



# FORREST HISTORY NEWSLETTER



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## TRAGIC LOSS

Unfortunately there is hardly a month goes by that we do not lose a valued friend and an important member of our Historical Society. Perhaps we can think how timely that we formed the group in 2006. We have been in time to have had the important contributions of people like Clarrie Green, Alf Stevenson, Norman Gardner and Alf Wilhelms. It was a very sad time to lose both Frank and Cliff Frizon in a matter of weeks.



Despite failing health Frank made every effort to attend our various events and on the last occasion when he felt it was beyond him he even came to my house to record

his memories of earlier days on video. What an immense amount of knowledge of the history of timber milling in our region was possessed by these two!



We also sadly record the loss of Normy Rourke, Lorna Fisk and Merv Blundy.



The passing of Jim Spier, last November was a tragic loss. For years Jim was a one man local historical society. He never missed an opportunity to grab his camera and interview a local identity. He recorded over 40 important interviews. He was a visionary and a great enthusiast. He promoted the idea of our own history centre. He wrote *Kaanglang* and produced several videos and generously made his history photo library available to other authors.

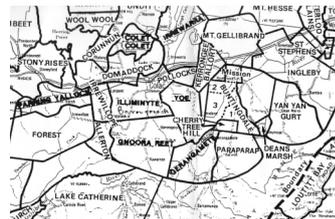
## THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF OUR DISTRICT

**We were most fortunate to have the benefit of the knowledge and research of John Callahan when he made an illustrated presentation to our event on the 26th October last year.**



Our area was virtually invaded by Tasmanians (although it was Van Diemens land in those days) With their success of selling wool to England, Tasmanian pastoralists were looking toward Victoria, still part of New South Wales in 1835, when John Batman and fellow pastoralists sailed across Bass Strait. Following Batman's well know "Treaty" with local aborigines along the Yarra River the pastoralist established their base at Indented Head, between present Portarlington and St Leonards.

John commenced his account with two of these pastoralists, Hesse and Gellibrande who went exploring the Western District and became lost. A search party was sent to look for them and were very impressed by the superb grazing land and reported back to other farmers from Van Diemens Land. John was able to



draw on original letters written by Geo Armytage to the Lt Governor C. J Latrobe, outlining the way he and others took up the land in our area. John showed a map of those famous squatters sheep stations such as Gerangamete, Paraparap, Ingleby and YanYan Gurt.

When the "invasion" came to the knowledge of the government in Sydney, the Batman Treaty was disallowed and the land taken up by the squatters was gazetted as having been seized illegally. All land was the property of the Crown. However lucrative exports of wool to London was already taking place and the government was very short of money( does that ring any bells?) so they granted leases to the squatters for the land they had seized and taxed their production. John said that the whole question of boundaries at that time was quite fluid and virtually a matter of mutual agreement.

However other settlers were arriving from overseas, particularly as a result of the gold rush and were looking for land. The politicians regarded the Western District as a golden land, like England, capable of supporting hundreds of families. so by the 1870's the leases began to expire and surveyors divided these larger holdings into smaller units of and offered them for sale to selectors.

In 1856 Henry Dewing and Philip Callahan leased Paraparap from Capt Henry Dewing. When he died in 1859 the lease expired and the land became available for acquisition and Philip's share of 320 acres is still owned by the Callahan family to this day. John showed a series of family photos and some important historic photos of the period..To our delight he concluded with an amusing photo of an overloaded donkey cart. We were most grateful for a very interesting presentation.



### A TASTE OF THE EARLY DAYS

John Callahan's presentation, (see page 1) was very well researched and provided an excellent insight into those early days. Its hard to conceive of what it was like then.. William Roadknight was running 640 cattle on his 21,000 acre property, Gerangamete. He became a leading citizen of Geelong and established a splendid home on the Barwon River, South Corio, from which he managed Gerangamete along with his other properties, River Station, Stoney Rises, and Cherry Tree Hill.

A visit to Barwon Park, just outside Winchelsea , property of the Austin's gives an idea of the prosperity enjoyed by these families. The Armytages, of Yan YanGurt, went on to build Como House, South Yarra , another property now owned by the National Trust.

Along with a valuable reference, 'Letters from Victorian Pioneers', John presented some wonderful recollections and amusing drawing by Edward Snell, particularly tracing a horseback trip from Birregurra to Apollo Bay in 1856. Right is 'the preferred route from Birregurra to their first stop, Bartlett's property', just north of the future Forrest township and below. 'Arrival at Apollo Bay'.



## OUR NEXT EVENT

The amusing drawing above is relevant to our next event. **THE ROAD FROM FORREST TO APOLLO BAY** at which we look at these early experiences of the road and go on to

study the important coach services which ran from the Forrest Station to Apollo Bay. Jen Cunningham will tell us about the most famous coach operator her antecedent , Tom Curtis. We have invited the Apollo Bay Historical Society to join us for this event. In the afternoon we will drive down the route under the guidance of Norman Houghton and we are promised a welcome cup of tea at the headquarters of the Apollo Bay Historical Society. Please join us on **Sunday, 3rd May from 10.30 am at the Forrest Community Hall**. Our friends from Neighborhood House are providing the lunch so we can get away on time for the Bay.



**Cream Delivery in 1876.**

On e of the great historic photos presented by John Callahan and



**Country Women's Association basket making at Barwon Downs. Lillian Callahan, middle row, right.**



**The first house**



**John McClennan and the Callahan Girls, 1910**

## FORREST WELCOMES HOME THE TROOPS June 1946

At the end of WW2 the Shire organized a series of functions in the district to welcome home returning servicemen. According to the Colac Herald-The people of Forrest and Barramunga turned out in full force on Friday the 1st June 1946 at the Forrest Hall. The large crowd was full of gaiety and certainly enjoyed the music supplied by the popular Forrest orchestra, "the Gloom Chasers".

The 60 guests included well known local names such as Henriksen, Taylor, Trew, Caspar, Curtis, Dowie, Evans, Gourley, Grant, Hammond, Hutchison, Mulgrew, Murnane, Muir, Neale, Rourke, Whelan and Wihelms.

A few moments of silence recognized those locals who did not return: John Mulgrew and William Mellings.

The President of the Forrest Welcome Home Committee, Mr. R. J Green presented the returned soldiers with a beautiful travelling rug, being: **Mrs. Reg. Wilson, Miss L. Henricksen and Messrs. F. Curtis, A.G. and R. Hutchison, F.J. Grant, G. Jackson, R. Jeffers, A. R. Rourke, A. McKenzie, N. Neale, D. Neale, A. Curtis, G. Curtis, W. Hill, K.J. Phillips, W. J. Whelan, A. Thomas, and D. Gourley.**

The Shire President, Cr. R.M. Whelan, said that the men and women of the Shire whose enlistment totalled over 600 had fought bravely in every sphere of war. Amongst them were "Rats of Tobruk", Navy men who had fought the last brave battle with the 'Perth', men of the RAAF and those who gave the Japs their first big defeat on the Kokoda Trail. These men had given up their health and offered their life for their country.

The singing of "For They are Jolly Good Fellows" concluded the proceedings and dancing continued to the early hours of the morning.

## Your Family History : Penman visit

Tracing your family history is not everyone's cup of tea. But sometimes the question arises "How did it all happen?"

Maybe you want to leave something for the children. It's always exciting when someone who has caught the 'family history bug' comes to Forrest to trace their origins. Shirley Aitchison is descended from the Penmans, a well known name in our early history. Visiting from Port Macquarie, NSW she traced her family to Bendigo, Geelong and then to the Otways. Her great grandfather, John Penman, a weaver from Scotland, arrived in Australia on the SS Great Britain in 1869.

In the 1880's, when blocks of land in the Otways were available for selection he took up land on the ridge adjacent to the well know Curtis clearing and farm. On her weekend in Forrest, 21,22 March, Geoff Spiers was kind enough to drive Shirley up the Kaanglang Road to find the family land on the Mt Sabine corner and an adjoining Penman's Shale pit. After the coming of the railway the first publican, William H. Pengilly, set up a grocery store in Station St and John Penman ran it for him before the well known Mr. R. Green took over. A daughter, Maria, married Oliver John Houlst and they ran a boarding house in Station St. where the Whitehead Bus service was later located. Audrey Miller, who went to school with the Penman children, was able to give

Shirley (on the right in photo) her recollections of the Penman family. Naturally her visit finished in the cemetery where there are several Penman graves. Shirley was very happy with the information and photos she was able to obtain on her visit to Forrest.



## WE LOSE OUR HISTORY CENTRE

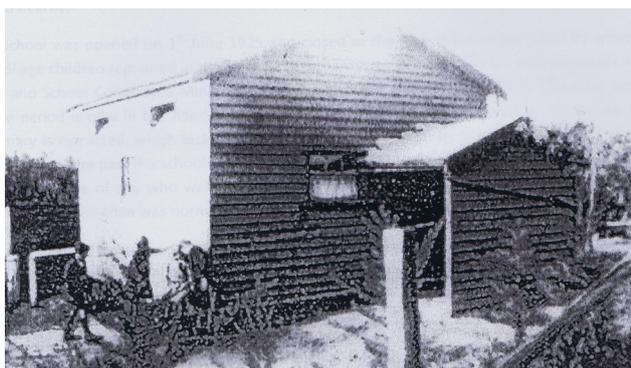
We are disappointed to advise that Barwon Water has decided to resume the Weir Keepers Cottage. They say these are unforeseen circumstances. At the time they acted in good faith believing that the house was surplus to their requirements. Now it is required for their Forrest Depot.

The building was quite derelict when we took over with mould on the ceilings and large holes where an air conditioning system had been removed. Our working committee of volunteers, Frank and Jean Whitehead, Barry and Glenda Gourley, Don and Aileen Larson, Jen and Ron Cunningham, Nora Potter and Mariette Deppeler did a wonderful job repairing, restoring and cleaning the building and it is quite embarrassing that their enthusiastic work has been in vain. Barwon Water has offered compensation and the generous grants received from the Forrest Lions Club and the Community Group will be refunded. A new home is being sought.

## The Upper Gellibrand State School No 4261



In October 2008 our Event involved research on the Bush Mills and a visit to Barramunga. Here our members are at the site of the former Upper Gellibrand State School at the top end of Roadknight Creek Road.



In the early 1920's families along the Gellibrand River, and on the Roadknight Creek Road, Stevenson, Hamill, Halliday, O'Neil and Wynne had no where to send their children to school. There was no school transport and the nearest schools were Barramunga(7km) and Forrest (11km). Roads were dirt tracks and there was no other option but walking.

Following a local community meeting and a letter to the Education Dept. a reply was received that it would provide a teacher, at least part time if a suitable building was available. The community decided to erect a small hall to serve both as a

school and community building. Ginny Halliday was appointed treasurer and an appeal opened. Funds were raised and a building of approx. 25ft by 20ft was erected by local carpenters. A brick chimney was important for the cold winters and a water tank was provided. The school opened on 1st June 1925 with nine pupils and Miss Hilda Beeby was appointed teacher on a shared arrangement with the Gerangamete school. By October 1926 the School inspector reported 19 pupils under a full time teacher, Mr F.J.Mitchell. "pupils were in earnest about their school work" . "The teacher has a quiet, effective and encouraging way with the children".

This research was contributed by Alf Willhelms. At the time of construction of the school he was a newly wed at the family property. His and Lorna's first child, Laurel, brought the enrolment to 10 in 1932. However with no prospects of further enrollments a decision was made to close the school at the end of 1933.

Alf recorded that an important activity for the senior boys in the autumn was to become axe men and cut a good supply of firewood for the winter. During the schools existence the Committee continue to raise funds from euchre parties, dances, and at least one sports day which included a popular wood chopping event. The building was used for community purposes and for a monthly service by the Methodist Church. This continued for another 10 years or so. It was also used as a polling booth for elections. However after the 2nd World War this ceased and the building fell into disrepair and was abolished in the 1950's.

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