



SPOOKY: Adam Jenkins (left) is deadly serious about telling people about the spine-chilling events and colorful characters who inhabited Beechworth's Mayday Hills Hospital in his new enterprise, Beechworth Ghost Tours. Here he shows people inside the former men's ward called Grevillea at La Trobe.

Past back to life

By **GAYNOR MATTHEW**

BY day, the La Trobe at Beechworth grounds overlooking the town provide a picturesque and evocative landscape with its vast array of 1860s circa buildings, sweeping gardens and large, old trees.

By night, when lamplight casts its own moving shapes against the aging walls and looming tree limbs, and you are being told spine-chilling anecdotes and grisly facts about its former inhabitants, it becomes downright spooky.

A Beechworth couple, Sharon and Adam Jenkins, saw the potential in conducting evening tours at La Trobe showing visitors a little known side of the site's past.

They started Beechworth Ghost Tours and since Easter, more than 400 people have

jumped at the chance to play a more active role in absorbing the atmosphere and activating their imaginations while learning about the past.

Built in 1867 as a government welfare institution for mentally ill people suffering isolation, poverty and uncertainty on the goldfields, the Mayday Hills Lunatic Asylum, as it was then known, covered 200 acres and contained water storage and a farm, enclosed by a sunken stone wall.

Its 300 inhabitants worked and were given social activities and treated with what we now view as sometimes cruel methods in the absence of modern day drugs.

Mrs Jenkins says her husband has always had a passion for history.

At 29, Mr Jenkins has lived most of his life in Beechworth

and eagerly absorbed stories and historic facts about the town's rich past.

After working for eight years as bakehouse manager and supervisor at Beechworth Bakery, he has this year thrown himself wholeheartedly into doing what he loves best; talking to people about Beechworth's history.

He is an active committee member of the Friends of the Robert O'Hara Burke Memorial Museum, a tour guide and staff member for the Beechworth Historic Precinct, and is about to become group leader of the Beechworth Police Re-enactment Group.

"I love the tours and, like everyone, I love going into old buildings," Mr Jenkins said.

"I enjoy talking to people and I love history, especially the personal side of things.

"It's more interesting at night

by candle or lamplight and it gets people's attention and thinking what has really gone on up there, and it's a bit of fun.

"There is some fantastic history up there and it's something we can expand on in time too."

Beechworth Visitor Information Centre manager, Penny MacGregor, says the Beechworth Ghost Tours provide much needed evening tours for visitors.

"Visitors give us very good feedback about it," Ms MacGregor said.

"They say they find the tour interesting and that Adam takes them into places that they would not normally have access to.

"The quality of the tour is excellent with interesting history and places that are at times a bit scary.

"It is a great boon for tourism and something new."

**Funny
show for
the family**

A SHOW with a difference will be held in the Beechworth Memorial Hall at 8pm on Saturday, April 19.

"The World Bra Unclipping Championships at Garimba" is a modern day Dimboola about a small regional town which has faced drought, lost jobs and

lost confidence. But Garimbans are a resourceful lot, and they've come up with the world bra unclipping competition to put the town back on the map.

Tickets are \$20 or \$15 for concession, and bookings can be made at the Beechworth Visitor Information Centre.

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