

Your letters



Letters: Walk in memory of a working class man

Description

[box]We encourage readers to write a letter to Bluestone Magazine if you have something to say, or a special event to promote. Write to us at editor@bluestonemagazine.com.au.

This edition, Margaret Donehue writes about an annual walk coming up in Koroit on May 2 in memory of a man who championed the working class and Alison Aplin has feedback on [her open garden](#), Timandra.[/box]



William McLean's memorial in the Tower Hill cemetery.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #8F9F59;"] Dear Readers,

Among the old graves in the Tower Hill cemetery is the grave of a Koroit-born shearer, William McLean who was born in 1870. He died a penniless criminal released from jail early so that he could die at home.

McLean's grave, paid for by donations from working class families at the height of the Great Depression is an impressive polished red granite column with the top incomplete to symbolise an unfinished life. The epitaph is attributed to poet and writer Henry Lawson.

For many years after his death, locals walked each Sunday to McLeans grave and, in 1932, five hundred people attended a memorial there.

A small group still gather each year on the Saturday of the Koroit Irish Festival and after a five-minute history lesson, the energetic participants walk the scenic route around Tower Hill to Mickey Bourke's pub in Koroit. The less energetic gather at the coffee shop or pub to get a head start on the refreshments before going to the festival. This is family friendly and everyone is welcome at this year's event on May 2.

Like many shearers of his time, McLean followed the seasonal work to the large shearing sheds in central and Western NSW. Under a forced agreement of the times, shed hands were paid five shillings – less than 50 cents – per week and any worker who left before all the work was complete would not be paid.

The living standards for these workers were abysmal and they had no legal rights. In an attempt to gain some rights, 8000 rural workers joined the Australian Workers Union and many lived in strike camps, supported with food and necessities from the local community while they tried to find sustainable work. A number of men received six months jail for belonging to a union and those associated with strike camps received two years hard labour on an automatic charge of riot.

On August 26 1894, unionists, including William McLean, went to Grassmere station to talk to non-unionists. On entering the shearers hut, McLean was shot in the lung and John Murphy, who accompanied him, was shot in the back.

Six men – John Jones, John Virgin, Hughe Graham, Hector Osborne, Albert Kerr and Alfred Montgomery – attempted to carry McLean and Murphy back to the camp. They were stopped by police and all eight were arrested and charged with riot. All defendants, including McLean and Murphy, who were carried into court on stretchers, were given two years hard labour. After suffering harsh prison conditions both men died from their wounds.

Over a century after his death, the column on McLean's grave continues to immortalise a local hero.

You may wish to access the " McLean Walk" [Facebook Page](#) for more details on the walk as they come to hand.

Margaret Donehue

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The spectacular Timandra garden at Narrawong.

Open garden success...despite the weather!

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] T [/dropcap]hank you to Bluestone Magazine for the promotion of Timandra's Open Garden. Other than the shockingly cold and miserable weather, the open was a success, with \$1200 donated to Portland District Health.

Because of the constant unreliability of the weather (which is obviously a figment of my imagination!) we will need to put a lot more thought into our opening days. The weather has a profound effect on visitor turn-out.

I feel that people would be more inclined to visit our garden in high heat than the cold, especially since the garden is at least 6 to 7 degrees cooler during summer from the canopy of trees.

But the response from the visitors was very positive. It is a very different garden in every respect, and people enjoy this difference immensely. People leave wondering how they can incorporate a little bit of what we do in Timandra in their own garden.

Sustainability will one day become the norm with private gardens, but it is a long and slow process bringing about change, even if it is for the better.

– Alison Aplin, Timandra, Narrawong.

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Category

1. Archive

Tags

1. alison aplin
2. Koroit
3. Koroit Irish Festival
4. Margaret Donehue
5. Timandra
6. Tower Hill
7. walk
8. William McLean

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