

# FORREST HISTORY NEWSLETTER



Issue 13

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## SADDLY MISSED

Since our last Newsletter in November we have lost both **Edna** and **Allan Crabbe**.

In the early days of our Society Allan



and Edna were always present with their cheerful dispositions. Many will remember how they kindly hosted our group in March 2009 during our research visit to Gerangamete. They have contributed valuable club and church records to our archive. They 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 earlier this year. Married to Lorna, a Blundy, members will recall how Alf hosted our visit to the Yaughar 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.

## WE'RE ON THE MOVE

On October 1st last year, the Barwon Water, Colac Board Director, David Harris, officially handed over the key to our new **Forrest History Centre**. It was a very important moment in the 6 year history of our Society and once again we took the opportunity of expressing our gratitude to Barwon Water for their generous support for our activities..



On October 27th we held our first working bee and at the same time formed a committee to manage the new centre and take responsibility for its development and maintenance. Members are :

Jim and Geoff Speirs, Frank and Jean Whitehead, Ron and Jen Cunnington, Barry and Glenda Gourley, Don and Aileen Larson and Norman Houghton. Frank and Barry quickly organized some roof and plaster work while Jean equipped the kitchen and Aileen swung into action cleaning windows. Don has straightened up the shed and Barry has installed some shelves for the collection of vintage bottles Jim Speirs has donated. We now have place to display the Gerangamete rifle Club blazer given to us by Les(Squeak) Miller and the Church Bible from Delwyn Seebek. To give some idea of how our exhibition space might be used inside, in the garage and outside in the grounds some exhibits have been loaned or donated including a jump stump plough, an original mixing vat from the Forrest Bakery, a four wheel horse drawn market cart, a chaff cutter, a cream separator, a butter churn, a singer sewing machine and a collection of vintage cameras.



The jump stump plough



The horse drawn market cart arriving at the Center.

Another member of our Society who will be greatly missed is Alfred (**Darkie**) Trew.

Darkie died last November at age 85. He seldom missed attending our events, usually with his wife Mavis and had a lot to contribute.



Last October we received a generous donation of \$200 for our new History Centre from Bet and Merv Blundy who wrote, "Our fond memories are of Forrest and District and we wish you all the best for this new venture".

## 'A FEW OF MY FAVORITE THINGS.....'

One of our most enjoyable events occurred on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September last year when we invited members to bring 2 or 3 objects of historic interest and to talk about them. **Ron Cunnington** started



off the day with a knife with a handle like an axe used for splitting palings used in the early days.



This was an interesting because our archive contains several photographs of workers splitting palings which represented a very large part of the timber production from the bush mills.

**Peter Shanahan** said his grandparents were the Pengilleys, the first licensees of the Terminus Hotel. During their time here they had 10 children. His family were originally in the Mallee but around 1841, when the Huntingdale Mission property came up for sale they took 450 acres. This 'Happy Valley' property predates the beginnings of the township of Birregurra and is still in the family. Peter showed an aboriginal hand stone axe made of pyrites or green granite and a curious little guillotine which was used to slice chewing tobacco. His mystery tool turned out to be one for removing slate from a slate roof.

**John James** showed a vintage indoor croquet set, perhaps a children's toy and the traditional washing board.

**Geoff Spiers**, said his historic objects go back some 100 million years during the Jurassic period. Despite being told to the contrary, he proved that the fossil remains of plants could be found in the Otway's and he showed a specimen that had been recovered from the Quarry. Again it was said that there was no iron pyrites in the Otway's but he had found a sample from a cutting after some erosion. **Jean Whitehead** presented a mantle radio run by bat-



tery which had to be recharged at the local workshop. This led to some interesting reminiscences of our favorite radio programs. In those old days radio was important for the local football results, 3LO was popular and the tea time programs on 3DB of Martin's Corner and Dad and Dave brought back many memories of eating at home with the family. She also displayed a 1944 cup for an intermediate running championship won by her husband Don.

**Frank Whitehead** showed an old 2 foot folding carpenter's ruler which we have not seen before as well as an old tire gauge. We remembered how they had changed the valve from the traditional pump connection to car tyre size so it could be pumped up at service stations. **Marriette Depeler** read a wonderful old press



clipping from a fancy dress ball from St James Anglican Church, many local identities were mentioned.

**Bruce Neill** won a prize for the most original costume, **Cliff Frizon** was the best dressed boy while **Helen and M Whelan** won a prize as **Mickey and Minnie Mouse**, she also mentioned that her father was a boxer and the air force invited him to train younger boys. He has a cup for boxing. **Bev Mattingley** pro-



duced her third grade school report from the Forrest Primary School from 1948. It was a good report and assured her that she should do well in 1949.

**Ken Widdowson** produced a hand driven harrow which he had found on his farm which turned out to be a hand pushed onion weeder with adjustable blades. This led to an important discussion about secondary crops in Forrest such as hops, potatoes, peas etc. which provided useful pocket money for ladies and children in the town. Ken showed **Albert Hammond's** old work hat. He told the story of the Kent family who occupied an old house on the farm and how as a young girl **Biddy Kent** married **Albert Hammond** and they took over the farm at the South end of King's Creek Valley, sleeping their first year in

a tent while they built their first house. No-one had any problems recognizing Ken's last object, a **1930's copper stick**. Everyone remembered on washing day the copper had to be lit, and clothes as they boiled were agitated with the washing stick. This led to an animated discussion on how we used to bath in the old days, the water being heated in the copper and then bucketed into the bath on bath night. The whole family, starting with the children, would use the bathwater. It brought back quite a few memories of washing days for Flo Oakley when she held the copper stick in her hand. She seemed right at home with it.

**Jim Spiers** remembered washing being done in a kerosene tin on the fire. While Geoff remembered a rotary agitator, and Nora Potter remembered the hours washing football socks in the 1950's. She also remembers the iron's used before electricity. One powered by fuel which would often flare up. Some members even remembered washing at the river bank and drying clothes on nearby bushes and how nice they smelt getting into bed. Nora remembers an iron which appeared to be wrapped in light sheet met-

al, others called it a smoothing iron and Ken remembered the words of a favorite song at the time "Dashing away with a smoothing iron, she took my heart away,".

**Nora Potter** surprised us all by producing a beautiful old wedding dress which she said had been in great demand subsequently as a fancy dress costume at times like the 1937 fund raising event for the Bush Nursing Service, run by the Anglican Church.

In all it was a very interesting morning and it turned out to be a very good opportunity for stimulating



## WE REMEMBER THE WAR

On Sunday the 17<sup>th</sup> November we held a research event on "**We remember the War**". It proved to be an even more interesting event than expected as quite a few members brought along exhibits which they were able to talk about. **Ron Cunnington** had an interesting selection of War Memorabilia such as an explosives box and a field transmitter. He also had a headlight screen used in blackouts during WW2.

**Carlene Alexander** told us about her uncle, Ray Dawson who left Australia in November 1913 for Egypt where he met up with the 13<sup>th</sup> Light Horse which had come from Gallipoli and together they went to the Western Front. Carlene showed a card received from him at the time. She was surprised at the lack of security, describing exactly where they were and the traffic of the Suez Canal. Ray was injured several times and he is writing to Dory, his true love. Carlene's grandmother's brother, George Stanford, was in the infantry. He was injured three times but each time was sent back to the front and finished up in Italy. He married a nurse in hospital. On their return to Australia, they had four children but he died quite early as a result of his war injuries.

**Nora Potter** had some recollections of her Uncle Ben Halliday (her grandfather's brother). He was wounded in the war and only survived 10 years after his return. After he was wounded he spent 18 months in 5 different hospitals. On his return, to Nora's horror, one of the children asked him what he enjoyed most about the war, but he went on to say that it represented a wonderful opportunity to travel and to see places which he never would have done otherwise. Nora recounted a story. This is during the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war and he was in the islands with the Japanese approaching. When Singapore fell, expecting a Japanese attack on the island where they were, they were sent out to render every bridge obsolete so the Japanese would not find it easy when they arrived and wrecking the bridges they dropped the rocks down into deep gullies. They went back to base and found the camp had been abandoned and they just had to make do. But on the next day the officers returned and they announced that the Japanese were not approaching and they were all sent back out to rebuild the bridges!

**David Frizon** made a very interesting presentation about the war experiences of relatives on his mother's side. When he researched the WW1 records of his Great Uncle, Stan Ball, he discovered that there was no record of him enlisting from his home town of Newcastle, NSW. They later discovered a recruit of the same name from Newcastle UK and realized he had given a false address because he was only 16 when he enlisted! David also spoke of his Grandfather, Gerry Heyen, who played an important role in The US offensive in the Pacific. The Americans, then based in Australia, after evacuating the Philippines, were



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### THE WEST BARWON DAM

On the 14<sup>th</sup> April we held a research event under the theme "What are your memories of the Construction of the West Barwon Dam?" We viewed a slide show of the initial excavation through to the official opening in 1965. Greg?, Arthur Weston, Normy Rourke and Alby Halliday all worked on the dam for a while. **Frank Whitehead** worked on the initial clearing of the site then any driving work he could get and later had a horse and cart and took all the groceries up to the house which was there at the V in the middle of the dam site which was the place where all the workers ate. It got too wet in the end for the cart and Frank got a sledge. **Barry Gourley** said they took a truck up from the bakery to the dam every day. Frank's horse was owned by Charlie Crabbe and if it ever got out of your back yard at night it would go home to Gerangamete and that happened a couple of times. **Audrey Miller** said they used to work all through the night and it was on the night

### Japanese Planes over the Otway's

Apologies for returning to this same subject. In the April 2010 issue we showed a classroom drawing of a Japanese plane seen by a student of Birregurra Primary School. The new 2010 publication *History of Cape Otway 1939 – 45* by Ian C McKellar and Morrie Fenton, has an actual illustration and we can see how close the student's drawing was.

Now that we have access to Japanese War records there is a definite record of a submarine surfacing between King Island and Cape Otway

planning their offensive and found a valuable map of the Pacific Islands prepared by Gerry Heyen. At that time David's Grandfather was in the Australian Naval Reserve helping with recruitment., but before the war he had been on a boat collecting Copra from the Islands and bringing it back to Australia. As a result he developed such a good knowledge of navigating that part of the Pacific that his help was sought and he spent most of the war on board US vessels providing important assistance to them. He was highly respected by the Americans. David showed a canvas covered travel case which would have gone with him to all the different stations during the war and all the big battles associated with the occupation of Japan .As a result of his valuable service, David's grandfather, Gerry Heyen, received an Order of Merit from the US and the American Ambassador attended his funeral in early 1981.



shift that Stevan Prascervic was killed in 1962. Frank said he had to leave in the end because they kept asking him where his license was and when he was going to bring it and show it to them and of course he didn't have one. It was good money and Frank said he made enough money to buy his first motor car. Audrey said she had just got married in 1968 and they were working on leveling their garden. The dam contractors had to get rid of rocks so they had an arrangement that they could come any time and dump rocks on their property.

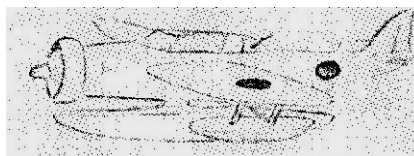
Many of the Forrest businesses did quite well out of the dam construction , in particular the pub which was filled every night. They had dances



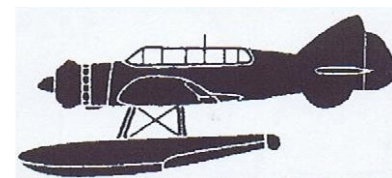
in the town which the workers attended.

Frank said that Louie De Jong used to work up there and he got sacked three time but he kept coming back the next day, because he made out he couldn't understand them. After the third time they let him carry on working. **John James** found an internet reference which indicated that the Sandersons Mill, the Noonday and Barwon Mills were submerged by the new Dam but during a subsequent drought some of the remains appeared above water including the funnel of the steam train.

**Norman Houghton** said that it was his report and he had identified the engine as being from an L Class Loco on the Barwon Mill site. Frank said the excavation machine which they used up there was massive and had to be brought in three pieces and it took weeks for them to assemble. **Nora Potter** said the old dam site was a great spot for collecting blackberries.



and sending a reconnaissance plane to survey Geelong, Williamstown and the Melbourne area returning safely to its mother ship. From 1942 Japanese I-25 long range submarines patrolled the Australian Coast carrying a Yokosuka E14Y1 two seater



mono plane with floats.

The wings and floats were removed and the tail plane folded up. It was in a sealed container and could be reassembled and prepared for flight in a short time. Forrest observers during WW2 reported only one unidentified plane and it was never confirmed if it was Japanese.