



FORREST HISTORY NEWSLETTER



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The new Sawdust and Steam... a Remarkable Achievement

There is possibly no other place in Victoria which has been so painstakingly researched and so carefully documented as Norman Houghton's **History of Sawmilling in the East Otway Ranges 1850 - 2010**.

Our Society was very proud to be associated with the official launch of the revised edition at the Forrest Community Hall on Saturday 26th February.

Norman's presentation

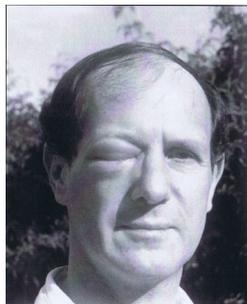
Prior to the official launch at 2pm by the Minister for Transport and Roads the Hon Terry Mulder, MLA for Polwarth, our members and friends were treated to a one and a half hour presentation by Norman Houghton during which he gave an account of the extensive research he undertook in the compilation and revision of the book. In a time when much research starts with Google, Wikipedia, or an online search at the Public Records Office, it came as a surprise to members that in the absence of detailed and accurate maps and records Norman actually undertook the physical survey of virtually every bush mill and tramway route involving over 600 hours of bushwalking over three and a half years from 1993 - 1996. Working mostly on his own he would leave his car, say at the West Barwon Dam lookout, leaving a note of his likely whereabouts and would simply take off and bushwhack down steep slopes through wet and muddy condi-



Hon. Terry Mulder congratulating Norman Houghton on his publication

tions to locate the remains of tramway tracks and follow them to former mill sites.

His encounter with snakes and wet areas seething with leeches is well described in an appendix to the latest edition. It was only through this exhausting survey



Norman exhausted and eye swollen from leeches

work that he was able to trace much of the history of the creation of the bush mills and their associated tramways. He could see where one route was overlaid by a later one and trace the movement of the mills from one source to another as useable timber ran out.

The new edition of **Sawdust and Steam** is a treasure trove for those interested in any of a great number of different aspects of the timber industry; the excellent illustrations show the remarkable engineering

achievement of creating the tramways and their remarkable trestle bridges and occasional tunnels. The mechanical skills are shown in the variety of sawmilling equipment winches, and locomotives, employed over the period. Changing policies for the management and extraction of the timber resources are discussed in detail but it is perhaps the graphic account of human endeavor that comes across strongest. Many spent most of their lives in the bush and we can only imagine the life of the small townships that grew up around some of the mills with schools, post offices, blacksmith shops, engineering workshops and offices. These were times of immense physical hardship and great personal risk from accidents, bushfires and occasional floods. Men were tough and ingenious in ways in which they solved the problems of moving these massive logs and loads of timber from the early days of bullocks and horses to steam engines, winches and a variety of small locomotives.

But through the personal accounts of those days there was a great deal of camaraderie and good fun in those communities. Walking out six miles to football practice on Thursday nights is remembered as just part of the game and the excursions of people along the tramlines to and from the mill site for social occasions is well illustrated in Norman's book.

Continued page 2



We Lose a popular Forrest identity

Since our last Newsletter it was with deep regret that we farewelled **Tassie Whelan**, 11th September, aged 84.



Tassie received an Order of Australia (OAM) in 2006 for his work in the community through sport, church and service organizations.

President for 20 years, vice president for 18 years and delegate for 30 years Tassie had a major role with the Forrest Football Club. Notably he encouraged the



junior teams. (see above). He played in two Premierships, '52 & '54, and set a club record in 1955 playing 142 consecutive games. He coached Forrest from 1958-61 and 1963-66 and was a club life-member.

With his cheerful optimism and total dedication he was an inspiration to sportsmen and community workers over many decades.

We also lost **Bob Caspar** recently. At the end of Caspars Track, Bob was more or less the custodian for many years of the former hop fields and hop processing barn of Bertie Ireland until the barn was demolished on 2004.

Members will recall the excitement of locating the site of Bob's father's blacksmith shop during our Barramunga History Drive in October 2008.

All those who attended the funeral of **Bernice Rourke Currie** last July remarked on the beautiful eulogy written and delivered by Gillian Neale. 'Niecey' was another former Forrest resident who will be sadly missed.

While not a local resident there are few who do not remember the sterling work for Forrest famers performed by Colac Vet. '**Dusty Rhodes**' who passed away recently.

Continued from Page 1 Birre-Forrest Line

The first part of the book gives an amazingly detailed account of the creation and history of the **rail line to Forrest**. The function and layout of each of the stops along the way is described and of most interest to Forrest people is the account of the immense crowds which attended the **Foundation Day sports meetings**, held annually at Forrest. Special trains brought visitors from Camperdown, Colac, Winchelsea and Birregurra.

All this provides a wonderful foundation from which our Society can undertake further research on the activities which took place on these sports days and the whole range of connections between local families and the timber industry.

A story to tell

Many of us were left with the overwhelming feeling that here is a story which **needs to be preserved and told**. Here was a remarkable time in the history of

the area involving thousands of people, a very distinct way of life and a significant contribution to the construction industry, mining and wharf construction, and the economic development of the State right from those early days.

As a Society we have a big responsibility to keep this story alive and communicate it to future generations, and to some extent rehabilitate the contribution of all of these courageous men and families from the bad press received towards the close hardwood logging. There is a wonderful story for us to tell and keep alive and Norman's new and enlarged edition of **Sawdust and Steam** provides a wonderful vehicle from which this can happen.

Special Lunch

We tried a new format for lunch by which members brought meat and drink and ladies from the Neighbourhood House group provided some excellent salads and the necessary condiments, cutlery and service along with morning and afternoon teas. They cooked muffins in the morning and provided Devonshire Teas in the afternoon. A special feature was the wood fire oven, lit early in the morning,

which provided superb damper and a place where members could cook a pizza.

Industry Representatives

It was exciting in the afternoon to see some familiar faces and older representatives of families associated with the industry. The Armisteads, Frizons and Haydens were there along with some staff from Peter Adam's mill at Birregurra and of course many of Forrest residents like Jim Speirs who have had long standing associations with the timber industry over many decades.

Norman Houghton invited Alan Eddie, with his lifetime career in Forestry to address the 60 or so attending the launch before the Hon. Terry Mulder officially launched the publication. As a boy Terry Mulder had close associations with Forrest and its surroundings and recounted some of his early experiences.

You are strongly urged to obtain a copy of the new edition of Sawdust and Steam. It has gone to an A4 size and the illustrations are sharp and clear. It has been extensively rewritten and all dates and information carefully checked and revised. Ordering information is on the back page of the Newsletter.

We Celebrate School's 125th

On Sunday 21st November 2010, a perfect spring day, 180 former students, and their families and friends, of Forrest Primary School assembled to celebrate its 125th Anniversary.

When master of ceremonies,



Albert Halliday, called for the oldest former student present two ladies going back to the 30's were confident they had it won but **the prize went to Frank Frizon who commenced school in 1927.**

Keith Marriner, John Hoult and Rod Mac-



renzie, OAM were amongst the former students who attended the 125th anniversary.

Former politician, **Rod Macrenzie OAM**, attended the Forrest Primary School for three years during the War. He recalled a volunteer Home Guard at Forrest that drilled by marching up and down Station St. on Sunday morning with Boer War rifles and half the children of the town marching behind. The women were recruited to work in shifts spotting enemy aircraft.

Present day students provided a demonstration of bush dancing from their recent concert and Principal, **Ann Buchanan**, conducted visitors on an inspection

of the school now undergoing major renovations.

To suit the occasion, the **Lion's Club** provided a traditional school lunch. Visitors entered their orders on a brown paper bag and collected them at lunch time, including miniature milk bottles donated for the occasion.

The Fox family came in strength. Left to right Patricia, Bill, Chelsea, John and



Jeff.

Frankie Lawrence and his dance



Frank Frizon with Lorna and Alf Wihelms

band kept visitor on their toes during the afternoon but the real interest during the whole day was the opportunity of discovering former school mates, talking about old times and catching up on news of mutual friends.

Many brought photos for the Forrest Historical Society archives and a highlight of the day was the gift to the Society of a genuine blazer of the former Rifle Club from **Les (Squeak) Miller**. The School Committee has already foreshadowed another get together this year to celebrate

Right. Les (Squeak) Miller with the former Rifle Club Blazer he presented to the Historical Society on the day.



Wally Trew

the opening of the new renovations.



John Hoult with Heather and Ted Jennings



Marion Matthews with Edna and Alan Crabb



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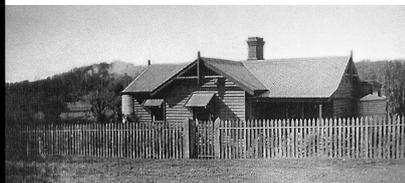
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WHO IS THIS ATTRACTIVE SWIMMER AT THE FOR- REST WATER HOLE?



—AND WHO LIVED HERE



—at the old Railway House?

All will be revealed if you are
able to attend our next event

THE FORREST I REMEMBER

Terminus Hotel next Sunday 29th
From 11am, along with our mys-
tery guests above you will hear
from Edna Crabb, Audrey Miller,
Lorraine Evans, Graham Jen-
nings, Frank Whitehead and Alby
Halliday.

After lunch we will walk around
the railway and timber mill sites
under the guidance of Norman
Houghton and visit the sites of the
old Creamery and Wine Shanty at
Barwon Downs with research by
John James and others.

**This looks like being a memo-
rable event and we hope to see
you there.**

PLEASE SUPPORT THESE NEW PUBLICATIONS

We all know how local history books produced in small and limited printing runs quickly become scarce and unobtainable (copies of Sawdust and Steam have been unobtainable for years), so it is wise to seize the opportunity of these limited run booklets.

We are pleased to announce some new releases which we think we will be of particular interest, including some produced and funded by our own Society.

- **Hop growing at Forrest**

This book by Pam Jennings follows research undertaken on our Hop Fields day (Oct.2007). Pam has added extensive biographies of the families associated with hop growing. It is interesting to note the association with the industry in Kent, UK from which the Blundy's originated. Also an excellent collection of photos and recollections of the people involved.

- **Farming the Foothills**

Here Pam Jennings has covered a number of areas not previously written up, including Muroon, Pennyroyal, Barwon Downs and Gerangamete with some excellent extracts from her research of the Colac Herald and other local news sources.

- **Fun and Games**

Collects together the fun photographs and stories which we researched when we had our event "Forrest at Play" last Feb. It has stimulated a lot more information from readers viewing the pictures (such as "that's me at the old swimming hole" see column 1).

- **Sawdust and Steam**

Nothing written in this region can match this brilliant work of research by Norman Houghton on the railway history of our area, the fascinating story of the bush mills up to the 1939 bushfires and the vast mileage of tramways which served the timber industry bringing timber to railheads like Forrest from the late 19th century to the mid

20th. It's a remarkable story of human achievement, engineering and mechanical skills and a unique part of settlement of the district.

- **Games at the 'Ditch'** Norman Houghton has also just released this new booklet for the centenary history of Beech Forrest's Ditchley Park sports ground. It contains some great photographs and stories of all the sports and community activities over 100 years at Ditchley Park, Beech Forrest.

- Our members might also be interested in another new publication of Norman Houghton, **A Grand Parade, 150 years of the Colac and District Pastoral Society**. Fascinating pictures and stories bring it's history to life.

- **Hotels, Pubs and Inns of the Geelong Country Districts**

Its hard to believe the detailed records which Pam Jennings has been able to assemble in this remarkable record of Hotels and Pubs in the district. Each entry lists all the licensees and gives a brief history. Naturally our own Terminus Hotel is mentioned along with the Wine Shanty, Barramunga Hotel and all the others. It's a great record to have on your bookshelf.

- Norman Houghton has also updated his classic history of Forrest **By the Barwon**

PRICES TO ORDER

Hop Growing at Forrest	\$10
Farming the Foothills	\$10
Fun and Games	\$10
Sawdust and Steam	\$44.50
Games at the Ditch	\$5
A Grand Parade	\$29.50
Hotels Pubs and Inns	\$12
By the Barwon	\$7
Add postage	\$2

Please send you order and cheque to
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