



HISTORY BUFF: Rutherglen Historical Society's president David Valentine has always had a passion for history since high school days.

From winemaking consultant to Rutherglen historian

DAVID Valentine was born in Manly, NSW and has lived in Rutherglen for 21 years.

What's your job?

I was appointed the winemaker/manager for Rutherglen Estates. When my three-year contract ended, I decided to be a winemaking consultant. Since retirement in 2014, I joined the Rutherglen Historical Society and at the recent Annual General Meeting (AGM) was elected the society's president.

What brought you to this role?

I did six years in the Army Survey Corp and was trained in the Bonegilla Royal Australian Survey Corps (RASVY) School. We trainees spent many weekends tasting Rutherglen's best - as the commanding officer (CO) permitted us to keep wine - only wine, in our barracks. Mapping and winemaking, I was always going to find my way back.

What do you love about your job?

I have always had a passion for history. A big storm in January at the start of my year 10, the only book left to read was my older sister's history text - not only did I read it, I thoroughly enjoyed it. I was able to immediately answer every teacher's question until I was told to sit in the back of the room and read. Any question not answered by the class, I then answered. After six months, the kids asked how come I was always right. I told them I had read the text book. It was a natural progression to join the Rutherglen Historical Society.

What do you do in the community?

My wife and I volunteer at the Rutherglen Museum showcasing history to the community and tourists.

What's the most important current community issue for you?

Our heritage is being lost, the young want digital information, and our older population want to tell their stories. We try to collect these stories, and would like to make them available to all, but many locals don't seem to be aware that Rutherglen has a museum.

What would you do to solve, change or improve that situation?

We have gained 'Deductable Gift Recipient' status making donating more attractive. We are applying for museum accreditation to assist in obtaining grants. We are also looking to engage with the local schools to get the children, and hopefully their families, more involved with preserving our history.

We are currently working on digitising the Rutherglen Sun and Chiltern Valley Advertiser. We purchased an \$8000 auto digitiser for microfilm rolls, as unfortunately, the quality of the microfilm was poor and we need to rescan, page by page, to get the maximum quality from the digitiser.

What's the most important current world issue for you?

Climate change and the self-interest approach to it by so many.

If the person you would most like to meet came to Indigo, or was already here, who would that be and what would you show them?

Founding host of ABC's Insiders, Barrie Cassidy. Barry attended the Mount Carmel Convent School in Rutherglen. I would like to show him through our Rutherglen Museum.

Why would you show him that?

I would like to see his reaction when he learns that the Rutherglen Common School was the first to open on January 1, 1873 as a free, secular and compulsory school to initiate an educated society. Not just the first in Victoria, Australia or the British Empire, but the whole world.

What book are you reading?

I'm re-reading John Ronald Reuel (J.R.R.) Tolkien's 'The Hobbit' which I read 40 years ago.