

FORREST HISTORY NEWSLETTER



Volume 4, Issue 8

February 2010 Price 20c.

SPECIAL EVENT * FORREST AT PLAY

How did people in Forrest entertain themselves before television and computer games?

Can you help us with your stories and photos? Send them in or bring them along.



Bruce Neale has kindly offered to start the memories rolling:

Bruce remembers the flower shows in the old hall (opposite the police station) run by the Church of England ladies. It was like a mini fair, with lucky dips and other attractions, but flowers first of course.

The CWA had a full program of events local and with visiting clubs.

Weekly dances were organized by the Roman Catholics in their own hall opposite the current DSE, catering for a large Irish contingent in town - no reason to believe they were exclusive, however. (He was a child, and did not attend any.)

Bruce remembers movies in the old hall, card nights, also card games at the pub to keep the drinkers there, followed by the pool table as entertainment.

Sunday morning fights, (clean fist fights i.e. no weapons, no dirty tactics) which resulted from and depended upon who was drunk on Saturday night. The next morning fight, to settle the score, was held on the banks of the Barwon on what was Neale's property. The fights always attracted a good crowd.

Saturday night entertainment for many was a sing-a-long at Rourke's, with Nettie on the piano. As a young man, Bruce and Forrest friends would go to



Gill Neale reporting

Come to our next Society event, including the Forrest Flower Show and an Old Time Dance with Frankie Lawrence, just like the old days.

Sunday the 14th February, Community Hall, Grant St. from 10.30 am.

The St James Ladies Guild invite you to help us re-enact the 1933 Forrest Flower Show. Bring along your Show entries by 11am. Categories:

Flowers: Best vase from your own garden, **Vegetables:** Best home grown item (three if small), **Cooking:** Best home cooked cake or biscuit.

Fancywork: Best handmade craft from last 12 months. **Photography:** Category 1. People, Category 2. Scene. Top Judges, Great prizes.

Special prize for best 1930's hat.

Traditional catering will be provided by the Lions Club

the Victoria Hall in Colac to the **Saturday night dances**, after milking, by which time all the best "sorts" had been snaffled.

There were **football concerts** in the old hall, with local entertainment organized by Fred Pearce e.g. a group of footballers dressed up as **can can girls** and dancing (I have a feeling there may have been alcohol involved!) was one of the acts. There were also occasional **concerts** with visiting artists - I have a memory when I was in my teens and staying here of being in the old hall with a visiting **theatrical troupe** including a handsome artificially tanned **magician** called Johnny Broadway (also a musician, I think, but certainly had a girl with him who played a guitar and sang - the name Shirley Broadway hovers around the edges of my mind)

Another entertainment was the **gymkhanas** held each year at the recreation reserve, with horse events, sprints, wood chopping etc, the latter attracting big names (O'Toole, Matheson). Bruce said there was always a boozier there. The river had a **swimming hole** in it, with diving board and all, which was heavily used by the locals. This was in a bend of the river on Neale's place, below the now caravan park. Bruce's father had no problem with the town

The Mc Padden family, including Betty and Kathlene, have donated 150 prize tickets from the 1930's Forrest Flower Show, for winning Rhu-rarb to Sausage Rolls.



swimming there, but used to get aggro if people picked **apples** off the trees (remnant of orchard remains just through the caravan park fence) and throw them uneaten into the river - apparently a way to fill an idle moment between dips.

Musically, over years, the town was blessed with **Nettie Rourke** on the **piano**, **Sylvia Bremner** on the **saxophone**, and **Geoff Law** (during the war years) on the **piano**. He was a teacher at Barwon Downs, brother of Philip the Antarctic man. (nb. Fred Pearce, the truck driver and footy committee man, was Phil Law's brother-in-law)

Bruce also mentioned the **Buffalo Lodge**, next to the old hall in a separate building (might have been owned by IOOF, or the Buffaloes.) Bruce knows very little about them. His father apparently went to one meeting, said they all got full and wanted to fight, and didn't go again.

Bruce's photo of the swimming hole. See over..



WHO REMEMBERS THE SWIMMING HOLE ?

The swimming hole was over the railway from the pub behind the present camping ground. It was a very popular picnic spot until it was lost with the creation of the West Barwon Dam. Here are some memories: *"How easy it is to become a child again., hot summer days playing in the river with the Sanderson girls, Winnie and Kath, Joan Smart, Lorna Blundy, Phil Newcomb, Ray Hutchinson, Frank Frizon, Chas. Ham and others whose names escape me, sitting on a log across the river at "the little swimming pool" dangling our feet in the water as a "huge" tiger snake glided quietly out amongst our legs and all hell broke loose. I remember our learning to swim classes at the river which we arrived at by means of lying across the slope of the hill and rolling all the way down to the flat."* Sheila Currie (nee Semmel) whose father was head teacher from 1928-33.



Colac Herald

Pam Jennings has kindly dug out some references
1.8.1884: Batchelor Ball, Gerangamete
5/4/1889: Annual Bible Christian Society picnic at Barwon Downs took place

The Queen Contests

Queen contests appear to have been beauty/dress contests associated with fund raising. Does anyone have any information? Here is an account of one contest from the Colac Herald supplied by Pam Jennings: 1/9/1919

Queen Carnival held in Public Hall Forrest in aid of a local family who through sickness were in need. Mr J H Grant presided

5 Queens:

Miss Hurst, Barwon Downs (Queen of Sport)

Miss Simmons, Barramunga (Queen of Charity)

Miss Mary Burn, Henry's Mill (Queen of Timber Industry)

Miss Russell, Gerangamete (Queen of Forrest)

Miss Frizon (Queen of Peace)

Each Queen made her appearance on

stage accompanied by train bearers. Honour of Queen of Queens went to Miss Frizon: 90 pounds.

Other Queen amounts:

Russell 87 pounds

Burn 50/15 pounds

Simmons 23 pounds

Hurst 17 pounds

Total 270 pounds

Musical entertainment provided principally by 3 women from Ballarat.

at Mr Scott's residence. Mrs. Scott was very attentive to the wants of those present but Miss Scott unable to help due to ill health.

10/12/1889: Barwon Downs Bible Christian Church concert & coffee supper

11/4/1890 Murroon steam train & concert at Yaughter

25/11/1890 A Blue Ribbon meeting and concert is to be held in Yaughter Valley. A series of concerts to raise money for church organ fund – most of the young people have donned the blue ribbon and thirteen have signed the pledge, including several adults.

29/7/1891: Yaughter – Post Office Opening Ball

26/8/1891: Yaughter Presbyterian church grand soiree & concert

19/9/1891 PUBLIC PICNIC at Yaughter -In September 1891 over 600 people attended a picnic day on ground kindly lent for the occasion by Mr BARTLETT. A special train from Birregurra brought 100 people to the dancing to bagpipes by J & D McLENNAN and the violin by Mr FLETCHER; fishing and picnicking by the river amongst the ferns while the younger ones played football and other games. Mr BAILEY contributed toys and lollies for the children's prizes.

28/1/1919 Forrest sports & Barramunga Concert & tea meeting

19.8.1919 Gerangamete Rifle Shoot: Wilson, B Fletcher, B Greig, T James, J Balcombe, J Crabbe, S May & C Crabbe.



From the archive: Above, Emily Gourley (Mrs Cherry) Queen of Spring (when?) Left, Ethel Maud (Harding) Wood. Who is the lady on the far left and what occasion?

HOW DID THEY MAKE MERRY?

Norman Houghton's popular history of Forrest **By the Barwon, a History of Forrest and Barramunga**, rev. 2007

Provides a very useful list of those who led the merriment:

Feature Balls and dances were promoted by the Football Club, the Sports Committee and the Oddfellows Lodge. The public hall was the venue for most of these and this building was originally provided in 1900 using timber donated by Alex Sanderson and sited in Station Street south, opposite the present police station. The building was lengthened by nine metres in 1928 to cater for the increased use then prevailing. Regular Saturday night dances were held with piano and violin music being provided by local players such as **Mrs Craswaller, Florrie Cherry, Bob Mulhare and Fiddler Fletcher**. A more formal band was formed in the 1930s as the **Micky Mouse Band comprising Rose Seebeck piano, Neta Seebeck saxophone, Arthur Ure cornet, W. White drums and John Seebeck vocals**.

Pam Jennings' research also mentions the Forrest Merry-makers. Do we know anything more about their activities?

FORREST MERRYMAKERS: This concert troupe was formed in May 1919 to give entertainment to the local benefits, bringing people together and promoting social intercourse during the winter months.

President: W T GALE

Stage Manager: W A PAECH

Pianists: Mrs CRASWELLER

Committee: Miss ELDRIDGE, C FRIZON, Mrs CRASWELLER, Mr WILSON, Mr PENMAN and W PEACH.

Biddy Hammond (Clissold)

recalls that her husband Albert Hammond played the violin for dances at the hall and his father, Watty Hammond was usually the MC (see column 3).

Frankie Lawrence who is leading the dance band for our Old Time Dance on 14th Feb. has been playing for 58 years and has actually played at the old Forrest Hall. Darby Bremner was the policeman at the time and his wife, Sylvia, sometimes played the saxophone with Frankie's band. Nettie Rourke, the popular local pianist from Turner Drive also played with him. Nettie is well known for the local sing-alongs around the piano at her place. He also remembers Jim Spiers as a good Sax. player.



It is a pity that this appears to be the best picture we have of the old Forrest Hall, partly hidden by the manse in the foreground with the Oddfellows Lodge to the right. For dances Mrs May Jennings had a small temporary shop opposite for drinks and confectionary. No liquor was allowed but was often hidden behind the hall. According to Norman Gardner the young larks "would have a great time eavesdropping and finding out where the older fellows had hid their beer and would shift it to a new location, never far away, just to hear the owners say "How the heck did it get there?" "

What is 'Tally-Ho'?

Sheila Currie (p.2) also remembers: *Once a month the Mothers Club held a dance in the school and on moonlight nights we played "Tally-Ho" among the trees and usually reappeared amongst the grown-ups around supper time. A couple of times a year, movies or flicks came to the town. As there was no electricity, the projector was run from the engine of an old truck. Of course breakdowns were frequent, so a lady pianist was engaged to entertain the audience while repairs were duly made. At the end of the show the chairs were pushed back and everyone joined in the dancing. A couple of these shows I remember featured Rin Tin Tin, the wonder dog, and Charlie Chaplin.*

Talkie Bell

Sound movies arrived in the 30's and many people remember "Talkie Bell" from Apollo Bay. He showed movies in Forrest and Barwon on Friday night.

FORREST SPORTS DAY

29/1/1915 There is every likelihood that the Forrest Sports on Monday will attract a large attendance, for an excellent program has been drawn up including bicycle races, foot events, log chopping etc. Apart from the sports many people always avail themselves for the opportunity of making the trip for the spot is an ideal one for picnic purposes. There is ample shade along the river and people who desire to have a breath of the bush and get away for a brief space from the worries of every day life, can rely on having a pleasant day at this gathering. The special train leaves Cressy at 7.30 Beeac, Ondit and Colac arriving at Forrest at 10.50 and leaving Forrest on the return journey at 7.50pm. Colac Herald.



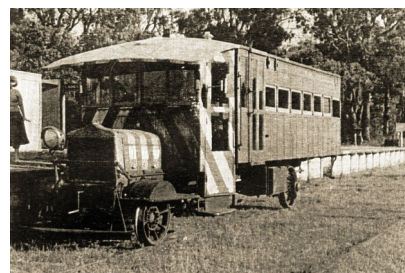
According to historian Norman Houghton **bush mill workers** had fewer opportunities for entertainment. "Reading was very popular, as was card playing, and those at Henry's No. 1 mill had access to a hall and billiard hut".

So they must have welcomed a Sunday visit from family and friends by tramway. (Photo above)

Writing in 1990 Norman Gardner recalls "Sixty years ago it was the usual Saturday night dance in the Barramunga School and Summer and Winter young people walked 15 miles or more to get to the dances—there were no roads only bush tracks. For many years life revolved around the Barramunga School where all the locals would get together followed by a monster supper made by the housewives who would vie with each other with batches of scones and cakes.

Families used to travel many miles to the dances and one lady recalls coming to the dance with her parents and upon returning home remembers sitting with her father in the cart while her mother walked ahead with a lantern to show the way."

In the days when the Tiger was running it was replaced by what Clarrie Green called "the Elephant" on weekends and special social occasions when more passengers were expected.



From **Clarrie Hutchinson:** *Everyone turned up for the football game and the Saturday night dance at Forrest Hall, when all the old time dances were the order of the night, the most popular would be the progressive barn dance, usually put on early in the night, every one had a chance to meet everyone during this dance. Mr Watty Hammond was regular master of Ceremonies and would call the sets, as we knew them then such as the **Lancers, Fitzroys etc.** probably forerunner of square dancing.*

**FORREST AND DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.**

**80 Kents Rd Forrest 3236,
Tel/Fax 52 366 327.**

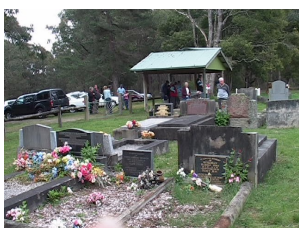
**Email: kenw@pipeline.com.au
Publisher: Ken
Widdowson**

Published with
assistance from:



GRAVESIDE HISTORIES

On Sunday the 4th October, 20 members visited the Forrest Cemetery. There were met by Peter O'Hanlon a trustee, who told us of the good work which had been done at the cemetery by the Lions Club including the initial cleaning up and the erection of the shelter and the information memorial which was installed and dedicated in February 2001. It provides a plan of the cemetery divided into Presbyterian, Methodist, Roman Catholic and Anglican with a small miscellaneous area and lists all of the people interned that could be located from records giving the position of the grave, date of death and age.



The shelter has been severely tested by some of our recent stormy weather and has only suffered minor damage to the ridge. The erection of the memorial involved the removal of the grave diggers shed in which, in earlier day's grave digging tools and the standard measurements for the grave were stored without being locked up. It was intended to be moved to the end of the pathway but it was known that there were several paupers buried there but it was not sure exactly where so it was deemed safest to put it in the far corner.

Peter showed us the location of a collective grave where still born children were buried and at this stage it is unmarked. It is their intention to fence it off and provide something better for them.

Don Whitehead, started the tour of the graves by recounting the story of **Reg Walker** who died in June 1949, age 18. He had just fixed his motorbike and took it for a trial run up Grant St and hit a stump, went over the top and was killed.

Dorothy Frizon, drew our attention to the fact that one of the most imposing memorials in the cemetery was in memory of **Alex**

Sanderson, age 45 years and his son **Marshall** aged 16 years who both died in November 1907 in that tragic accident where they were riding a consignment of logs on a tramway crossing a trestle bridge along the west branch of the Barwon when it collapsed, plunging them both to their death. While Alex died instantly Marshall appears to have survived a day before dying.



The grave also includes Alex Sanderson's, father, **David Sanderson** who died 1st October 1908, age 79. He arrived in this area from Mount Cole with his sons Alexander and George in 1897.

It was interesting to note that one of the largest tombs at the cemetery was that of the Ireland family. **Henry Ireland**, the original pioneer who came out and established the hop fields, died in November 1906 aged 59 years along with his wife Catherine who died September 1924 aged 73 years in the same grave is their son, Edwin Herbert (**Bertie**) Henry Ireland, who died September 1962, age 91 years. The grave also contains Bertie's sisters Isabelle, Annie, and Aida Elizabeth, all of whom appeared to have died young at 26, 21 and 18 respectively.

Nearby is the grave of the neighbouring pioneer, **Stephen Henry Blundy**, 1836 to 1927, well designated as "a **Yaughner Pioneer**" on his tombstone. We will recall from our Yaughner Day with Alf and Lorna Wilhelm's (nee Blundy) that Stephen Blundy came to Australia from Kent around 1800.

We were very interested to see some photos and information on the **Mulgrew** family who are buried at the cemetery. Bernard, husband of Louisa Mulgrew, died in March 1910 aged 83 years. Louisa has her own grave having died in June 1912, aged 79.

Ken Widdowson was able to tell something about the Black graves we found, as they were amongst the earliest settlers along Kings Creek where he presently lives. **John Black**, died in 1925, aged 68 and his wife Annie Black in November 1936. Next to that is James Black, December 1982 and Ethel Black, August 1968 aged 72. William Henry (Harry) John Black's grave is also nearby. He died in April 1947 at 63 years. It was Ethel and her twin sister Doris who owned the photo album found in their former home by Cyril Lidgerwood and made available to us to copy its wonder-

ful collection of local photos.

As a former Seebeck, **Edna Crabbe** was able to point out the Seebeck family graves including Johanna Charlotte Seebeck (nee Schmidt) born 1849, Rugen, Prussia dying in July 1933, wife of Johann (John) Henry Seebeck and father of their children John (Jack), Gustav, Francistra, Beatrice, Bernard, Amy and Grace.

Geoff Fox Joined the group as a recently appointed Trustee (apparently the number of trustees was enlarged to stave off a takeover bid from a Melbourne Cemetery Group) and it was a good opportunity to learn more about a long standing friend of



Geoff Fox, right, telling his mother's story to members. Host, Peter O'Hanlon, can be seen behind left.

many of our members Marj Fox, who died in May 2001, aged 75. We were keen to unravel her childhood and Geoff with the assistance of one or two other members was able to relate that Marj was a Simmons where her parents lived directly below the present lookout above the West Barwon Dam on the Apollo Bay Road. However she was actually born at the nearby Hayden's Mill. Her mother subsequently died when Marj was only 2 years of age and her care was taken over by the Hendricksons. They had a daughter, Louisa of the same age and Marj and she grew up virtually as sisters.



They moved to a farm behind Seebeck's in seven bridges road and Edna Crabbe can remember walking the 5 miles to the Forrest Primary School and collecting Marj along the way with others that joined the group on the way to school. They later lived at 79 Grant Street, the little property owned by Ken, now called 'Ponderosa', from where we have a photo of her (right) with Louisa (left) when she is leaving the farm for her wedding.

Our visit finished on a practical note where several members enquired about the possibility of booking and acquiring grave sites for themselves !!