

Forrest history newsletter



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WE LOSE A POPULAR MEMBER



The sudden death of Vera Tebble, at 75, on the 3rd of August was a great loss to her family and her many friends.

As a foundation member of our Society she provided invaluable information on our early history. I remember sitting in a car outside the hotel and she described for me the entire layout of the old Hotel, having worked there for some years.

At her funeral Graham 'Coke' Newcombe paid tribute to her as a hard worker and a popular, caring woman who loved children. Vera was born at Kawarren. Her mother died when she was only 18 months and she was raised by her father and older brothers and sisters.

Nevin Kent brought the family to Forrest around 1941 to a farm at now Kents Rd and Vera attended Forrest school until age 14. She occasionally waggged school to work at Queenie Frizon's shop. Coke told some amusing stories about the children, once at home alone and threatened by a bush fire they threw the furniture into the creek to save it. Of course the wind changed. At 13 she met 'Boxer' her future husband and decided then he was her man. They married when she turned nineteen.

Vera will be fondly remembered by all.

PROUDLY ANNOUNCING OUR FIRST PUBLI-



The research and photo collecting that went into our very successful HOP FIELDS DISCOVERY DAY last October led to the production of a useful eight page Data Sheet. When Society member Pam Jennings saw it, she was sure it was the basis of our first booklet.

Adding her own exciting research on early Forrest families and the hop growing industry, Pam traced the beginnings to 1877. While Bertie Ireland is the name most associated with hop fields many

families grew hops then, along with tobacco in some cases. The first was Stephen Blundy, drawing on his experience of hop growing in Kent England. Corney, Fletcher, Porteous, Malhoff, Bartlett, Wood, Weir and Wilson were others involved.

Pam has found some excellent additional photos including an early hop barn and extracts from newspapers of the day. Our new booklet is rounded out with reminiscences from May Jennings, Clarrie Hutchison, Cliff Frizon, Edna Crabb and Bruce Neale.

Pam Jennings took the entire responsibility for the production of this booklet. Thank you Pam.



Here Don Whitehead is showing the group the track from Forrest into Bertie Ireland's first hop paddock

Many Forrest families were touched by the hop growing so please make sure you obtain your copy of this fascinating new booklet and the Hop Fields Discovery Day data sheet on which it is based. (Cont. page 2)

MARKING THE END OF 150 YEARS OF LOGGING

OUR NEXT EVENT

On July 3rd the Geelong Advertiser announced the end of State forest logging after 150 years. 'The last licence to log, held by Murnane's mill in Colac expired on Monday' (30th June 2008)

We will assemble at the Terminus Hotel, Forrest, as usual at **10.30am Sunday the 19th October**. We will have speakers, including Jim Spiers, with video and pictures of bush mills, tramlines and logging equipment. It will also be an opportunity to help get our new archives in order. Keith Maxwell, Birregurra has been helping enter data but we are looking for captions for our 400pictures.

RESEARCHING BARRAMUNGA

In the afternoon, following our very successful visit to Barwon Downs in March, we would now like to turn our attention to Barramunga.

Barra existed before Forrest, and if it had not been found unsuitable as the rail terminus perhaps Forrest may never have existed!

It was the site of some important mills in those early days of logging so it is appropriate that we study it on this occasion.

I will get a lot map and start a Data Sheet for our research. We could visit there in a car convoy in the afternoon to locate former historic sites.

CAN YOU HELP WITH PHOTOS AND INFO?

We do not currently have any members from Barramunga. Who is a good guide to its former historic sites. Where were the mills? store? hotel? school etc. Do you have any photos to include in our Data Sheet? Please let me know, email, send them c/o Forrest PO, or bring them on the day.

Jim Spiers has contributed the first story. There was a two storey hotel there. One night there was loud banging on the front door and the publican leant out of the top window. "We want to stay here" the visitors shouted. The reply they got was "well stay there but stop making such a racket so I can get some sleep!"

THE TIGER BEING RESTORED AT DAYLESFORD



One of the 6 Tiger Rail Trains which served in Victoria up to the 1950's is being restored by the Daylesford Spa Country Railway. It is the 74RM. Not the one which served Forrest which was the 72RM, the last one in service.

In February 1936, six petrol driven sedan type rail cars were commissioned from the Cycle and Motor Company. The chassis were manufactured by Dodge Bros USA and the bodies fitted by the South Australian Railways including very distinctive yellow and black stripes which gave it its name.

This particular Tiger languished in the rail yards at Williamstown for many years before being taken on loan by the Daylesford Group who have been working on its restoration on and off for the last 15 years.

It was in considerable disrepair when they took it over but a lot of work has been done in restoring the panel work.

The motor ticks over but a great deal more has to be done including the creation of the new jack which is used



The 'Tiger' in 2000 to elevate and turn vehicle.

The Society has approached both the Australian Railway History Society, which owns the Tiger, and the Daylesford Group which have it on loan for its restoration to collaborating in some way to accelerate its restoration so that we may be able to have it here on display from time to time along with other interested groups such as those in Birregurra and Deans Marsh. It could well become a centre piece at some of our regular annual festivals and will bring back memories for many people who can still remember travelling on the Tiger or going down to the local station to collect the mail.

Do we know of anybody within our Society or friends who might have some knowledge of vintage car restoration, in this case a '36 Dodge, who might be willing to contribute some time and effort to helping to finish this work or anyone who has sufficient



The 'Tiger' under restoration this year

interest to take responsibility for our end of the project and help raise necessary funds to ensure its completion?

They estimate it may take \$50,000 to get it back on the rails and to have it undergo safety checks etc. We imagine that it would be transportable by road so that it can be brought to various sites in our area for people to inspect. Could we have your ideas and suggestions?

HOP FIELDS DISCOVERY DAY



Aroona Court provided an excellent view of the entire hop growing area including the road that used to lead across the bridge to the Colac Forrest Rd.

HOP GROWING AT FORREST

Pam Jennings

The district of Yaucher, and later the township, can be traced to the early 1870's when selectors took up land along the Barwon River flats at the edge of the Otway Ranges. Many of the farmers steadily cultivated the industry of hop growing until the 1940's. The area was known by many names: Gerangamete Valley, Yaucher Valley and Hop Valley. The East and West branches of the Barwon River provided the two main river flats and of course water for the crop.

The soil upon which the hop vine was

cultivated, was said to be in every way suited for its growth, and resembling in many particulars, the characteristics of the soil in County Kent, the famous hop growing county from which the Blundys came.

The hop (*Humulus Lupulus*) is a herbaceous hardy perennial and belongs to the Cannabinaceae family, which also includes hemp and is related to the nettle and elm families. It dies back to its roots every year and will live for 20 years or more. The hop is a dioecious plant, which means that the male and female flowers are borne on separate plants, and it is the larger female flowers, called cones, that yield the fruits that are used commercially. Petals grow inside the cones and these house yellow glands that, when dried, give beer its distinctive bitter taste and smell. In past times it was also used medicinally and also for bakers to prepare yeast.



For more than eight years Mr Elliott, the well-known brewer for Messrs Hodges Bros, used these Gerangamete hops, both at his brewery establishment in Colac and at the West End brewery in Latrobe Terrace, Geelong.

Bob Casper, who took over the Ireland



Members enjoyed a video presentation on hop growing including pictures of the entire process from Tasmania.



property when there were still poles in the ground, confirms that there were hop fields right up to the house. The barn had two levels with the press in the upper level. The press was operated by a large capstan wheel manned by four men to compress the dry hops before tying the bale. There was a hole in the wall to drop the bale to ground level. The furnace to dry the hops was located at one end of the barn. The edge of each hop field was built up and flood irrigated from the river. The vines grew on coconut fibre strings which were cut down at harvest time.

BARWON DOWNS HISTORY WALK SUNDAY 2nd March 2008

Report by John James

The walk began at Brian & Heather Neale's property in Mahers Rd Barwon Downs. Brian had drawn up a plan showing the position of the Butcher's Shop and Slaughter House operated by Eric & Katherine (Kit) Gourley from about 1920 to 1958. Brian told how, when his father (Charlie) bought the farm in 1958 from Clare Hurst, Eric Gourley moved his Butchery to Forrest.

Not a lot remains, but we did see one of the big iron boilers which were used to render fat. Most of the buildings have been modified over the years. Brian recalled that when his family moved in, there was a huge collection of carts, wagon and harness. His father gave most of this away. Brian & Heather live in Clare Hurst's house, which has seen lots of renovation. Eric Gourley's house which was about half a kilometre further down Mahers Rd. was demolished about 1985.

Brian pointed to where there once stood a storage shed that had originally been a church school, now situated near the present Fire Station.



Brian and Heather Neale and Cindy Maguire with the iron boiler from the killing pen

We then listened to an entertaining talk by Cindy Maguire, who worked as a butcher for Eric Gourley. Cindy started there as boy of 14. He told of how the bodies of beef, and the sheep were brought up, from the Killing pen, on a cart pulled by a horse called "Paddy". Cindy had a love/hate relationship with Paddy, who sometimes was known to nip. Cindy was involved in the killing and skinning of the beasts and the hanging of the hides. "runners" (intestines) had to be prepared for later use as sausage casings. In addition he served in the shop, and made up the orders, which Eric delivered to Forrest on Tuesday & Friday, by horse and cart. Eric & Kit's daughter, (Marj) used the horse and cart for deliveries around Barwon Downs, on Wednesday and Saturday.

Marj (Harrington), and her sister, Val, and her mother, worked in the shop. There was no electricity at the shop, and a petrol engine had



to be started up each day to refrigerate the cool room.



Painting of Gourley's house

Next, we drove 1 km. to "Blackwood" the original Hayden Home. It is on the Birregurra Forrest Road, (Number 1630). Next door (No. 1626) is where Hayden's Store once stood, in front of what is now a private residence. The tramway, which carried the timber from the bush mill to the Barwon Downs Railway Station, passed out the front.

A little further on, just past the new Bar-



won Downs Fire Station, at the intersection of Wickham's lane and Callahan's Lane are the remains of Hayden's saw mill, which in its heyday employed up to 40 men. Also the nearby kiln, which operated from about 1941 until it burnt down in 1944. It is a substantial concrete structure, and was built to kiln dry timber, using steam. Now its only occupants are Bottle Swallows (Fairy Martins). Ron Cunningham told us how the timber came into the kilns, for seasoning. A trolley loaded with the sawn timber rolled down the incline to the railway siding. A horse pulled the empty trolley back up to the mill. The mill operated until about 1972.

Nothing much remains of the Railway siding. Sad, because from here, in addition to timber; milk, cream, turnips, potatoes and charcoal were dispatched. Also, mail went out each day on "The Tiger". Passengers, too.

Next, we went to see Charlie Drayton's shop which still stands

(Number 1588). It is now a private residence, and has been renovated in such a manner, that it replicates many of the features of the old shop. Drayton's shop also housed the telephone exchange. Charlie worked on the Exchange and was assisted by Lynette Callahan (Faughey) who worked for him as a telephonist in about 1958. Jenny Cunningham (nee Curtis) recalled how, when she worked at the Forrest Telephone Exchange in 1962 she often had to put calls through to Bev Banham (nee Taylor) who was the telephonist at Barwon Downs. Forrest Exchange operated all night, and was very busy, as the West Barwon Dam was under con-



struction at that time. Barwon Downs Exchange closed at about 8 or 9 pm each evening.

Next door to Drayton's shop once stood what is thought to be the smallest bank in Australia. It was a branch of The National Bank Of Australasia, and operated until it closed in 1975. It handled the wages of the men who worked in the three saw mills which operated in Barwon Downs. Houghtons lived in another shop which once stood on the west side of Charlie Draytons.

It was a great day. The oldest person attending was Loma Cunningham who is 90 and the youngest was Patrick Charles Cunningham who is 7 months.

Walk concludes near the historic bank. Loma Cunningham is in blue.



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Once again my son David Widdowson has donated 50 of his brilliant astronomy calendars for Society fund raising. Each month gives the position of stars, and planets, upcoming eclipses and a superb photo of a stellar object.

We are grateful to Rose's Store, Forrest, Blane's Colac, and Barwon and Dean's Marsh stores for stocking them. Please support them with your business. The calendars make an ideal Christmas gift and bring more than \$300 into our funds for future work. Available for \$10 ea.



A wonderful photo of the Callahan family and the first home in Barwon Downs.

Letters to the Editor

Please let us have your comments, memories and stories.

Dear Ken, I am not sure I will be able to attend the function on Oct. 14th. Has anyone of the REID, WILSON, CASPAR or SIMMONS clans made contact with you? I am descended from John Lindsay Gordon REID, youngest son of George REID and Mary Jane WILSON. I believe George REID was granted one of the first 'hop' licences near Colac in 1898. He selected land beside Roadnights Creek. I think this is the land that Dad inherited in 1926 as a 15 yr old. His mother would have lived there until her death in 1934.

At some stage TED CASPAR was associated with the hotel at Barramunga and George SIMMONS was at the Forrest Hotel. The two of them are my maternal grandfathers. Some of the descendants of Joseph WILSON and his wife Rosette KILPATRICK are still associated with the Yaughner/ Gerangamete area.

Regards, Colleen ROBINSON (nee REID) born Colac but lived first 31/2 yrs at Forrest.

In another letter Melissa Hallyburton recalls school holidays at Forrest with grandparents Mary and Septimus William Newcombe, in Blundy Street.



The sad death on Aug. 25th of Betty Whelan, seen here with husband Tassie on our Forrest History Day 2005, was a terrible loss to family and friends. The overflowing attendance at her funeral gave the clearest indication of the wide circle of friends and organizations touched by her life of service. While estimating the thousands of football jumpers Betty had washed and the hundreds of dinners prepared for visiting Anglican clergy it could be noted from our archives that Betty faithfully continued a family tradition going back to Tassie's parents, Patrick and Hanna, who had begun the reputation for their hospitality to the clergy while Tassie was still a boy. Betty was described as a model wife, mother and friend and a guide and inspiration to all who knew her.

PAM JENNING'S NEXT BOOKLET

**World War 1 & 2
Servicemen & Service women of
Forrest, Barramunga, Barwon
Downs & Gerangamete**



Any information re their service details, photograph and personal details appreciated, Contact: Pam Jennings 52504177

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A PERMANENT HOME

We are starting to think about a permanent home for our Forrest and District Historical Society. The library and archive are growing and it may need more space than Ken's living room! There are more items for sale and at some point we may be given memorabilia and even items of equipment from farming, logging or hop growing. Where to store and display them? A small building would be a start with room to expand and to install outside shelters for equipment. One day we might even have the 'Tiger' to display. So keep your eyes open and start thinking.

New photos for the archives

One advantage of our field days is that they can shake out some great new photos and information for our records. How many times have we driven past



Old Creamery at Barwon Downs

Creamery and Wineshanty Roads and wondered how they originated? The wine-shanty, Farmer's Arms sat right on the corner where the fruit trees remain.



A12-17 FREMONT HOTEL BARWON DOWNS 3236