

# Friday parade 'for the kids'



**ON SHOW:** Merbein RSL treasurer, Robert McCarthy with the commemorative photo gallery at the Merbein RSL.

Picture: Sarah Simmons

## Puzzles from the past

**By Hannah Knight**

TOM Storer is piecing together puzzles from the past.

The 64-year-old Victorian vet has spent the past six years creating a commemorative photo gallery at the Merbein RSL.

With photographs of more than 500 ex-servicemen and women, the gallery is a porthole into the past.

Mr Storer, Merbein RSL president, said he first started the project six-years-ago in 2003.

"When I first came here there wasn't a picture in this hall," he said.

"So, I started collecting old photos.

"I started off with just a few of the locals and it's just kept going."

Featuring photos of ex-servicemen and women who served in World War I, World War II and the Vietnam war, the gallery is in honour of people who enlisted from Merbein.

"We think there's about 700 people who enlisted from here from World War I to the present day," Mr Storer said. People are invited to view the



Tom Storer

photographic display at next month's Merbein Centenary.

With 10-days of events kicking off on August 14, the centenary celebrations will include competitions, a street parade, bush dancing and exhibitions.

Rebecca Wells, a Merbein Centenary committee member, said organisers were eagerly counting down the days until the event.

"It's all coming together

now, which is great," she said. "We just want to make sure people know what's happening – it's not just a weekend, it's a whole 10-days of events.

"If anyone wants to know more about the events or are interested in volunteering to help out they should go to our website at [www.merbeincentenary.com.au](http://www.merbeincentenary.com.au)."

While Merbein RSL's photo display is a unique tribute to ex-servicemen and women, Fishers will also be displaying memorabilia from the company's extensive historical collection.

Entries from the NAB photographic competition will also be on display during the celebrations and Merbein and District Historical Society will produce a pictorial display, *Grave Matters*.

Ms Wells said the celebrations would be a fantastic opportunity for locals and visitors to learn just what makes Merbein special.

"There has been an enormous amount of community organisation to get these open days and displays up and running," she said.

"The town's very excited about opening its doors to everyone."

**By Hannah Knight**

MERBEIN'S centenary parade is in the spotlight after a decision to host the event on a Friday rather than at the weekend.

The issue was first flagged last week when *Sunraysia Daily* published a text to the editor querying the choice of dates.

Richard Wells, Fishers Supermarkets Centenary Parade coordinator, said the text had been a hot topic at a Centenary committee meeting last week.

"It came to our attention that we needed to get the facts out there," Mr Wells said.

"One of the main reasons we've decided to have the parade on Friday August 21, starting at 1.30pm, is because there are nearly 200 entries.

"From day one, one of our main objectives was to make it affordable for the whole community and engage the greater Merbein community – including the kids.

"We've got all the Merbein schools participating in the parade, about 600 kids, and that wouldn't have been able to happen on a weekend."

Weekend sporting events also posed a hazard for the event, according to Mr Wells.

"We don't want to clash with any sporting club and, traditionally, parades held in Merbein have been held on a weekday," he said.

"We're also having the Merbein Saw Mills Fire Works Spectacular at Chaffey Park on Saturday so we couldn't have had the parade on Saturday because that would have clashed."

Mr Wells said the cost of traffic management and road closures had also been a significant factor when deciding the parade's date.

Police and council workers will manage more than 30 road closures for the parade.

Mr Wells said while who was footing the bill was still being decided, Mildura Rural City Council had been very generous.

"They've been absolutely fantastic with financial and in kind support," he said.

"They've been extremely supportive of the Merbein Centenary Celebrations."

"If the parade were to be held on a weekend then penalty rates would apply for all those people involved and that would just be so much more expensive – money the Merbein community can not afford."

While the parade date has sparked some criticism from the Sunraysia community, Mr Wells said it was going to be a spectacular event.

"The theme is old and new and it's going to be broken up into several sections," he said.

"We'll start off with some really old history for the pre-irrigation section which will involve police barracks and overlanders droving cattle.

"Then we'll have irrigation which will have the Chaffey Trail."

There will also be an extensive section on the history of horticulture in Merbein.

"We'll have things like tractors, rack shakers and harvesters," Mr Wells said.

Two bikers will also rev-up, as a tribute to the past.

"A couple of blokes on motorbikes rode up here on motorbikes, from Mackay, in 1950 to pick grapes," Mr Wells said.

"One now lives in Mildura and the other one, who still has his original bike, lives in Ballarat.

"They'll both be in the parade."

Merbein's sporting heroes will also feature.

"We've got quite a few VFL footballers and descendants of some very good rowers," Mr Wells said.

Tania Zaetta, an Australian actress and TV presenter who grew up in Merbein, will also feature in the parade.

"There'll also be a percussion band, the Foster's horses, and a section for Settlers of the salt bush.

"We're hoping to have dry land section as a distinction from irrigation."