

Forrest history newsletter



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Stringybark Summer

Story of a Forrest Bush Mill in 1908.

Written in 1985, Judith O'Neill's book **Stringybark Summer** provides a wonderful description of life in a Forrest bush mill in 1908. Although, essentially a children's book and said to be fictional, it provides a colourful and detailed account of life in a bush mill like Hayden's No 1 Mill.

The main character, Sophie, is sent to stay with her uncle for the summer school holidays during her mother's pregnancy. It starts with a train ride from Birregurra through Yaugher to Forrest and then the horse drawn timber jinker along the six miles of tram lines to the bush mill including passing through the tunnel and crossing many ridges.

Stringbark is a busy mill township with store, blacksmith shop, school, billiards room and the workers huts around the timber mill. A team of draft horses are used to extract the logs when they are fallen and pull the sawn timber to the Forrest rail head. It makes a telling comparison with today's Christmases when Sophie received a gingham apron, a tiny naked china doll, a skein of blue wool and pair of bone needles, a red wooden top and a whip to set it spinning as presents. The Christmas meal included stuffed rabbits, decorations consisted mainly of fern fronds, maiden hair and Christmas Bush from the forest.

It was a bonus contains a very colourful description of the Forrest

Echo Research Saves the Day.

When the Forrest and District Historical Society decided to hold a hop fields discovery day for its latest event it made the assumption that some of its older members would have hops, however they soon discovered that as hop fields finished in the early war years the hop pickers with the memories were at

the Yougher Cemetery and there were only childhood memories in the group.

Then Jane Shannon's marvellous research report for Echo December 1984 came to light. Her research and an extended interview with the late May Jennings, a former proprietor of a shop in the main street, she was able to tell the whole hop fields' story accompanied by two excellent illustrations. She not only gave us the starting year for hop fields around

1898 ? and the original farmers who grew hops but was also able to give us the actual names used by the hop pickers to the different paddocks such as "Style" where they had to climb a style, "Bridge" where they had to cross a bridge into the main hop fields area, "Seabick" and "Tulles" adjoining property owned by those people and finally the "Home paddock". As she talked of the arduous work involved and the long hours during the three week picking season and it was amusing to find that even the school had only one weeks

Alf's fascinating research



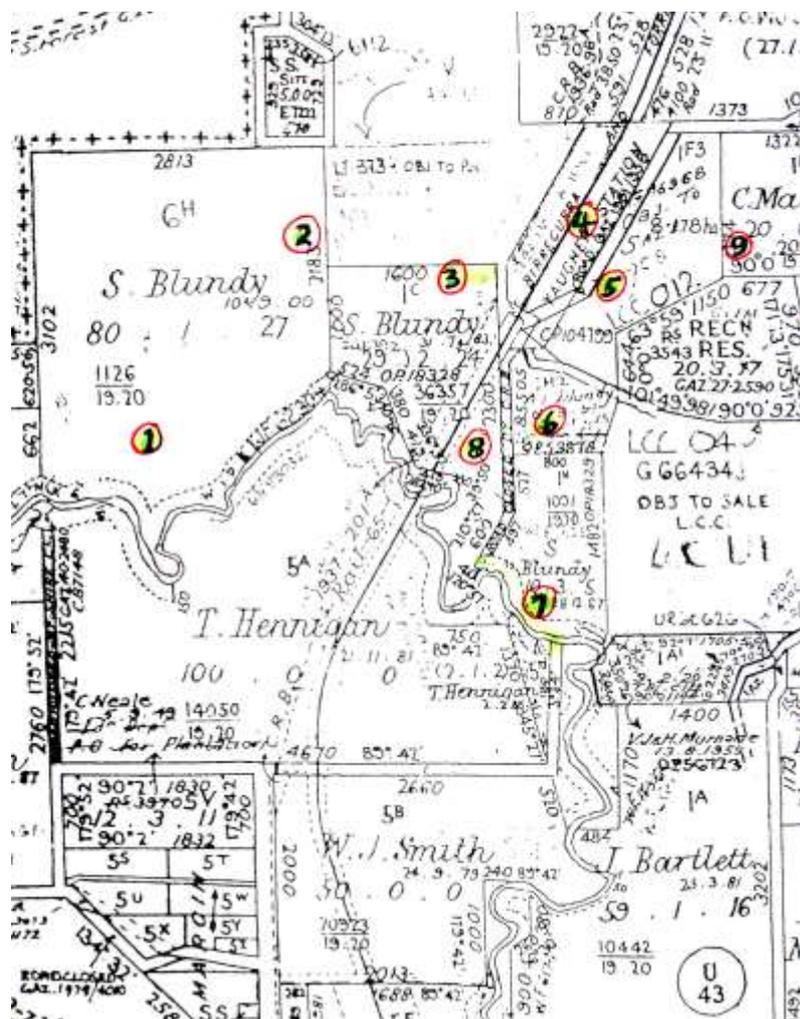
Yaughter is not an aboriginal word as we might have thought but appears to be named after an area in Kent between Rainham and Hartlip. Significantly Stephen Blundy, who took up land in the area, was born at Rainham Kent.

Stephen Blundy's brother in law, Edward Usher, also from Rainham, lived on an adjoining block to the Blundy selection which became known as Ushers.

An overgrown well and concrete slab is all that remains of the **Slaughterhouse** (see plan).

Soon after settling at Yaughter in about 1880 Stephen Blundy made an acre of land available for the erection of the **Anglican Church**. Mr and Mrs Paddy Whelan were the last people to be married in the Church before it was destroyed in a bush fire in 1906.

In addition to the **railway station** platform there was a siding, a cattle yard and a gatehouse occupied by a person who opened the gate for the train to cross Yaughter Rd.



The **sawmill** was probably built in the 1960's and the power pole can still be seen.

The **Yaughter School** was located just past where Michael Scott's house now stands. It was moved to Forrest in 1906 as the population there began to outnumber Yaughter's.

The above map shows the Yaughter area. The number 5 is the present Horse riding Club and next to it can be seen the Rec. Reserve. The present road is absent but the former one can be seen going around the Hennigan property and crossing the river at 7.

The sites identified by Alf and visited during our walk around are numbered on the map as follows:

1. The site of Usher's Cottage
2. The Slaughterhouse
3. Yaughter Anglican Church
4. Yaughter Railway Station
5. The Sawmill
6. Yaughter School
7. The Old Road
8. An old Blundy Shed

The only place we could not identify was the Store but 1892 rate records mention a Charles Malhoff, Storekeeper with 20 acres and a dwelling. A Malhoff property is marked 9 .

Copies of all the handouts at the Yaughter visit is available on request.



Nostalgia at old Yaugher

Our society events are often a cause for nostalgia particularly for those members now living away from Forrest. Members who come to our events often take the opportunity to visit the old family home in Forrest and call in at the cemetery before going home to pay their respects to departed relatives.

It was no exception for Jenny Cunningham when she took part in the Yaugher visit. When we walked through the scrub and stood at the site of the old Yaugher Railway Station it almost brought tears to her eyes when the most vivid memories came back of the access road to the Curtis property which ran behind the station and her use of the rail service. Jenny writes:



Jenny Cunningham (nee Curtis)
My Memories of the Train & Tiger at

Yaugher:

I can remember the train coming past our farm at Yaugher and I was always out to give the driver a wave and was always rewarded with a couple of whistles from the old steam train.

The Tiger was used to transport passengers from the train in Birregurra to the Yaugher Station. My memory was of going to the Station to meet my Auntie and Uncle from Melbourne. To this day the memory is so clear in my mind of them stepping onto the Yaugher Station from the Tiger.

I rang my Aunty, now 94, to asking if she had any input just this week, when I asked "Was it comfortable to ride on?" her reply was "We didn't look for comfort in those days, just a way to get around".

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

We do not have an Alf Wilhelms to produce his excellent research for our Hops Discovery Day. (Can you believe he googled Yaugher and scored!)

So we need your help to make the day a success.

Could you please contact Ken at the addresses on the back of the newsletter as soon as possible and let him know if you worked on the hop fields at any stage and have any memories that can be contributed at our event.

(We know of a certain Brucie Neale, as a boy, wagged school and worked at the hop fields for the pickers who would give him the most sweets. He made a full confession at the recent interview conducted last year at the Primary School!)

Does anyone have photos of the hop fields which have not already been submitted? Does anyone have dates for when the hope fields started and finished? The output produced or how it was organised? This will be a very interesting day and we look forward to you coming along.

The Black Sisters Photo Album

In the April issue of our newsletter (page 4) we asked if there was any way of finding Carlene Alexander, Nan Lidgerwood's daughter, who was believed to have the superb photo album of Ethyl and Doris Black which contained a wonderful collection of early Forrest photos. With Pam Jennings help we have located her (believe it or not she simply googled the name and Carlene appeared as a school teacher).

We have been in touch with Carlene and she would be interested to attend

our next members function and bring



A photo from the Black sister's Album along the album to show people and possibly make copies for those interested.

Family Histories now in our Archives

One of the most important features of our Forrest History Archives has turned out to be our collection of **family histories** of local families, thanks to contributions from Nora Potter and Pam Jennings.

In some cases this includes family histories which go right back to the original founding members who came out from England and in one case even an entire diary of the passage by sailing ship.

Our family history records include the following families;

BLACK
BLUNDY
FRIZON
GOURLEY
HALLIDAY
HARLOCK
LIDGERWOOD
MALHOFF
NEWCOMB
PENGILLEY
TREW
WHELAN
WILHELMS

these will be available for inspection at our next meeting.

WW11 Plane Spotting

Further to Gill Neale's article in the Feb. edition of the newsletter about WW11 Plane Spotting at Forrest, an interesting exhibition in the foyer at COPAC describes Portland as being

a potential landing site for the Japanese. It describes how a submarine surfaced in that vicinity unloaded a sea-plane, with specially designed folding wings, which undertook a reconnaissance flight up into Port Phillip Bay and back

without being intercepted. Perhaps this was the plane which was spotted by our Forrest watchers? We have written to the Australian War Museum for further information but have not had any reply as yet.

FORREST AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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Total	\$4229.70

Expenditure

Computers and Printer	\$1888.46
Software	228.00
Society Registration	52.50
Photos for history walk	125.75
Books for resale	217.00
Society functions	170.00
Printing newsletters	708.50
Postage	100.00
Books for library	120.65
Stall charge	15.00
Membership Birregurra HS	<u>5.00</u>
Total	\$3630.86

Funds at Bank \$598.84

Letters to the Editor

Please let us have your comments, memories and stories.

Thank you for sending me your recent Newsletter re the Forrest & District Historical Society.Let me fill you in on my connection with Forrest:-

My maiden name is Yvonne Kendall. I attended the Forrest Primary School I in the 1950's and lived just down from the Forrest store with my parents and two sisters. My father worked for Alf Frizon at Frizons Sawmill (which has now ceased to operate). I went on from the Forrest School to attend Colac High School

and then left the area in my early twenties.

My sister Mary married Kevin Harrington and I married Bernie Harrington in 1977. The Harrington family lived in Barra-munga (13 in all). My husband Bernie died in 1994 and I remarried in 1998. My current husband is Bryan Hunt who is President of the Forrest Football Netball Club Inc. (2007 will be Bryan's 8th year as President)

We have recently sold our business in Melbourne and hence in the process of moving to our house in Colac (address as above).

Yvonne Harrington- Hunt

Historic Rail Trail Walk

Our society was invited by the Lions Club to participate in the recent Barwon Downs Soup Fest by providing an historical guide to a **rail trail walk** which



was conducted from the site of the Yaugher Railway Station part way to Barwon Downs.

Over 100 people joined the bus shuttle and undertook the walk. They were able to see some interesting culverts and the remains of an old timber bridge and the worst affected valley when Lake Elizabeth spilled in 1953 . For those who took the first walk, there was still a fog in the valley and it was quite atmospheric walking through a superb stand of white gums shrouded in mist. We were grateful to Rosalind Terry for allowing us to conduct the rail trail walk through her property.

Forrest History Walk Now Ready

The last of the plaques and the town map showing their location has now been installed, so the Forrest History Walk, on which we have been working for the last eighteen months, is now ready for use. Information guides to the walk are available at Rose's General Store so we are ready for the summer tourist season.



The Primary School students have already tried the walk and had a conducted tour by Ken Widdowson which also included a visit to Kerry and Mark Jennings' new café being developed in town. Students were able to see a building in the process of renovation with the walls cut away to show the historic early construction including old newspapers and the use of rough sawn timber from the sawmills.



Treasures from our Collection



The bush tramlines and their rail trolleys were an import means of visiting friends and relatives living at the bush mills, especially on Sundays.