

# Forrest history newsletter



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## Our Society Foundation Members

Thank you for joining our Society and our apologies for the delay in acknowledging your subscription. We have been busy finalizing the plaques for our Forrest History Walk. We are very pleased to welcome the following 20 foundation members of the Forrest and District Historical Society.

Frank Whitehead  
Don Whitehead  
Bernice Currie  
Bev Thomas  
Lois Kemp  
Alf & Lorna Wilhelms  
Ken Widdowson  
Rachel Buckley  
Julie Etheve  
Frank Frizon  
June Frizon  
Anne & George Trew  
Ros & Bruce Upson  
Pat & Rosie Murnane  
Bruce & Gill Neale  
Forrest Primary  
School  
Norman Houghton  
Biddy Clissold  
(Hammond)  
Vera Tebble  
Dorothy Frizon

So if you haven't already done so please join the Society in order to receive the next newsletter in the mail and to participate in our research, writing and exhibitions if you are interested.

An application form is enclosed. Subscription is \$25.00 per year and \$15 concession for 60yrs. and over.

## NEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Following the success of our Forrest History Day last November the 26<sup>th</sup> 2005, We have decided to create the **Forrest and District Historical Society**.

With the photos that people brought along to the history day and the information which we gathered then and since we already had over 300 photos, promises of many more and offers to provide further

information about our fascinating history.

It was therefore felt that we needed to create some sort of organisational structure and a proper well managed historic archive in which to carefully record and preserve all of this information so that it will be readily available for a reference, publication and the interest of future generations.

It was also clear from our history day that it was becoming quite urgent that we gather as much information as we can from the older members of the community while the opportunity still remains. We were all saddened by the fact that Joyce Harding passed away between the time we sent out invitations to our history day and the day on which it took place. This was a timely warning.

Our new Society applied to the Colac Otway Shire for seed funding to help get out Society off the ground.

As our Birregurra colleagues advised us, one of our advantages of starting from scratch now is that it opens the possibility of having **our entire historic records in digital format** on a computer system.

To take advantage of this suggestion the first thing we needed was some basic computer equipment on which we could create our archives. We applied to the Shire for \$5,000 in start up funding and on the 13<sup>th</sup> July we were informed that a grant for \$1925.00 had been awarded which was duly received.

## THANKS TO COLAC- OTWAY SHIRE

This has enable the purchase of an A3 printer on which this newsletter has been produced, a starter supply of paper and inks and a scanner for scanning photographs and documents into our records.



The computer equipment we were able to acquire with the Shire's grant.

Our funding did not go as far as a desk top computer and monitor but in the end we found an out of date model of a portable laptop computer which we got for around \$600 which would enable us to go to members' homes and scan their photos and documents into our records on the spot without them having to part with their precious memorabilia and at the same time to be able to enter descriptive information into our system.

This grant from the Shire has been enormous encouragement and will get us off to a flying start in creating our historic records.

### FORREST AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

#### Statement of Purpose

To research and collect historical information about Forrest and the surrounding district.

To create and manage an archive of historical photos, films, sound recordings, documents and realia.

To publish historical booklets, monographs and newsletters of interest to members and the public.

To encourage and support writers and producers of new works about the history of Forrest and district.

To collaborate with the Colac Otway Shire and other government agencies in the creation of historical exhibits.

To cooperate with fellow historical societies and share information and resources.

To conduct historical festivals and exhibitions.

To raise funds to assist in the achievement of these purposes

# Can You Help With Further Research?

As we are a new Society there is a great deal of research work to be undertaken, gathering stories and photographs and researching precise information about our past for the interest of our members and other residents and visitors. Here are just a few examples of further research which can be undertaken:

Anyone interested in looking specifically at the history of **Barwon Downs**? We do not have much information at all, although there is a little at Birregurra. Perhaps someone from Barwon Downs itself would be interested in gathering photos and information and writing it up for the archive.

Similarly we would be interested in anyone who would like to develop part of the archive for the history of **Barramunga** and the history of

**Gerangamete**. Barramunga is important because it actually predates Forrest. Mills were established there earlier than the beginning of Forrest and it was originally planned as the terminus of the Railway.

**Family studies:** Would anyone be interested in developing specific writings about individual families with long associations with Forrest. For example we have some good material on the Frizon family but what about others, the Whitehead, Gourley, Curtis, Halliday, Hammond, Whelan, Wilhems, Kent and many other families.

**The Hopfields:** We have a few good references and photos of the hopfields which played such an important part in the life of Forrest in the 30's and 40's. Who would like to gather more and write up the story? How about organising a field day to see

where they were and hear from those who remember working there?

**Yaugher** was the forerunner to Forrest but there is nothing to see there now. Where was the railway station, mill, the Anglican Church, the school? Would anyone like to take members there and point out those locations? Do we have any photos?



Forrest families picking hops.

“ **Bertie Ireland** used to grow the hops and people came from far a field, as well as locally to pick the hops. If they got a 20 pound cheque they were really happy. They would be up at the break of dawn and there would be a race to see who could get out there first. So finally he brought in a rule that they could not start before a certain hour. Bertie was a teetotaler and never drank at all. At one time he wanted a cook and advertised for one, a woman came, a Mrs Urban and she was a drinker and she used to ring Dorothy to ask her to get a taxi because she would've been away drinking for two weeks or more. She used to make a cake sometimes and bring it to Dorothy.



The hop fields were a great family time during the picking. Bertie had a gummy leg and had to drive with it sticking outside, so the door was removed from his car.

In June, when the

Bertie Ireland in his hop fields

## A Hair Raising Trip !

by Dorothy Frizon

big exhibition was on in Melbourne, Bertie wanted to go and said to Dorothy's Auntie Nell that he would take her and Dorothy to Melbourne if they would like to come. They went up in a half ton truck. The right door didn't open so everyone had to get in and out on the left hand door. They left the truck outside and took the tram into the city. They went to the Melbourne Coffee Palace to stay. Auntie Nell booked in because it was good to have the one place but when Bertie Ireland inquired the price it was 10 shillings per night. There was no way he was going to pay that because there was a cheap bed he could get at the Salvation Army for 3 shillings. However in the end he did not stay at the Salvation Army but decided that he would spend 5 shillings for the night and stayed at the Melbourne Coffee Palace in Little Collins St, but he did not have a good night because his room was right next to the kitchen and he could not sleep for the noise.

Coming back they decided to leave at 2.00pm because it was a long way to go and they could only drive about 20 miles an hour but there was not much traffic on the road. It was on a Friday and you could see commercial travellers coming back into town but he was often driving on the wrong side of the

road and the girls would often have to yell at him “you're on the wrong side of the road” and he would come back again, and then “you're on the wrong side of the road again.” He didn't have any tail light. He had a hurricane lamp and that was quite an experience. He had no matches to light it. When we were coming towards Colac we suggested he should go through Birregurra and he asked what the roads were like. We said that they were okay but they were pretty rough and when we were going up Bert Muir's Hill, which in those days was quite steep, the truck stopped so we had to put on the handbrake in the middle of the driving compartment and then along came Jack Turner in his motorbike and sidecar. Jack went and got a log of wood and put behind the truck and got it going again and so he got me home. I will always remember that trip, it was hair raising.”

(Taped interview with Dorothy Frizon 2006)



For many years we have had a wonderful set of photographs provided by the late Nan Lidgerwood of an **old slab and bark hut**. It is one of the best examples of its kind and perhaps the only one built in the vicinity of Forrest. The question was, where was the hut located and who was the person who



## The Old Bark Hut

*And of the furniture, there's no such thing,  
'twas never in the place,*

*Except the stool I sit upon-and that's an old  
gin case.*

*It does us for a safe as well, but you must keep  
it shut,*

*Or the flies would make it canter round the old  
bark hut.*

*Chorus*

*In an old bark hut, in an old bark hut.*

*Or the flies would make it canter round the old  
bark hut. Anon.*

lived there?

At our exhibition for the Forrest History Day the owner was quickly identified as Willie Asplin a well known identity from the 30's. Albie Halliday was able to find out from this father, Bob that the hut was located on a knoll down Reserve Road just beyond the first bridge over the Serpentine. With Frank Whitehead and Ken Widdowson Albie went looking recently, and he thinks he may have identified the site.

The nearest residence is a new modern straw bail home which has just been constructed by the Schuhmann's.

Dorothy Frizon mentioned Willy briefly in her taped interview and Albie and others remember something about him. We have a 1920 rate notice and lot number.

Is anybody interested in researching and writing up this interesting old character and how he came to have a beautiful example of a bark hut in the Forrest area? If so, please call Ken (52366327) or Ros (52366538)



## Great Support from Fellow Societies

We have already received excellent help from other local Societies. Colac History Centre has provided old subdivision maps, Apollo Bay Historical Society gave us a photo of the Hotel in 1910 and Geelong Heritage Centre has made available old Otway Shire rate books and press cutting files.

### Thank you Birregurra

In particular we have had great encouragement and support from the Birregurra and District Historical Society. We report regularly to their monthly meetings and they have



Peter Shanahan at his historic family homestead, Happy Valley, Birregurra

offered us copies of any photos or records we require. One of their members, **Peter Shanahan**, is the grandson of **William Pengilley**, the first publican at Forrest. He has provided us with WP's biography, family tree and a remarkable photo of the opening of the Terminus Hotel, Cash Store and Post Office in 1892.

He has also generously given our Society an entire copy of ancestor T. Pengilley's log book of his journey to Australia from London, August 28th to Dec. 22nd 1852.

### GOOD PROGRESS WITH FORREST HISTORY WALK

Our thanks to all those who contributed to the content of the plaques. Norm Houghton kindly checked all our information and Jim Spiers provided many of the photos. Jim has obviously been a 'one man Historical Society' for many years. He has diligently conducted and recorded interviews and developed a wonderful collection of historic photos. He is generously contributing to our activities as a member. The Shire has come up with a new design for the

plaques. They will now be podium style, look better and easier to read.



Tess Winter, Frank Whitehead, Albert Halliday, Ros Upton, Maureen Ward and John Weickhardt recently gave the history walk a test run. Plaques are expected to be installed in January.



Jim Spiers

### The School Interviews

recorded last year with, Jim Spiers, Audrey Miller, June and Frank Frizon and Gill and Bruce Neale are now in our archives along with a 2 hour interview with

Dorothy Frizon, (see story page 2). Both Bruce and Dorothy referred to a **WW2 AIRPLANE WATCH** at Forrest. Where was it located, who manned it and did they spot anything? Would any member be interested in researching and writing this up?

## FORREST AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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### Thank you to local businesses

We want to say a sincere thanks to those businesses which purchased and sold the 2006 astronomy calendars kindly donated by Ken's son David with the proceeds going to our Forrest History photo archive. Most have now taken the 2007 calendars.

Those businesses which assisted us for 2006 and 2007 were as follows:

Moriac Store \$25 (2006)  
Deans Marsh Store \$75, \$50  
Colac Newsagency \$50, \$50  
Colac Visitors Centre \$50 (2006)  
Barwon Downs \$50.

And a very special thanks to

### ROSE'S GENERAL STORE

Rose and Jim collected over \$150 for our new Society from calendar sales without taking any proportion of the money for themselves. That was most appreciated.

**So please buy lots  
from our generous  
sponsors.**

In addition we received the following donations on the Forrest History Day:  
Frank Whitehead \$10  
Don Whitehead \$10  
Dorothy Frizon \$5

The money received from sponsors and donors will be used to employ some part time help to get into our computer archive all those maps, books, video tapes, photos and documents which have been contributed following our Forrest History Day.

### TREASURES FROM OUR SOCIETY'S ARCHIVES



This wonderful photo really captures the life of early settlers around Forrest. Probably taken around the turn of the century it is from the Black girls' album made available by Cyril and Nan Lidgerwood. We do not know who they are or where the farm is but they are dressed in their Sunday best for the photo.

## Where is the Tiger?

During the Great Depression in 1935 the Victorian Railways decided to use cars converted to run on rails, as a cheap alternative to a large train. They did a contract in February 1936 for 6 sedan type rail cars with the Canada Cycle and Motor Co. The chassis, made by Dodge Bros., USA, were modified by the SA Railways and fitted with car bodies. They were painted black with chrome yellow stripes.



The 'Tiger' at Forrest Station

They quickly became known as "Tigers" and given the road numbers of 70 - 75RM. They were stationed at Forrest, Goroke, Avoca, and Katamatite. The last unit in service was the 72RM at Forrest in 1952. But where did these 6 rail cars finish up?

This requires some further research. We have discovered that 74RM is currently undergoing major restoration at Daylesford. We have contacted them and offered to contribute towards the cost of renovation in the hope that in exchange we could have the Tiger back here in Forrest from time to time on special occasions. Perhaps Birregurra and Deans Marsh would also be interested. (Latest news is that the person doing the renovation has left the Daylesford district).

#### But where are the other Tigers?

Frank Whitehead was always sure that there was another larger 'Tiger', but no-one else could be found to confirm



First train to run to Forrest

that. However we subsequently came across a photograph which appeared to confirm his memory. (see below). One of the trains was called 'The Flying Dunny'. Was this the one?



There is a great deal associated with the rail services to Forrest which requires further research.

**This is a wonderful opportunity for any rail enthusiasts or other members interested to help develop our archive on the Forrest rail service.**

Surprisingly some the best Forrest photos are available at the Puffing Billy Railway Museum, Belgrave! The Birregurra Historical Society has a good section on the Railway Service to Forrest which is going to be helpful. If interested, call Ken, 52 366 327.