of her time, means the end of her 12 years of devoted volunteering with Mentone Public Library.

Significantly, there are no book purchases made this year, one of Tony’s favourite jobs, not only because of the impact of repeated lockdowns, but book borrowings have dropped to just 50 for the year. Catalogue manager Sybbie Nicoll puts the question, if we do buy books again, should we target specialist areas, rare books, local history publications, and local authors? “Or do we even allocate a budget for book purchases, given our slow lending trade?” she asks.

On the local book scene, the Miles Franklin goes to Amanda Lohrey for ‘The Labyrinth’, Alice Pung releases the delightful ‘100 Days’, and TV host Julia Baird receives an Indi award for ‘Phosphorescence’ about the search for the ‘light within.’ Internationally, Madeline Miller tops bestseller lists with ‘The Song of Achilles’ and ‘Circe’.

President Graeme’s view on where the library stands with the books is to maintain them with suitable and regular refreshment and complete Philippa’s cataloguing of them on a computer data base, while continuing to re-position the library as a Writers Centre, adding further literary programs to the already successful ‘Author For All Seasons’ and ‘Page Turners.’

Importantly, negotiations are being held with Kingston City Council to have its maintenance crew do a complete make over and freshen up the space.

2022

How does one say thank you and goodbye to someone like Julia Reichstein, after 12 years selfless devotion to the Mentone Public Library?

Well, one way is to present her with a suitably engraved clock to represent her own gift to the library - her many, many hours, often late at night, of unstinting work to ensure the place has run smoothly, particularly conforming exactly as required to the most stringent of bureaucratic expectations.

Secondly, to present a necklace representing 'circles within circles' in recognition of her outstanding ability to be inclusive and welcoming to all-comers, drawing together writers, readers, volunteers, members and communities.

Thirdly, by President Graeme moving a special vote of thanks. "Her role in managing the expectations and demands of voluntarily running Mentone Public Library for twelve years, her initiative in establishing and running the Author events, and her total dedication to the members and the community have all been outstanding and raised our profile immeasurably," he says.

In her inimitable fashion, she responds with a classic Julia performance, acknowledging in song and dance the contribution of the Committee members, confirming to everyone that she is not only skilled at organizing the appearance of a performer, but also a sublimely talented entertainer in her own right.

COVID has rendered the library inoperable, but it has not stopped its renovation by the Kingston City maintenance team. Furniture and administrative materials are placed in storage, and it is repainted throughout, with old lighting replaced, skylights refreshed, and additional power points and a ceiling fan installed, giving it a bright, fresh look and a more welcoming feel.

Four stand-alone shelves of books are removed to open up space and provide more comfortable seating arrangements for author presentations. This is boosted by the purchase of four foldaway tables, a lectern and microphone/speaker, and chairs sourced from other Kingston City buildings by council officer Shauna Rochford. She, along with executives Ali Street and Kirsten Palfery and the maintenance crew are thanked publicly for their great input and support.

The new set-up is used for the launch of two new monthly events. First, Open Mic offers the opportunity for people to verbally present the results of their creative efforts, such as poems, short stories and memoirs. Second, books are purchased for the first version of a unique project headed up by Elsie Johnstone, 'The Writer Meets The Readers', a book club style gathering with the additional element of the author attending to take part in the discussion and answer some very curly questions.

As well, the tables can be fixed upright for people to simply come in, sit down and write, further enhancing our role as a Writers Centre. Opening hours are expanded to five days a week to encourage creatives.

More shelving is purchased, with these areas devoted to our growing collection of local works - both fiction and non-fiction - as well as books focusing on Australian.

All this work tops off the installation of an Internet modem, the library thus going online for the first time! This makes book cataloguing and general administration much easier while also providing credit facilities for paying customers at presentations, thus taking us out of the 'cash only' world.

Under the direction of new member Caitlin Johnstone and stalwart Nathaniel Davies, a social media platform is also established to promote our activities and keep members up to

date with what is happening, with Mentone Public Library and Mentone Public Library Writers Centre pages presented on Facebook.

The library still maintains its quirky, unique atmosphere, but at long last has leapt into the 21st century.

Garry Andrews continues his role not only as Auditor, and as advisor to Graeme in his Treasurer's position. Vital decisions are made, including the write-down of the catalogue to give its true value.

Sybbie Nicoll declares she will wind down her role in charge of the books, with Philippa Davies to take that over, while Nathaniel Davies takes up where Julia left off in terms of media, including editing the newsletter.

Of concern is that no one is willing to take over Julia's role of Secretary, with Geri Colson agreeing to fill in until a permanent officer can be found. In mid-year, a new volunteer, Piotr Natalczuk takes on the job.

Katherine Lee is appointed Development Officer, an important new role aimed at coordinating Grant applications, developing a method to facilitate donations that are tax deductible, and assisting the Treasurer by co-authorising banking deposits and payments. A highlight of the year is the unveiling of the wall clock that was originally gifted to the library in 1927, and which had remained silent for many years. It is repaired and lovingly restored by Rob Raverty, a former aerospace engineer and member of the Australian Antiquarian Horological Society, a group of hobbyists, restorers and professionals who bring time pieces like ours back to their former glory.

On the book front, Shehan Karunatilaka wins the Booker Prize with 'The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida' while Jennifer Down wins the Miles Franklin with 'Bodies of Light.'

It is certainly one of those years. The world finally starts to stagger out of COVID, the quirky February date of 02/22/2022 is highlighted, the United Kingdom is led by three Prime Ministers within the 12 months, and Victorians, having endured more than 260 days in lockdown, get into heated debate when un-vaxed tennis star Novak Djokovic is allowed to land in Australia for the Open. He is deported before he can even toss up a first serve.

2023

Development Manager Katherine Lee makes significant progress for the library in two vital areas - maximizing grant income and enhancing infrastructure for private donations.

A successful application for a grant from Kingston City Council, amounting to \$3500, allows the library for the first time to pay each author a presenter's fee for appearing at 'An Author For All Seasons'. The Grant will also cover - again, for the first time - marketing expenses promoting the monthly sessions. This is a significant step in the continuing growth of the program to present quality authors and their works.

Authors of the calibre of Kerry Mayne, Katie McMahon, Alice Pung, Kylie Orr, Kate Forster, Kylie Ladd, Vikki Petraitis and cartoonist Alan Rose pave the way to a great "Author For All Seasons."

After much investigation, Katherine also secures library membership of the Australian Cultural Fund, which means all incoming donations are now tax-deductible.

This is great news, as two earlier applications to achieve the same result via registration with the Australian Charities & Not-For-Profits Commission had faltered for a variety of reasons.

In turn, efforts to set up an alternative method, a credit card donation platform at GiveNow, had been hindered by that lack of ACNC registration.

Katherine also flags a planned restructuring of Kingston Council's grant scheme, which will impact on the structure of the Partnership Grant that the library has been so steadfastly pursuing, and outlines that she will monitor progress and make the necessary application when it is due.

The library also takes two more vital steps into the digital world when it establishes its own web site, mentonepubliclibrary.com, and adopts a computerised booking system via joining Trybooking.

As well as flyers and newsletters, it is now in the realm of “like”, “click”, “share” and “follow”, plus ad targeting, simplified event ticketing, and “outreach beyond the usual circle.”

“This is the year that we have certainly moved the library on from its traditional foundations and clearly underpinned our re-shaping as a Writers Centre,” says President Graeme Johnstone. “Some have described it as a leap into the 21st Century - not bad for an institution now entering its 99th year.”

He concedes that the concept of lending books is “all but finished, although we are still fashioning our collection into a valuable, unique resource with the purchase of Australiana and local author books.”

The shift away from book loans, to be replaced by current and new Writers Centre projects, is supported by - following the end of the library makeover - a reduction in essential equipment purchases, as is evident in the upbeat financial results. At the second AGM for the year, to catch up the delay caused by COVID-19, the annual Treasurer’s statement indicates a profit. Only \$14! But nevertheless, good news after several years of negative year-end results.

In the midst of COVID-19 subsiding, military action flaring in hot spots around the world, earthquakes taking thousands of lives, and a 6 mm by 8 mm radioactive capsule disappearing from a truck on a remote WA road, Pip Williams releases ‘The Bookbinder of Jericho,’ Shankari Chandra wins the Miles Franklin with ‘Chai Time at Cinnamon Gardens,’ and Trent Dalton introduces his second novel, ‘Lola In The Mirror.’ Bret Easton Ellis, of ‘American Psycho’ fame releases his first novel in 13 years, titled ‘The Shards’, a fictionalised memoir of his final school year.

The library has a publication of its own in mind.

Now just two years away, the Centenary in May 2025 is being eagerly anticipated, with plans announced for a book outlining the library’s history to be written and published in time for the celebrations.

2024

Alexis Wright wins the Miles Franklin with ‘Praiseworthy’, and the Age Book of the Year goes to ‘Life So Full of Promise’ by Ross McMullin, with the Victorian Premier’s Award for Poetry going to Grace Yee for ‘Chinese Fish.’

A voice from the past reappears with the first-ever publication of ‘The End Of The Morning’, the unfinished autobiography of the late Charmian Clift, while another voice from those times is silenced with the death of Irish writer Edna O’Brien, whose evaluations of women’s feelings drew great praise, enormous sales, and thundering denouncement from the pulpit. With the library’s Centenary looming, work gets under way on the book outlining its remarkable story, Graeme Johnstone, Elsie Johnstone and Denise Tobin Shine sharing the research, writing and editing, and graphic artist/cartoonist Alan Rose designing it.

The source material varies enormously - pages of handwritten Annual Reports in a yellowing exercise book, newspaper cuttings, memoirs, council meeting notes, books outlining the

history of Mentone and Mordialloc, a four-page library history, a concise, year-by-year outline by a former Secretary up to 1967, and minutes and reports from later meetings, It is determined that the best way to go is to do it year-by-year, incorporating detail of significant novels released in that year, plus local, Australian and international news stories of the times to put it all in perspective.

Plans are also laid for a Literary Festival to celebrate the 100th milestone on Tuesday, May 6, 2025. It will provide a combination of author presentations, workshops, panels and prizes for writing competitions, with guests including authors that have made great contributions to our literary presentations over the years. It is a busy time for the committee.

Finances continue to show the benefit of the library broadening its program horizons, with 'An Author For All Seasons' providing a very firm base, 'Open Mic' going from strength to strength, and 'The Writer Meets The Readers' providing plenty of both insight and entertainment. Members enjoy the opportunity of sitting down with the author of a book that they have just read, and asking, "Why did you kill the chauffeur off in Chapter Three?" Secretary Jennifer Ma steps down from the role to spend more time with family, and Vice-President Nathaniel Davies and Catalogue Manager Philippa Davies indicate that after the Centenary celebrations they will, with a significant degree of sadness, resign in order to pursue career opportunities.

President Graeme Johnstone also makes it clear that after the 100th, he too will "disappear into the sunset", on the basis that he has done as much as he can to help the library along, and that as he will be by then in his fifth year at the helm, it is time to let a fresh set of hands take the wheel.

"I always said, let us celebrate our 100 years of serving the community, and then see where we go from there," he outlines. "And now, we have reached that point."

TWO REFLECTIVE POEMS

Where Am I?

By Elke Quennell

My former wordiness seems to have faded,
in truth, I sometimes feel old and jaded!
That urgent call to state my position,
is now no longer my cause or mission.
What is it then that keeps me here,
upon this earth, this radiant sphere?

I see much good in loyal friends.
No longer need to follow trends.
My family gives me untold joys.
I pray that nothing their welfare destroys.

Wide, open spaces I seek whenever I can,
of my garden and home, I am also a fan.
Dogs I greet on my walks nearly every day.
They make me smile and chase sadness away!
Mentone Library's my choice for poetic expression,
then a local coffee kills fears of recession.

When all is done, I'll be here 'til the end,
do my best to be good, past mistakes amend.
I'll cherish each moment and seek new directions,
be open to change and even correction.

So, thank you all for your interest today.
You've brightened my day, kept despair at bay!
I'll pray that your lives will be long and abundant,
that joy fills your hearts with fear made redundant.
Continue to write with passion and skill,
I'll be here next year, and a chair again fill.

The Old Library Clock

By Elsie Johnstone

(In appreciation of the ornate wall clock gifted to the library in 1927 and lovingly restored in 2022 by horological hobbyist Rob Raverty.)

For nearly a century, a silent sentry on the wall
Looking down on everybody, watching all
Witnessing Mentone town prosper and grow
Heard many things that only I know

I monitor the passing of time
From the library's beginnings to the end of the line
Generations passed by as time has progressed
Steady and reliable I have stood every test

Memories of when life was slower, there was Depression and War
Books were a refuge from what one experienced and saw
They allowed ordinary people to travel without leaving the chair
Provide insight and knowledge of things outside their sphere

Opening readers' minds to the world and its complexities
Allowing them to view things from other people's eyes
Used books passed on to others when their time here was spent
Genres came and genres went, all the time, I remained constant

Time is finite once gone it is gone
My ticking timekeeping continues on and on
Sixty seconds in a minute, sixty minutes in an hour
Tablets and devices replaced for the once sacred literary cow

The internet, moving images, cyberspace
Have converted our world to a contrasting space
But readers keep reading and writers keep writing
And books continue to live
That's why this special place has still more to give

Acknowledgements

Our grateful thanks to the many authors of published historical and personal material outlining the life and times of the people of Mentone and district across the 100-year journey of the Mentone Public Library.

Their books, reports, reminiscences and memoirs, along with local newspaper reports, proved an invaluable source of information and research in preparing this publication.

These include:

“Mentone Through The Years”, ISBN 0-9750417-0-3, and “St Bede’s College and its McCristal Origins”, ISBN 0-9593098-0-2, by the late Leo Gamble, a much-admired Mentone character in his own right, the community’s historian, and a friend of the library.

Kingston Local History - <https://localhistory.kingston.vic.gov.au>.

“A Library For Mentone”, Graham J. Whitehead, distinguished local historian and author.

“Growing Up in Parkdale In The 1940s”, Nancye Heighway.

“A History, 1925-1967”, by O. C. Phillips, President, Mentone Public Library, 1967.

“Mordialloc - the early days”, by Frank McGuire, ISBN 0-9590091-0-8.

Mordialloc and District Historical Society.

Friends of Mentone Station and Gardens.

Mentone Grammar School.

Mentone Girls’ Grammar School.

Mentone Girls’ Secondary College.

Kilbreda College Mentone.

Standard News.

Leader Community Newspapers.

Bayside News.

The Argus.

Wikipedia.

For pictorial support of the editorial in this book, please see our associated poster.

Our best efforts

Please note that the editorial team producing this book have made every effort to ensure accuracy, but mistakes are bound to slip through. This is particularly so dealing with historical documents, many of which are hand-written, faded or damaged, and where dates sometimes vary, locations alter, and surnames and occasionally even genders change from page to page.

We apologize for any inaccuracies contained or any acknowledgements that we have overlooked, as well as for any spelling errors, unnecessarily florid adjectives, errant past participles or other challengeable grammatical constructions that have crept in under our guard.

Please let us know of any concerns via this email and we will do our best to resolve the issue for subsequent printings: mentonepubliclibrary@gmail.com

Editorial Team: Graeme Johnstone, Elsie Johnstone, Denise Tobin Shine.

Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge that the Mentone Public Library and Writers Centre is sited on the land of the Bunurong people of the Kulin nation, the original storytellers of this area. We recognise their continuing connection to land, water and culture and pay our respects to elders, past, present and emerging.

As writers and readers of both fact and fiction from far and wide, the library community appreciates the importance of storytelling to the indigenous culture and recognizes that we can learn much from them.

We also acknowledge and respect the traditional owners of lands across Australia, their elders, ancestors, cultures and heritage, thus recognizing the continuing sovereignties of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations.