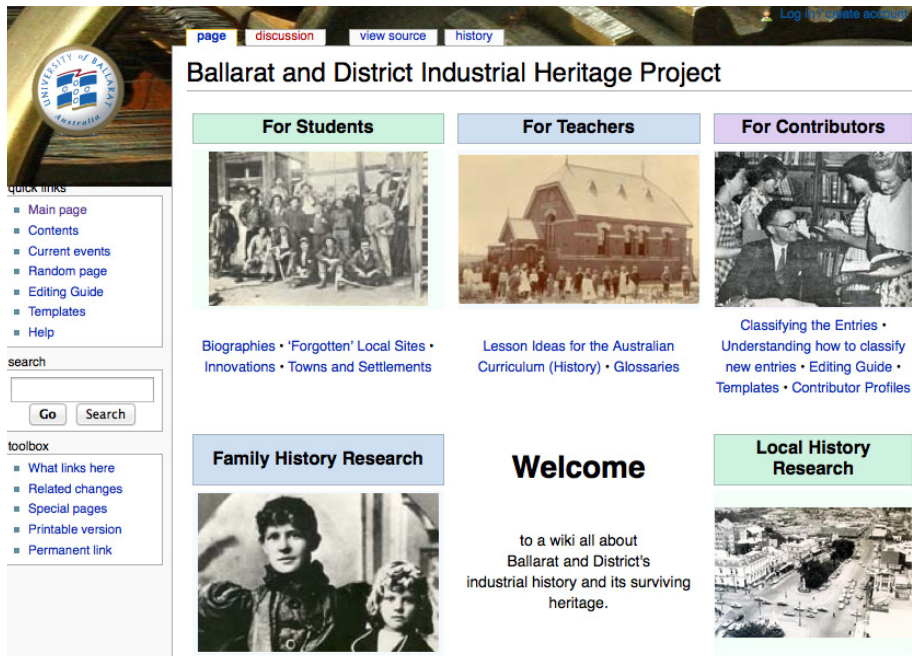


One Million Views! The Industrial Heritage Wiki, Ballarat

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Celebrations were the order of the day in Ballarat during 2010. Among countless anniversaries the University of Ballarat celebrated 140 years of technical education in Australia through the Ballarat School of Mines, and Sovereign Hill turned 40. Together we planned a series of celebrations. Along with flags and bunting, planning discussions turned to a joint heritage project. It soon became obvious the often overlooked theme of industrial heritage was important to both organisations. We determined to gift something to the local community on this theme, but what could we do with limited time and funds?

An online presence was seen as a sensible solution so advice was sought from the University's IT crew. Aims were outlined, and ideas were sought for an easy to use Web-format that would fit our needs. It took less than 60 seconds to receive the answer – 'sounds like a job for a wiki'. A wiki allows users to add and update content on the site using their own Web browser.

Within a week the Ballarat and District Industrial Heritage Wiki was created. I had never contributed to a wiki, but the IT staff assured me it would take around 15 minutes to learn the editing process. So confident were they in the ease of mastering wiki mark-up language that I was successfully trained over the

telephone. Once the telephone receiver was replaced I started to build the skeleton of the wiki ready for data input. Two hours later all was in place, and two weeks later the wiki content was appearing in Search Engines.

As part of our 140th anniversary celebrations the University of Ballarat offered four student scholarships with the aim of increasing wiki content. The scholarships were very successful with large amounts of information uploaded, including images from the University of Ballarat's Historical Collection. Images are uploaded onto the wiki at low resolution so they appear quickly and look good on computer screens, but are so small in reality that those wanting to use the image make contact to arrange for a larger file (and get to fill out a Permission to Reproduce Form!).

Since our wiki was created an Education student on professional experience has written educational materials based on industrial heritage, particularly World War One industrial experiences in Ballarat. These have been uploaded onto the wiki, as has research findings by students studying history at the University of Ballarat.

The Ballarat and District Industrial Heritage Wiki has resulted in a number of descendants contributing information on sites of importance to their family,

Below left: The front page of the Ballarat Industrial Heritage Wiki.

Right: View of the Richards & Co Wiki entry. Richards & Co were photographers located in Sturt Street, Ballarat and specialising in bridal photography.



heritage advisors have accessed the wiki and sought further advice, and we expect many more hits with the forthcoming World War One Centenary on the horizon. In less than two years over one million wiki views have taken place, and contributors have made over 24,000 edits.

The wiki format seems to be a little scary for some researchers. A common question being 'is the material reliable'? With this in mind we made a conscious decision to encourage referencing of entries. This enables the viewer to determine the accuracy of information. Because the wiki is never really finished information can be uploaded in stages, and numerous people can contribute to the one research topic.

After the success of the Ballarat and District Industrial Heritage Project we are now working on a Eureka Mapping Project. In the coming months a website will be launched. Visitors to the site will be able to choose from numerous historical maps overlayed on a current street map of Ballarat. By clicking map layers on and off, clicking on 'pop-ups', or viewing artworks and photographs users will be able to interact with the site in the quest to pinpoint the actual site of the 1854 Eureka Stockade.

The Ballarat Industrial Heritage Wiki has been shortlisted in the 2013 Ballarat Heritage Awards (winners announced mid-May). It can be accessed at <http://bih.ballarat.edu.au>

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http://bih.ballarat.edu.au/index.php/Ballarat_and_District_Industrial_Heritage_Project