



FORREST HISTORY NEWSLETTER



Issue 12

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WE LOSE THREE MORE LOVED AND RE- SPECTED MEMBERS

Since our last Newsletter in November many members sadly attended the funeral of **Allan Crabbe** in February.

In the early days of our Society Allan and Edna were always present with their cheerful dispositions. Many will remember how he kindly hosted our group in March 2009 during our research visit to Gerangamete. He contributed valuable club and church records to our archive. He will be greatly missed.



We will also miss **Edith Strickland** who struggled with ill health for several years. Who can forget her determination to walk with others around Forrest with her walking frame when we were looking at where people lived. She and husband Peter were very popular with locals when they ran the Barwon Downs store.



We will also greatly miss **Alf Wilhelms** who died last month.

Married to Lorna, a Blundy, members will recall how Alf hosted our visit to the Yaughner site and the excellent research paper he provided for the visit showing the location of the Church, School, Abattoir, Station, and gate keepers cottage. Alf was very active in later years compiling a comprehensive family history.



FORREST : HOME OF SPORT

While our research has shown that most small country towns had sports meetings in by gone days, in fact Barry Gourley indicated that there was a Victorian Athletics Association which allocated our sports days on their state wide calendar, there is no doubt that sport played a very important part in the lives of people in Forrest and the neighboring townships.

Whenever we have an event around a particular theme and invite our members to supply photo's and notes it is always pleasing to see how much new material is received for our archives. Our event **Forrest: Home of Sport** on 9th September was no exception. We were most grateful for material received from Norman Houghton, an entire chronicle of references from the Colac Herald starting in 1891, a history of the Forrest Netball Club from 1953 – 2002 from Yvonne Harrington-Hunt, and wonderful pictures and information from Jean Whitehead, Nora Potter, Bev Whelan, Ann Trew, Pat Washington and John Hoult, and some earlier material from Pam Jennings. The contributions from Lyle Trew and David Frizon were outlined in the last newsletter.

FOUNDATION DAY SPORTS

We turned our attention first to the famous annual sports meetings. We noted that in 1891 over 800 locals attended a picnic meeting in Bartlett's Paddock opposite the Hotel. There were bands etc. But by 1896 and '97 after the commencement of the railway, there were special trains run from Colac, Beeac, Geelong, Irrewarra and even one from Cressy. In 1897 the 9.30 train from Colac was crowded with 500 on it when it arrived at Forrest. By 1906 almost 1200 people attended the sports day.



Forrest Sports Day, Highland Dancing

In our document archive we are very lucky to have half a dozen official programs dating from 1916 to the 1930's. This bridged the period moving from the Pub Paddock to the Yaughner Reserve. It was fascinating to note the businesses represented amongst the patrons eg. JG Johnstone, W Hayden, J G Grant, WR Henry, and H Curtis. Many well known names from the past made up the lists of committee members, judges, starters, and handicappers, such as W H Pengilley, W Gale, E Muir, T Penman, W Pyle, P Hurley, J Crabbe, W Mulhaire, T Pyle, J Harrington, J Black, T Fletcher, P Whelan, W Hammond, and W Hutchison. The list of events is just as interesting, including the Maiden Plate over 100 yards, the Standing Block, 45 in. girth, Boys Race 75 yards, 16 years and under, Novice Log Chop, Committee race over 100 yards, Quarter Mile Race, Double Handed Sawing Match, Highland Fling, Barrell Race, Sailors Horn Pipe, Married Men's Race 75 yards, Flag Race on horseback, 1 Mile Bicycle

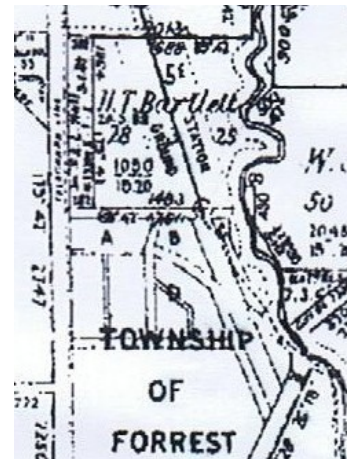
Race, Irish Jig for boys and girls Under 16, Pony Trot 1 Mile, 2 Mile Bicycle Race, Potato Race on horseback, kicking football, and underhand log chop. The programs also list the actual participants registered for each event and many of them are also well known family names in the district.

WHERE WAS THE PUB PADDOCK?

We knew it was opposite the Pub but directly opposition or further down on the opposite side of the railway line and how big was it and what was there?

It was also called Bartlett's Paddock and we read that in 1896 Mr H Bartlett, made the paddock available on the 31st January.

At a recent meeting in Forrest ,Wendy Fox from the Shire exhibited an interesting aerial photograph of Forrest and it was quickly obvious that the indistinct outline of the former Football Oval could be seen between the old Railway Line and the West Barwon River. A check with Google maps showed that this was about the same size as the present oval so that appeared to support our observations. Darky Trew indicated that a gravel road went down the north side of what is now the Caravan Park, across the Railway Line and left into the paddock. The profile of the hills behind correspond with photos from the 1920's including a popular one showing Highland Dancing. (see photo page 1.)



Early map of Forrest showing the Bartlett land north of the town.

FOOTBALL

At the time of arranging our meeting for September 9th we chose to focus on sport because the Forrest Seniors and the Reserve team were playing in the finals and perhaps even the Grand Finals on the day before our meeting.



Both achieved our expectations and the Senior's went on to become Premiers again after 7 years.

So that provided an air of excitement at our meeting as many had

been at the match and Ken showed a video of the 4th Quarter and celebrations after the siren.



Recent aerial photo showing position of sports ground



Hundreds arrived at the Pub Paddock by train

CRICKET

We had little in the archive on cricket and we drew heavily on Norm Houghton's book on the history of Forrest, *By the Barwon*, indicating that Cricket first became established in 1921. Jean Whitehead brought in another excellent team photo (right) but we still do not have a definitive history of cricket in Forrest. Jean say the Cricket Club soon lapsed after it was formed and didn't revive until the late 1930's, remaining active until 1955. It has since reformed to play in the Colac and District Competition.



Forrest Cricket Club Premiers 1967-68. Back Row: A. Maguire, G. Crabbe, W. Matthews, G. Stephens, R. Redman, R. Hansen, R. Shanahan, B. Hamill, Front Row: D. Whelan, P. McIvor (VC), R. Wynd (C), T. McLaughlin, W. Maguire (Pres).

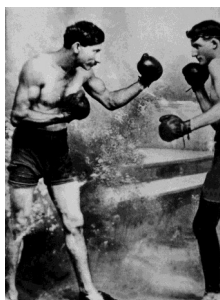
Where was the clay shooting?

In our last newsletter Lyle Trew mentioned hi recollection of Clay Shooting, He has since confirmed

that it was about 200 yards from the old Catholic Church going towards Barwon Downs but on the opposite side of the road.

BOXING

Nevin Kent, left, was a well known boxer. Don Whitehead said that after the war an ex.RAAF boxer trained a group in Forrest of which he was one. The best of the group turned out to be Neil (Red) Curtis who topped his instructor.



A LOT MORE TO KNOW!

After two hours we thought we had the topic of sport at Forrest property nailed until some of those present started talking about : **Horseracing** There was a local track which Frank Whitehead said was up in the vicinity of Bruce Neil's property in Barwon Downs but what else is known ? We have nothing in our records at all.

Tug of War Club – Barry Gourley said competitions were held against many neighboring townships and Frank Whitehead indicated that there were often quite good prizes. A remarkable contraption was employed to winch up the correct strain on the rope and then to release the rope and watch a needle which showed which side had the advantage. Are there any photos anywhere on Tug of War or more information of where and how this happened? Did some of the timber mills put up teams?

A Fishing Club was started by Geoff Speirs resulting from an extraordinary catch in the West Barwon River .

We have no information on the **Forrest Tennis Club**.

There was also a **Badminton Club** in Forrest which regularly competed with neighboring communities but about which we have not information, press cuttings, or photos at all. Can anyone help?

Carpet Bowls was also important but we have no information in our records.

We have made a very good start researching the History of Sport in Forrest. While we are on a roll please dig into your photos, press clippings and trophy cupboard and let us have more information for our archives .

NETBALL

From the materials supplied by Yvonne Harrington-Hunt the Netball Club was established in 1953. However, (Florrie Oakley said she remembers playing Basketball in Forrest in the 1920's when the girl's matches followed the footballers to whatever ground they were playing. We need more information on that earlier basketball history. Some of the well known ladies of the district including Glenda Denning, who was at our meeting, appear in photo's as youthful members of the netball teams who won

Premierships from 1962 to 1965.

1965 Premiers



Back: Fay O'Hanlon, Ruth Crabbe, Judy Murnane, Robyn Gray. Front: Fran O'Hanlon, Glenda Denning.

Nursing and Policing in Forrest

On Sunday 18th November, prior to the now annual Primary School Student Reunion, about 18 members met in the Community Hall to see how much they recalled of **nursing and policing in Forrest**. Norman Houghton (who could not make it on the day) provided us with a very useful printout of mentions of nursing and police in the Colac Herald 1913 – 1966. This gave us some names and dates with which to start. Pam Jennings, who was also unable to attend, is presently preparing a new booklet for the Society on nursing in Forrest and was able to give us a preliminary list of nurses and dates. June Matheson gave us the Forrest Police whom she was able to remember and this again is supplemented with the names mentioned in the extracts from the Colac Herald. We received many interesting submissions. Here is one from Sheila Currie:

My father, Thomas Semmel, was head master of Forrest school 1928 until 1933. I started school there in 1929. I am now 90 years of age. I have vivid memories of Sister Smart the bush nurse. I do not remember Jessie Clark or Sr Martin.... As the Depression was in progress, my father had the only car in town and he would help sister when need be. On one occasion the children were playing on the railway turntable. Matt Harrington, who was about 6 at the time, fell and the turntable went over him.

Sr Smart was called and my dad drove them to the hospital in Colac. Sr S held his head up to see Colac as he had never been there before. Unfortunately he passed away some hours later.



There is no doubt that the sister most remembered is Agnes (Polly) Dowey (Maddison) and she worked from late 1930's until the late 60's, retiring in 1970.

Everybody remembers Polly Dowey's goat that regularly chased the children along the street if it was loose. Barry Gourley was chased while carrying an icypole and a cone.

People in the town were quite impressed that Polly had a light above her bed which was driven by battery while everyone else was using oil lanterns. She was able to turn it on immediately at

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History of Nursing

According to a Colac Herald report on the 6th January 1915, bush nursing commenced in Forrest with an installation performed by the Governor General, Sir Ronald Munroe Ferguson, and State Governor, Sir Arthur Stanley on Friday 8th January at the Forrest Hall. The Vice Regal party was making a tour of the Otways.

Nurse Gerard was the first nurse, then **Agnes Cheeseman**, followed by **Nurse Greer**, the first permanent bush nurse at Forrest. It operated from a rented cottage we think on the North side of Blundy St. below the cnr. of Barwon St. **Catherine Rhys Williams** then **Carrie Guest** were followed by **Nurse Amos** 1921 – 26 until she returned to Queensland to work in a warmer climate. **Sister Raphael** took over but the Colac Herald noted that 20 families have departed and membership has declined. This suggests that the Bush Nursing Association was supported by annual subscriptions and donations (the sports club gave valuable support). From 1926-8 it was **Sister Jean Haig**, 1930 **Nurse May Hewitt**.

Note: *Jen Cunnington invited Max and Merlin Curtis to the meeting as Max's mother was Nurse May Hewitt.*

Around 1929 and 1930 BNA had 80 members. In 1931 there was a crisis meeting because subscribers were dropping off and it was living off its bank account. It was said that "BNA should become more self-supporting". Then it was **Sr Smart** and **Jessie Clark** before **Sister Margaret Martin** took over in 1933 and

the association decided to build a cottage for the sister. **Mr. Bert Ireland** donated the land and the saw millers donated the timber. The cottage was located at 27-9 Grant St. two doors north of the Store. Twenty five pounds was raised towards completing the cottage. It was most likely built in 1935. In 1935 **Sister Eileen Kerr** is the bush nurse and it is most likely that **Polly Dowe** followed her around 1937-8.. At the right hand end of the cottage veranda there was a room which was used by the visiting doctor. The one most remember was **Dr Eastdown** from Birregurra.

There were some remarkable stories of **Polly Dowe's** work which appeared to go **well beyond what would be expected of a nurse** these days. She would stitch up a wound without hesitation, reset fractures and was the first person to call in the case of any accident or illness. (Even being called to Kevin Gouley's father who was dying of a heart attack where she was not able to help). Jen Cunnington remembers her coming everyday at one stage to the Curtis family house in Yaughar to give an injection. It is thought she might have had a bike with a basket on the front. Her husband Alex (Turk) gave her great assistance and support. Alex (right) was the clerk at the Forest Commission for many years. Alex was a very serious man. Linda Fisk remembers that her mother had Polly as her best friend. She remembers her stitching up a finger when she had a deep cut.



People in the town were quite impressed that Polly had a light above her bed which was driven by battery while everyone else was using oil lanterns. She was able to turn it on immediately at night whenever she was called.

There was no ambulance in those days and there were only four or so cars in Forrest, Jack Turner would help take people to visit their family in hospital. Sister Dowe's husband Alex, also had a small car, a little wooden-paneled Morris, like a station wagon, which was sometimes used on her visits. Ultimately the Forestry bought a Blitz Wagon called a scout which was almost like an armor plated vehicle. It was used for emergencies and when John Hoult's grandfather's hearse could not make it up the hill, the body was bought back and transported to Colac in the Blitz Wagon. Jack Sharp's car was used to take people to the football and of course Frank Whitehead Snr. had a vehicle for transport as well.

Your Help Needed. We are preparing a special data sheet on **nursing**. If you can correct or add information to the above or have other stories please send them in.

One member ?? remembers their parents being the bush when she was about 8 splitting wood and a shaft of metal flew off from the wedge and embedded itself in her father's arm. When it was

WHO LIVED WHERE ?

Norman Houghton has kindly offered to write up the information we gathered on the history of who occupied Forrest properties and it is still coming in. Valerie Beddome has provided a very useful list of occupants of 44 Station St. and of course we saw the excellent work John James has done on nearby rural properties in the district at our last gathering.

A QUICK RESPONSE

Sylvia Sanderson has given us one of those quick responses we love to receive!

"Darby Bremner's horse did not win the Melbourne Cup. It was as follows: 1930 Third, 1931 Second, 1932 Third and 1933 Second." Thank you.