

FORREST:

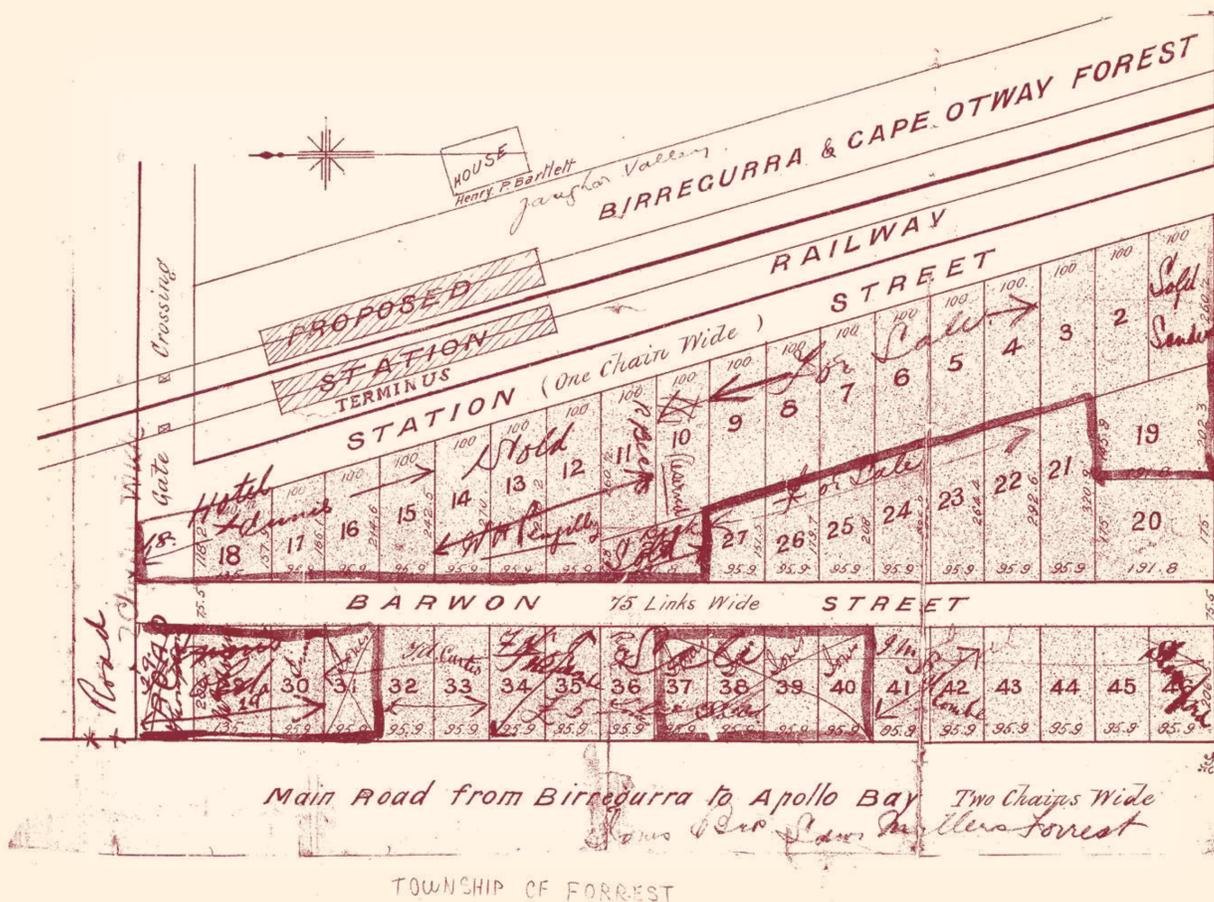
The township of Forrest is located where it is, due to land spectaculars cashing in on the new railway that was about to arrive from Birregurra. The developers created a private sub-division called Yaugher Valley Township on the west side of the proposed railway station site. This was in 1890.

Foundation and name

The first land sale for the new township was held in Geelong on 10 July, 1890. The township plan provided for three streets, these being Station Street fronting the railway yard, Barwon Street behind this and Main Road on the west.

Station Street became the main business area because everything came and went by rail in those days. The hotel in Station Street adopted a fitting name as the Terminus Hotel, being at the end of the line.

The township originally used the name of Yaugher, as in Yaugher Valley Township, and in the railway station name, which was originally called Yaugher. The word Yaugher is pronounced Yaw-ger and is derived from the Land Parish for the locality. After a few months the railway station and township were renamed Forrest, after the local parliamentary member, Charles Forrest, who was largely responsible for getting the railway built.



Hops



Typical hop garden arrangement at Forrest. The vines are run up wires supported on tall poles. At harvest time the vines are pulled down and the cones stripped off at ground level.

For many years Forrest was a celebrated hop growing area due to the soil, prevailing rainfall and sunshine, with the major plantings being along the Barwon River at Yaugher. The first settler to plant hops was Henry Ireland in the 1870s. Others to follow were Fiddler Fletcher, George Reid and Steven Blundy. Each of these growers managed four to six hectares. The harvested hops found a ready market with Victorian breweries and some was exported to American brewers.

The crop was grown in trellised rows with the vines run upwards for several metres. Harvest season was in February and March and the actual harvest involved taking down the vines and stripping off the hop cones. The gathered cones were dried in kilns and packed in bales which were then placed on wagons and carted to the Forrest railway station for loading.

A lot of labour was needed and this was mostly provided by the women and teenagers of Forrest. The pickers made a day of it, what with the family in tow, a cut lunch and plenty of energy.

In time, Edwin Ireland, son of Henry, became the largest grower and it was to his hop garden that most harvest labour was directed to. Ireland employed up to 40 pickers per season.

The growers more or less ran hops as a profitable sideline to their dairying and fruit growing so when these farmers started to retire from the 1930s and problems arose with maintaining enough water from the river to irrigate the crop the trade died out by about 1940.



Line up of harvest labour at Ireland's hop garden. The pickers are all women from Forrest and surrounds.

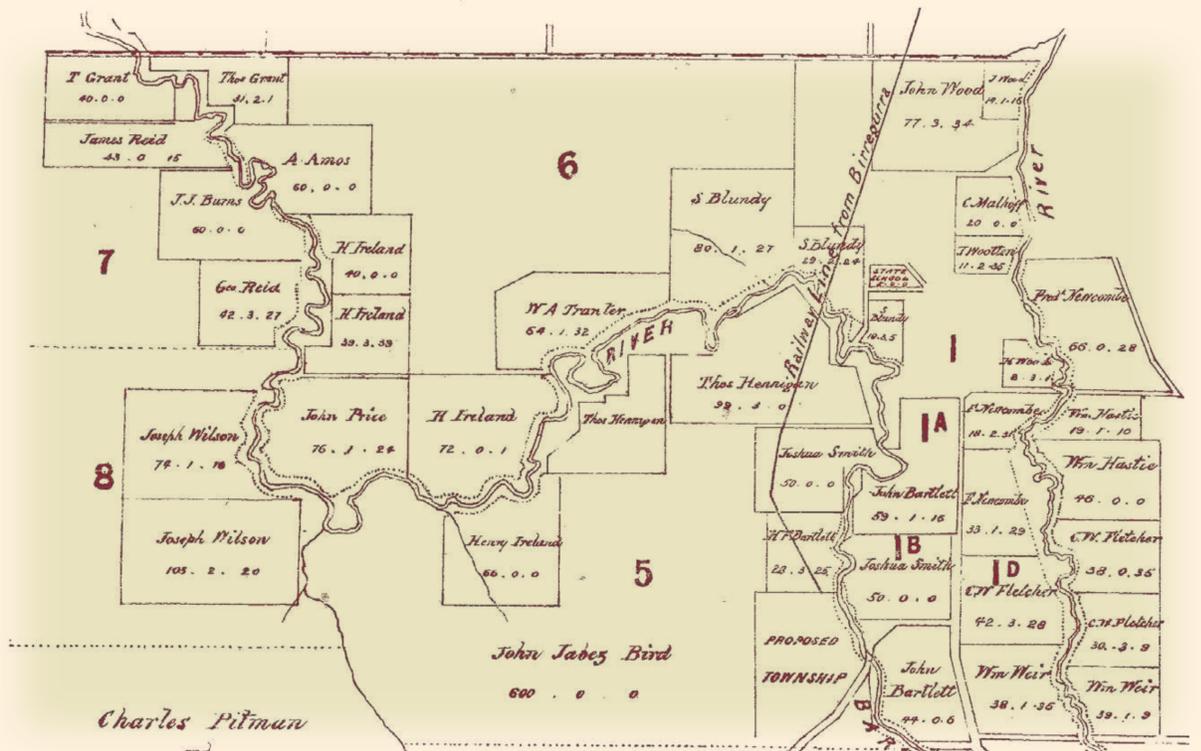


Harvest crew on the job at Ireland's during the 1930s. The vines have been pulled down and laid out.

Yaughter

PARISH OF YAUGHER

COUNTY OF GRANT



The original white settlement in the area was not Forrest but Yaughter which was first opened up in the 1870s. The area was entirely rural so its only facilities installed from the 1880s were a school and Anglican church. A cemetery site was gazetted in 1888 and this became the district's main place of interment. When the railway came through in 1891 a railway station was provided.

Plan of the original settlement along the Barwon River that formed the community of Yaughter. The settlers based their activities riverside for reasons of access to water. Follow the names along the river from the top left to the middle right to see these pioneer farmers who were here long before Forrest itself was set up.

Yaughter farmers worked the land along the Barwon River for a variety of crops such as tobacco, hops, potatoes, hemp, peas, oats, barley, wheat and the running of dairy cows and cattle.

The settlement of Forrest came along after Yaughter but it eventually eclipsed Yaughter. The Yaughter school building was relocated to Forrest and when the church burnt down in a bushfire in 1908 it was not replaced but a new one built in Forrest. These circumstances removed the only two public buildings in the area.

In 1926 a sports ground was installed near the railway station and this became Forrest' main ground for athletics, cricket and football, replacing a smaller venue near the Forrest hotel that had been used since the 1890s.

There was a fair amount of timber cut in the forests at Yaughter, principally firewood and posts and at one time a large sawmill (Casper, Towers & Co) worked near the sports ground from 1954 to 1968.

Intensive farming along the Barwon River at Yaughter gradually withered from the 1960s due to changing economic trends, river water supply issues and, by the 1980s, was wholly replaced with grazing and hobby farming.

Compiled by :
NORMAN HOUGHTON
Author and Archivist

From the Archive of:
FORREST AND DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

With the assistance of:



Farms

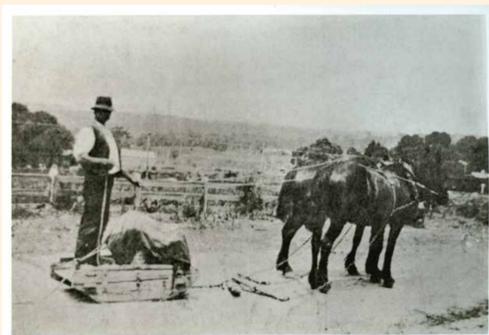
Although Forrest became a timber town there was a substantial agricultural sector around it, principally to the north on the flatter ground with few trees.



An extensive orchard of young apple trees at Forrest during the 1930s. Farmer using a tye plough to cultivate ground.



The rabbit nuisance was so bad at times that some farmers saw themselves as rabbit farmers. A Forrest rabbit trapper pegging out skins from his catch. There was good money in rabbit skins.



Taking cream cans by sled to the Forrest railway station, seen in the right background. Roads were so bad then that wheeled vehicles had hard going, so many farmers used sleds pulled by horses.



Jim Hennigans' dairy farm on the river flats at Yaughter. View taken from one of the railway bridges between Yaughter and Forrest.



Sheafed hay in stooks in a paddock at Forrest, 1925.

The first farmers worked the land along the Barwon River flats producing food and fibre. All sorts of crops were tried in the early days to see what would grow best or what the market would support. This included hops, potatoes, maize, tobacco, hemp, turnips, oats, sheaf hay, straw, chaff, peas, various fruits and the running of pigs, cows, cattle and sheep.

Over time the staples settled down to dairy cows, pigs, potatoes, peas, apples, chaff and hay. Cows and pigs went together. Milk from the cows produced separated cream that was sent to the butter factories at Birregurra or Geelong and pigs were fed on the skim milk.

Limits to farming were imposed by time and distance from value adders in that roads were primitive so not much could be carted long distances before the product deteriorated. The nearer the local railway station the better.

When road conditions improved after the Second World War farmers could supply whole milk in cans to the butter factories and increase herd size. Matters further improved from the late 1950s when refrigerated bulk milk handling was introduced. These were good times for farming at Forrest. There was money in cows, milk, peas, potatoes and hay.

Apart from drought years, farmers generally prospered to the 1980s when changed marketing conditions and the compelling economics of large herd size came into play. Many farmers quit or got out when they reached retirement age. By the early 2000s there were only a handful of dairy farmers remaining in the district. Other farmers continued with beef cattle.

Background image:

Albert Stevenson's neat milking shed and cream separator, 1930s.

The right-hand end of the building contains a small steam boiler for hot water and to power the cream separator.

Compiled by :
NORMAN HOUGHTON
Author and Archivist

From the Archive of:
FORREST AND DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

With the assistance of:


Colac Otway
SHIRE

The Dam

The site of the dam, as marked on the picture, at the time of preliminary clearing of the locality.



Engineering for water supply to Geelong has made a significant impact on Forrest over the years. The vast flows in the Barwon River from its rise in the high rainfall ranges behind Forrest were seen from the 1920s as tappable water that could be exported from the district to other centres of population.

The Bellarine Peninsula water scheme was the brainchild of the late 1920s wherein Forrest water could be sent to Geelong. This scheme involved a weir on the East Barwon, a tunnel through a dividing range towards Barwon Downs and an open gravity channel further onwards. The scheme was completed in 1932. The post war demands for water by Geelong prompted the Geelong water authority to expand supply from the Otway Ranges. The Forrest area was targetted and a scheme drawn up to dam the West Barwon River at Forrest, aiming to impound the waters flowing down the Noonday Creek and the West Barwon River.

The dam project caused major upheaval in the district. In the first place the farmers and sawmillers upstream of the dam site, from Forrest to Mount Sabine, were evicted from their properties to create a protected water catchment zone. Then local sawmillers were sent into the valley to cut down and remove the trees that were below the projected water line for the filled dam. Then an army of workers and contractors, more than 100, descended on Forrest, raising the population and taking all the available rental accommodation for kilometres around. A vast array of huge machinery moved in to do the earthworks and build the dam wall, offtake structures, tunnel and spillway.



Official opening ceremony of the dam. The State Governor unveiled the commemorative plaque.

For the technically minded, the dam is 43 metres high, 112 metres wide, holds 21,000 megalitres and the waters back up for six kms along the Barwon River and five kms for Noonday Creek.

The project's design and implementation ran from 1955 to 1965, being officially opened by the Governor of Victoria on 17 November, 1965 at a ceremony at Forrest. Immediate benefits to Forrest were in the creation of a reticulated water scheme for the town and the beginnings of a significant tourist trade for sight-seeing, pic-nicking and fishing.



Pressure water shooting / consolidating the rock core of the dam wall as it is being formed across the valley.

Lake Elizabeth

The placid and picturesque pond in the East Barwon River valley known as Lake Elizabeth was the creation of a violent natural event in June 1952 when torrential rains over many days caused the valley sides to shift and send thousands upon thousands of tonnes of earth slipping down and blocking the river course.

The roar and rumble of the night time event was dimly heard in Forrest above the sound of rain belting down on local rooves. Many did not recognize the significance of the rumble but the farmers along the river downstream noticed that the river had suddenly stopped running despite the continuing heavy rains.

Local Forest Officer John Hoult went to investigate the source of the roar and rumble and the stopped river and after a reconnaissance through the bush for some time came across a vast expanse of ripped up soil, broken trees and a wall of sticky mud and rocks lying right across the river bed. Behind the barrier a small lake was forming.

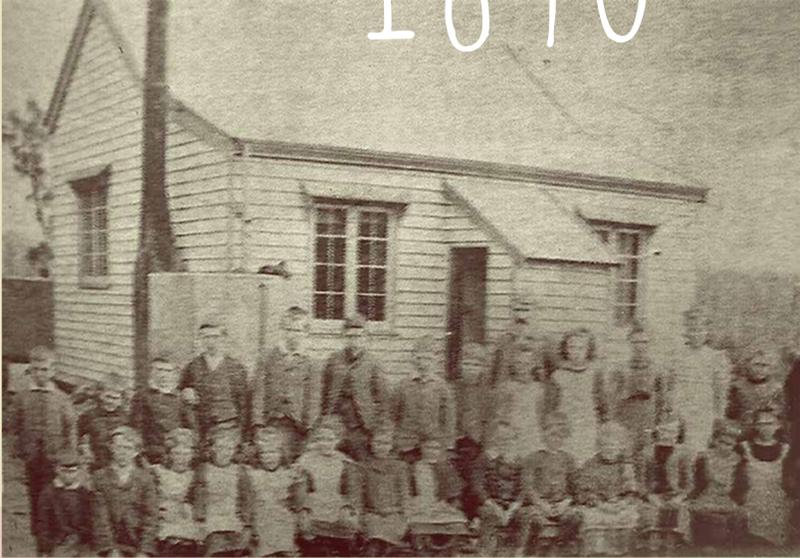
The barrier wall was unstable but substantial enough to withstand the pressure of the waters that ultimately built up to 30 metres deep behind it but after 14 months, and more rain, a major part of the wall gave way and sent a rampaging torrent of filthy water barrelling down the river. This flood smashed the farms along the river, ripping out fences, carrying off buildings and stock, and covering the ground with a thick layer of mud for kilometres.

The lake settled down after this release to about 10 metres deep and 800 metres long and while the bank moved and leaked a few

times in later years, the impounded waters that remained developed a scenic charm and ultimately became a tourist destination when the Forest Commission made a road down to it in 1969. And the name? Well, the timing of the event coincided with the pending accession to the throne of Queen Elizabeth so when a Melbourne newspaper reporter asked Hoult about the name for the lake, he had no hesitation in saying Lake Elizabeth.

1890

Yaugher



The school at Yaugher with its enrolment in 1895.

The first school was that at Yaugher that opened in 1885 with an enrolment of 38 children. Once the township of Forrest was formed in 1890 the school became Forrest's place of education, with the children walking between the two places. The numbers increased to 60 head. The inconvenience of the location for Forrest people caused the school to be closed in 1906 and education transferred to Forrest. The Yaugher school building was then relocated to Forrest and used as a teacher residence.

Schools

Forrest and district has been served by several schools over the years:

Barramunga



Barramunga school and its enrolment about 1890. School house and teacher house in background.

South of Forrest a small school was placed at Barramunga in 1887 on land donated by Caleb Gardner. At first teaching was conducted in a room attached to the hotel and this went on for some months until the one room school building was completed and opened. Enrolments gradually rose to a peak of 50 pupils in 1925 at a time when local sawmills were booming.

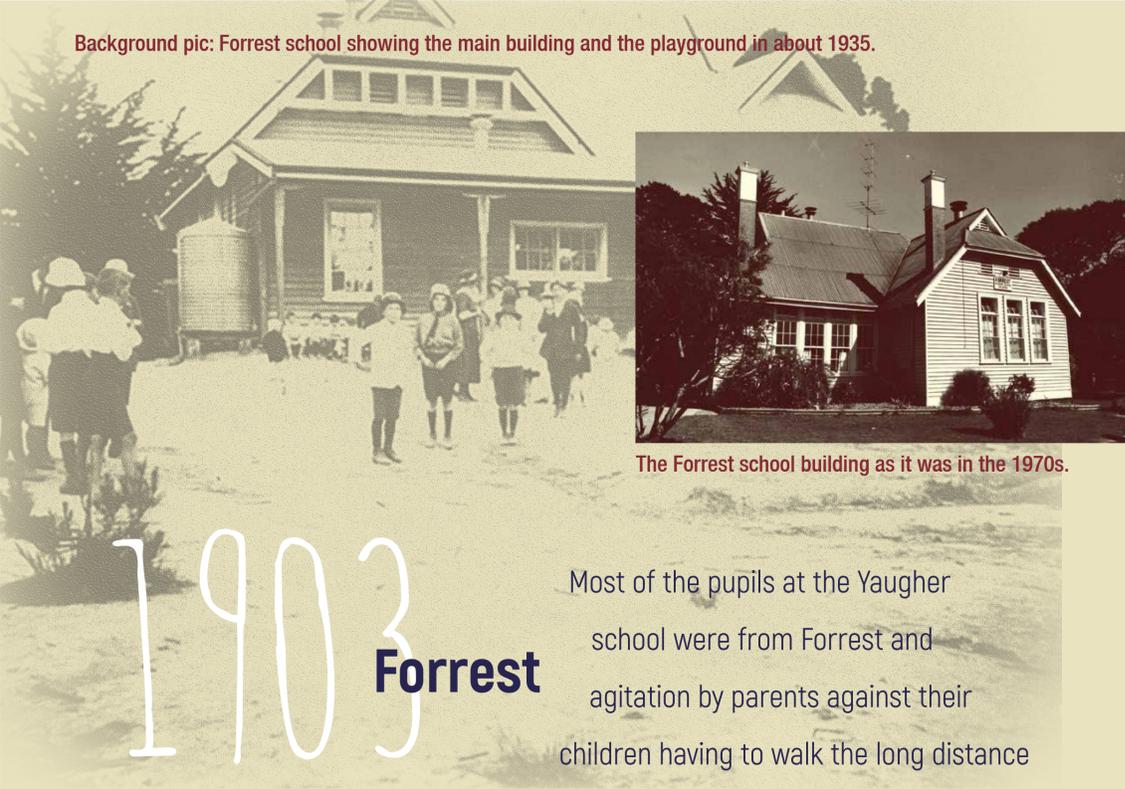
Conditions here were primitive, especially in winter. The building was cold and draughty and the mud so deep on the roads about that the children walked to school in bare feet, carrying their shoes and sox, which were put on when they arrived at school and after they had washed the mud off their feet.

Mount Sabine

1925

The most remote school in the Forrest district was at Mount Sabine. It operated in a building erected in 1908 by local labour and expense on Holmes' property about four kms along Sunnyside Road. The Education Department provided a half time teacher from September 1908 and this allowed the school to function through to 1919 when it was closed due to falling enrolments.

There was a sufficient farming and sawmilling population in the locality to maintain an enrolment of 10 to 25 over the years but by 1967 the attendance was down to six students so the place was closed. The pupils then attended Forrest school. The school building was acquired by the Colac High School and converted to a school camp.



The Forrest school building as it was in the 1970s.

1903 Forrest

Most of the pupils at the Yaugher school were from Forrest and agitation by parents against their children having to walk the long distance

twice a day prompted moves to relocate the

school to Forrest. A temporary school was opened at Forrest in 1903 in the Forrest Public Hall pending the construction of a new school and this was ready for the 1906 school year.

The school comprised a single class room for many years, accommodating up to 95 students at times, until additions were completed in 1916 to give extra room. Enrolments gently declined to around 60 students in the 1940s but rose again in the boom times of the 1960s to over 100. That was the peak and numbers dipped afterwards, although Forrest remained the major district school.

The school began to expand its offerings in the 1990s through an amalgamation with the Forrest pre-school centre. Closure of the school at Gerangamete brought new pupils to the school in 2002 as well as the Gerangamete school building itself, which was shifted to Forrest to become the drama and art centre.

By the mid-2000s the school had an enrolment of 40 or so, possessed four main rooms and offered a full curriculum as well as pre-school, occasional care, after school care and family day care services.

1874 Gerangamete



Student enrolment at the Gerangamete school 1929.

The neighbouring school to the north was at Gerangamete where a facility was first provided in 1874 on the track between Yaugher and Yeodene. It had a short life and closed in 1877 as most of its pupils lived on the other side of the Gerangamete swamp, to the east. Another school was provided from 1875 under the name Gerangamete East on Dewings Bridge Road and operated here until 1942 when it was closed. Education then moved back to the original site, by now on the main road between Forrest and Colac. Local farmers and sawmillers built the school playground in 1955 using a bulldozer, tractors, grader and post hole diggers as a means of self-help. The ageing building was replaced in 1965 with a new portable. Enrolments were in the range of 15 to 20 pupils at most times. Rural depopulation trimmed the numbers until the school ran out of pupils, was closed in 2001 and the building shifted to Forrest.

1925 Upper Gellibrand

Local farmers built a school at Upper Gellibrand in 1925 to serve their area and also Roadknight Creek, which localities were then extremely isolated and the local children at a disadvantage. The Education Department supplied a teacher to this private school and it operated to 1934 when enrolments dropped off and it closed.

The Upper Gellibrand School. This was built by local farmers in 1925 so that their children could have an education in what was then a wild and remote area.



The first church in Forrest was the Methodist Church, which was erected during 1900 in Station Street using timbers donated by local sawmillers. A Home Missioner attended to the charge and he was accommodated in a house built for him next to the church. The Presbyterians used the Methodist church for their services.



St. Joseph's Catholic Church building in later years when no longer a church. Built in 1925 and used to the 1970s.

The Anglicans possessed a church at Yaughter that pre-dated the foundation of Forrest. It was not until 1908 that St. James Anglican Church was erected in Grant St. A vicarage was provided around 1920 and a Reader was based here.

The Catholics had no church for many years and travelled to nearby Barwon Downs for services until 1925 when a local church was built. The Birregurra Parish supplied a visiting priest for services. All of the churches had ladies' guilds and mens' support groups and these bodies contributed much to the social and religious life of the town.

The churches were vibrant and lively for many years but population turnover eventually caused them to lose vitality. The resident Missioners for the Methodists and Anglicans were withdrawn in 1941 and 1947 respectively and the houses rented to general tenants. Ministers then came from further afield to conduct services.

Churches

St. James Anglican Church. Built by an energetic minister in 1908 and in continuous use since then.



**Background pic:
Forrest Methodist Church and Minister's home alongside,
in upper Station Street. Image dates from the 1930s.**

The Methodist Church was the most popular in Forrest and it operated to 1979 when the building became decrepit and the place was closed and sold for removal. The Methodists and Presbyterians, then merged under the Uniting Church, held services at Barwon Downs for a while before settling on rotating services in the Forrest Anglican Church. The Catholic Church remained viable until the 1970s and was then closed in 1980 and sold into private hands.



Competitors on their blocks for the champion 20 Pounds prize log chop at the 1910 sports. This was the premier chop event.

A Sports Day was an essential feature of any worthwhile rural community and Forrest was no exception. By the mid-1890s there were enough people in the infant township of Forrest for the locals to organise a Sports event.

There was then no formal sports ground but arrangements were made with the hotel publican to use a piece of his ground known as Bartlett's paddock, which was a grassed space immediately north-east of the hotel. This inaugural Sports was held on Thursday 27 February, 1896 under the auspice of the Forrest Athletic Club.

A special train was put on to bring patrons from Colac and district to Forrest. Each year thereafter until 1940 or so special trains were run and in some years there were three trains, one from Colac, one from Geelong and one from Cressy.

By 1900 the Sports was well established and given a registered slot for Foundation Day (Australia Day) in the Colac and district calendar. Features comprised foot running, wood chop, novelty races, equestrian events, dancing and stalls..

Sports

Highland dancing competition at the Forrest sports, circa 1911.



ANNUAL SPORTS AT FORREST—WATCHING THE HIGHLAND DANCING.



View of Sports Ground, Forrest

Sports ground at the 1910 event. In the foreground is the sprint track defined by the hurdles and further over is the wood chop ring.



The ladies' woodchop at the 1925 sports. Competitors facing camera left to right are Nell Caspar and Anne Mulgrew.



The new Forrest sports ground at Yaughar on its official opening, Foundation day, 1927.

Bartlett's paddock had no facilities whatsoever, apart from the temporary booths, tents and the like installed for the Sports and by 1910 there was community dissatisfaction about the grounds and the rough nature of the surface. Another piece of ground was secured for a recreation reserve in 1915 but the soil conditions proved unsuitable for a sporting oval and it was not until 1926 that an alternative site was secured at Yaughar.

Work got underway almost immediately to form the new playing surface. This ground was officially opened at the Foundation Day Sports in January 1927. The sports were held here thereafter, right through to when the annual circuit ceased in the early 1960s.

The Yaughar grounds become the home of the (earlier formed) Forrest Football Club from 1927 and likewise the same home ground for the Cricket Club and Netball Club.

Tennis was played closer to town with courts provided from 1911 on land donated by the Sandersons. Over the years the courts have moved and are now based in the Station Street park.

These traditional sports formed the backbone of local athletic endeavours until being supplemented by mountain biking from the early 2000s. By 2010 biking attracted hundreds of riders from all over to challenge the local tracks in variously oriented competitions. Mountain biking has now become the signature sport at Forrest.

The 2008 Forrest Bike Odyssey event at the Forrest sports ground. There were hundreds of riders and spectators attending for the week-end.

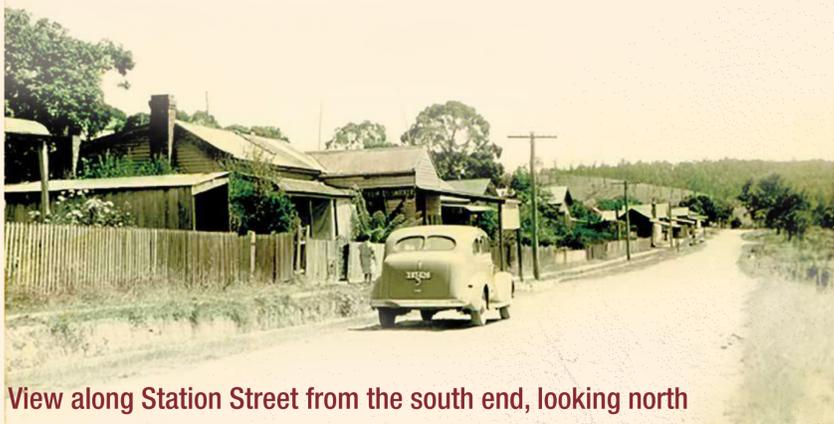




Boys under the verandah at the top store, corner Station and Blundy Streets in the early 1930s. The house in the background was the grandest dwelling in Forrest, being built by Alexander Sanderson, who originally built and owned this General Store in 1899.



The original Terminus Hotel as built and opened as soon as the railway arrived in 1891. This building survived until the late 1950s when it was totally remodelled and, in turn, the newer building burnt down in 1996. It was replaced with the present building.



View along Station Street from the south end, looking north towards the hotel, in about 1940. Railway station on the right.

The original business street for Forrest was Station Street. It held its place as the commercial heart of town from the 1890s to the late 1970s.

Compiled by:
NORMAN HOUGHTON
Author and Archivist

From the Archive of:
FORREST AND DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

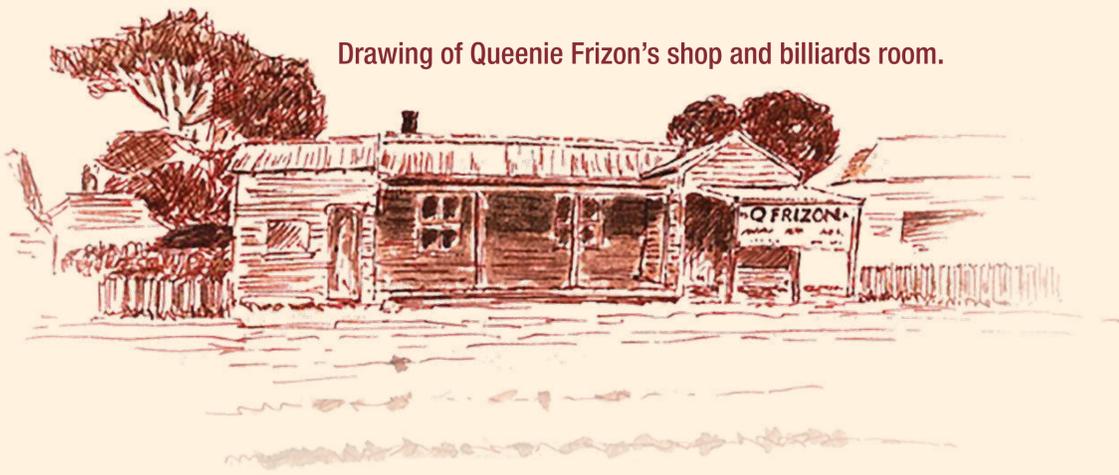
With the assistance of:



Background image:
The Commercial Bank in Station Street operated here from 1903 to the late 1960s. It was a needed service on account of the local and district sawmill businesses and their large payrolls as well as the other businesses in town.

Station Street

FORREST
VICTORIA

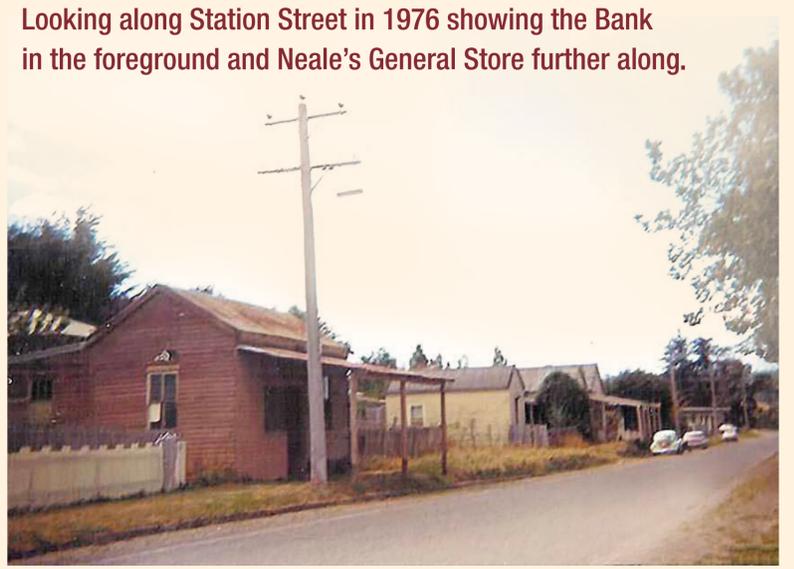


Drawing of Queenie Frizon's shop and billiards room.

From the Station Street south end (the present Blundy St corner) the business/service premises, not necessarily operating concurrently, were Sanderson's general store and savings bank agency, Frizon's fruit and lolly shop and billiards room (later to include the post office), Penman's boarding house, Commercial Bank, Police station and lock-up, bake house, Green's general store, Muir's butcher, Infant Welfare Centre and finally the Terminus Hotel on the north corner. The main entrance to the railway yard was opposite the hotel so all traffic passed this way.

These businesses changed hands over time and there were numerous variations but, overall, locals could obtain just about everything they wanted for daily living in Station Street.

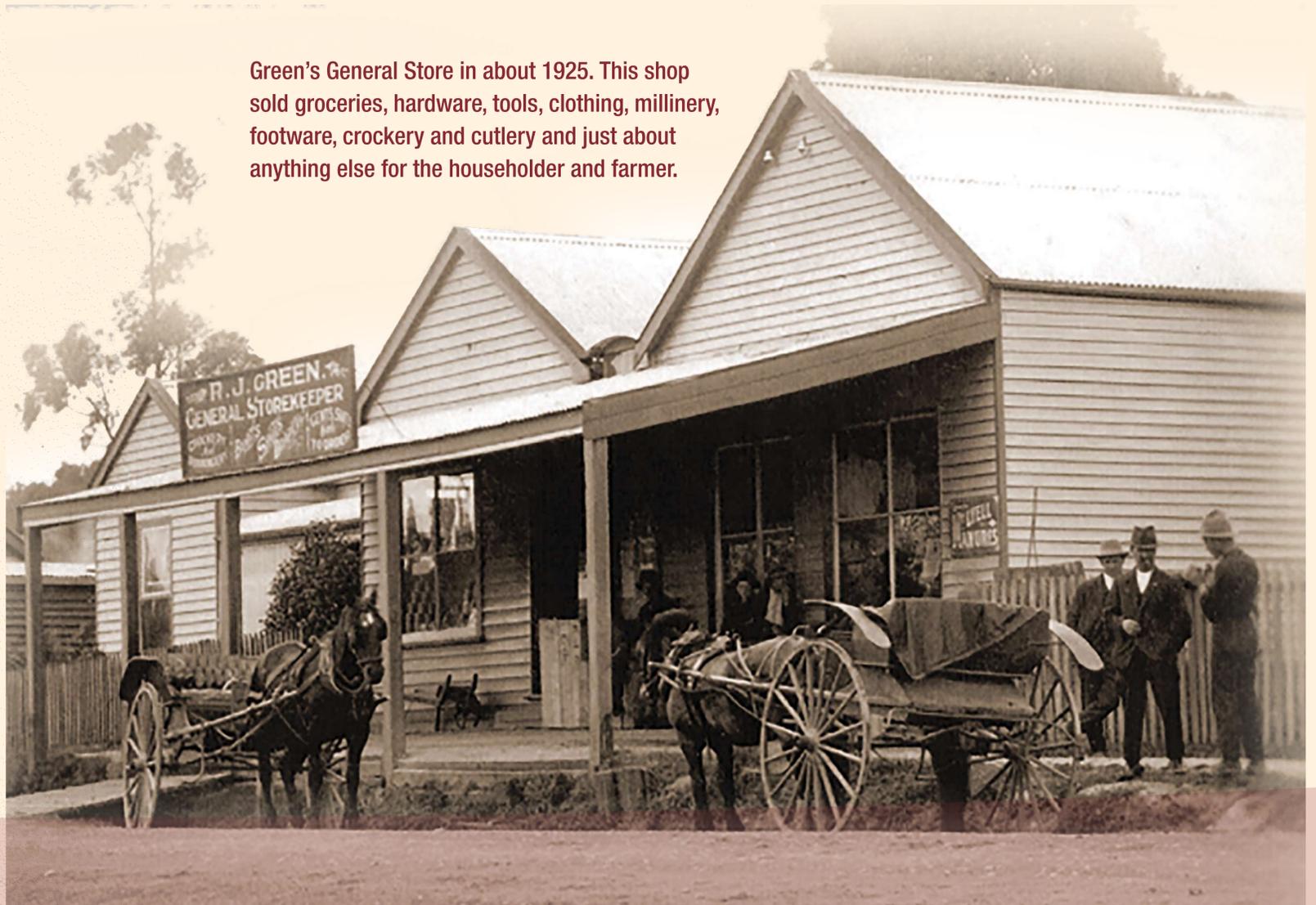
Looking along Station Street in 1976 showing the Bank in the foreground and Neale's General Store further along.



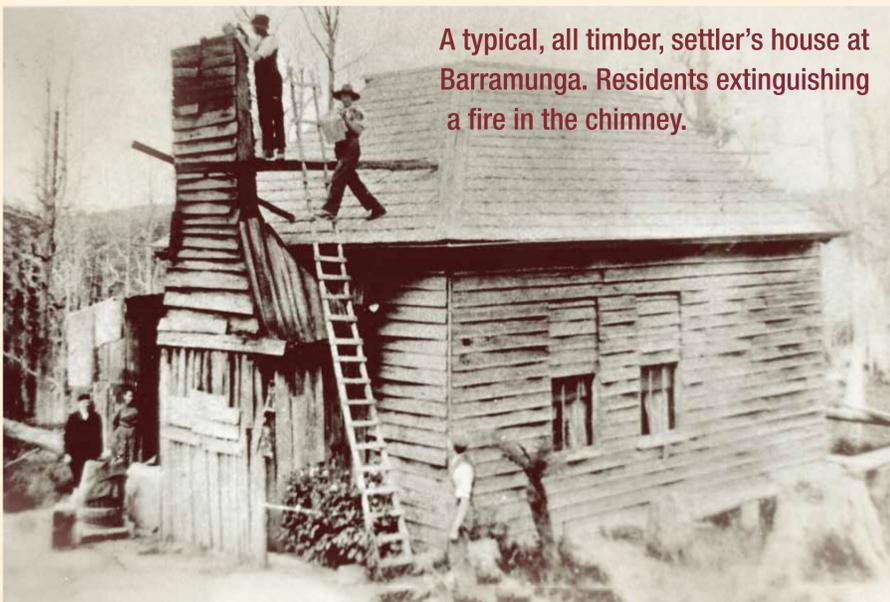
The second Terminus Hotel as rebuilt in 1960. View taken in 1983.



Green's General Store in about 1925. This shop sold groceries, hardware, tools, clothing, millinery, footwear, crockery and cutlery and just about anything else for the householder and farmer.



F. Roberts



A typical, all timber, settler's house at Barramunga. Residents extinguishing a fire in the chimney.

The settlers built simple huts or small houses, cut down the scrub and rung some of the timber in winter preparatory to burning in summer. Once some land was cleared the selectors planted potatoes, peas, beans, table vegetables and put down pasture grasses. Orchards were planted after a couple of seasons and dairy cows likewise introduced so that fruit and dairying became the main pursuit for a number of years. Barramunga gained a reputation for fine cheeses at this time.

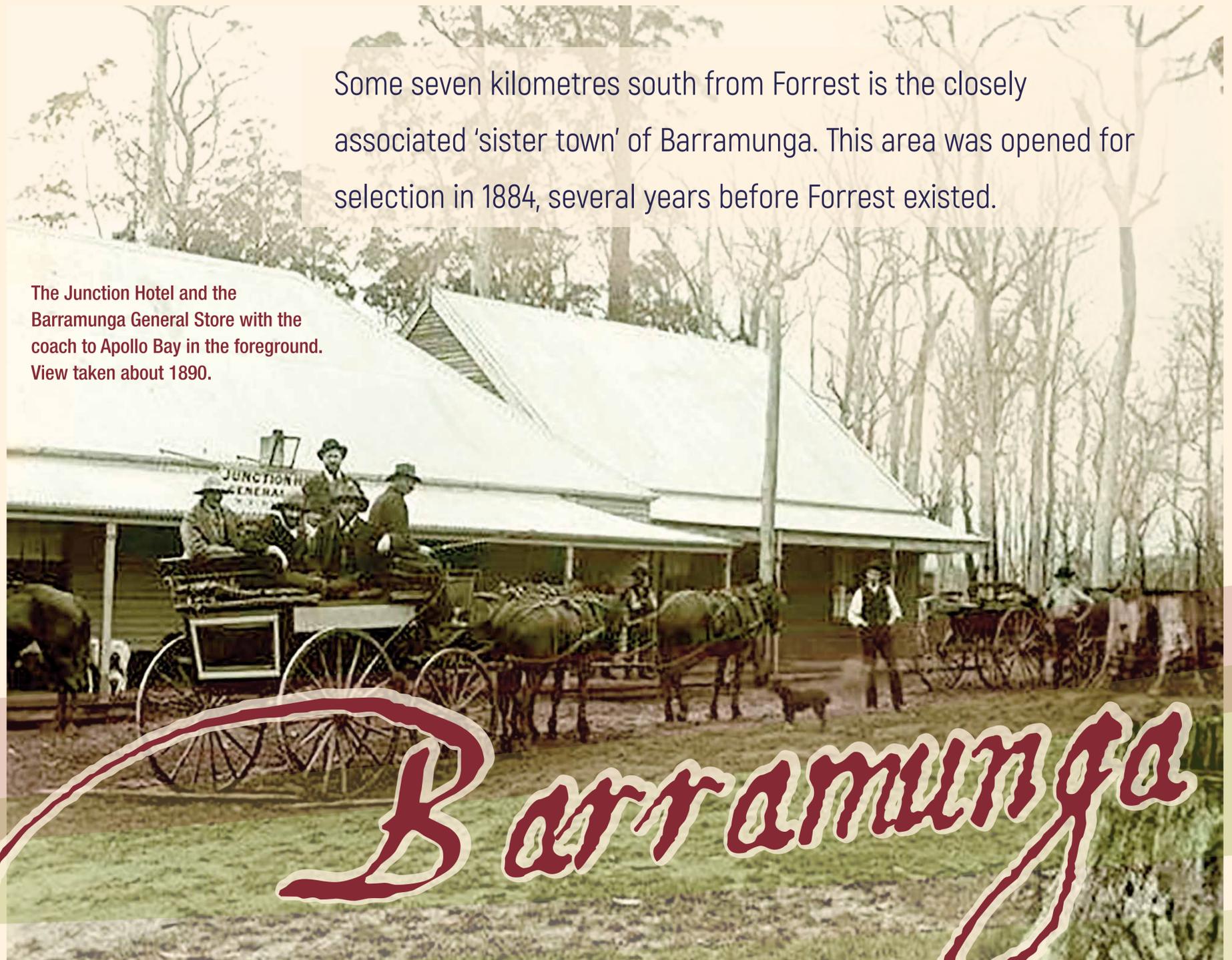


The second Barramunga Public hall. Built in 1956 by the locals, self-funded, and a well-used facility for many years until depopulation in the 1980s rendered it surplus. Turned to other uses.

The settlers were soon supported by an emergent commercial and social infrastructure. There was a general store with attached public hall, school, accommodation house, hotel, post office and Methodist and Anglican churches.

The hotel was known as the Junction Hotel and it provided accommodation, food and drink for passing customers and locals. Social activities included dances and organised sports meetings that included athletic events such as foot races, high jump plus wood chop and sawing matches.

Some seven kilometres south from Forrest is the closely associated 'sister town' of Barramunga. This area was opened for selection in 1884, several years before Forrest existed.



The Junction Hotel and the Barramunga General Store with the coach to Apollo Bay in the foreground. View taken about 1890.

Barramunga

Poor roads and bushfires undid the efforts of the original settlers and, with a fire almost every year, there was at least one house burnt annually. By 1910 many of the farms had either been abandoned or the owners taken up employment with local sawmills. The 1919 bushfire was another great destroyer to pass through. The once large dairy industry disappeared and the bush began reclaiming itself so much so that by the 1930s there was only 250 hectares of cleared land at Barramunga.

Sawmilling replaced farming as the major industry at Barramunga by 1920.

The hotel was delicensed in January 1929 following a drop in the accommodation and meal trade (and drinks) after the main road to Apollo Bay was sealed and road vehicles no longer stopped there. It then became an accommodation place for itinerant workers, trading as Junction House, and also included the general store and post office.



The Junction Hotel and General Store and Post office, taken in later years, probably mid 1920s.

Background image:

A gathering of locals at the Barramunga Hotel to agitate for the extension of the railway from Forrest to Barramunga in order to boost economic development in the locality.

There was a sufficient local population to support various social and sporting activities such as a football team that was formed in 1932 and played for a few seasons.

After the Second World War ended in 1945 the locality possessed a lively population of younger types and at this time was formed the Barramunga Progress Association, the Barramunga Ladies Club, the Barramunga Sports Club and the Barramunga Social Club. These groups held various functions such as dances, balls, gymkhanas and sports and used the funds to build a public hall. The new hall opened with a ceremony to celebrate the connection of mains electricity to Barramunga in 1956. This was the peak for Barramunga.

The locality began to suffer population loss from the 1960s when sawmills closed and farm lands were resumed for water catchment and buffer purposes pending construction of the West Barwon Dam. The decline in economic returns for dairying in the late 1960s and early 1970s caused several farming properties to be sold to pine companies. Soft wood plantings on a large scale were initiated from this period.

Modern tourism made a start in the 1970s with the opening of the Top of the Otways cafe on the Apollo Bay road and the construction of holiday cabins on the Upper Gellibrand Road. Stevenson's Falls at Upper Gellibrand had long been a tourist attraction and here was established a camping ground.

The school closed in 1974 when it ran out of pupils and was turned into a camp for the Colac High School. The public hall fell out of use soon after and it was redeployed for school camp purposes for a number of years before being sold into private ownership. The school camp itself was wound up in the 1990s and the school building sold for removal.

The increasing loss of residents impacted on the services offered and, with a reduction to nine families in total in the district, the post office and general store closed in February 1981. By the 1990s the district was largely tree farms, timber clad water reserves and State Forests so Barramunga had gone a full circle in one hundred years to bush with a few clearings here and there and the occasional dwelling.

The railway station at Forrest was the terminus of the line and had all the platforms, ramps, buildings, sheds, sidings and a loco turntable to facilitate this status. A departmental house was provided for the station caretaker.

Forrest was the railhead for a large area, more particularly to the south and Apollo Bay, and inwards and outwards goods reflected this important role. Inwards loadings comprised general goods, groceries, beer, livestock, stock feeds, road making materials and sawmill supplies and outwards was all manner of agricultural produce, fruit, butter (from Apollo Bay), livestock and timber. Forrest was the largest timber loading station in the entire Otways, annually averaging 8,700 tonnes outwards from 1899 to 1950.

Background image:

The first train to Forrest on opening day of the railway on 5 June, 1891. The locomotive is an S Class. The building behind the loco tender is the newly built Terminus Hotel and the house at the end of the train is the railway gatehouse, later shifted to behind the station office and used to house the station caretaker.

The Railway

The railway from Birregurra to Forrest was built in order to open up the Barwon Valley to further development. The line opened on 5 June, 1891.

Forrest station yard in 1956 as captured by photographer Andrew Blair. The shed on the right was a private one for the reception of inwards goods and supplies for the general store, almost directly opposite in Station Street. Henry's sawmill can be seen at the far end of the yard.





The Tiger rail car that ran on the Birregurra to Forrest railway from 1937 to 1952. The car was a replacement for the slow steam hauled train used prior and offered a faster and more comfortable journey over the line.



Forreest railway station in its heyday. Buildings from left to right are the station office and Forreest Post Office, ladies waiting room, cream can shed and small goods shed.

The steam train service catered for both goods and passengers. The service was a day return from Birregurra and it arrived at Forreest around noon, departed a couple of hours later, and reached Birregurra to make a connection with the mainline services to Geelong and Warrnambool. In 1937 an exclusive passenger service was introduced in the form of a Dodge car mounted on rail wheels and this ran daily from Birregurra. The Dodge was painted in black and yellow safety stripes and consequently earned the nick name of 'Tiger'.

The Tiger was a vast improvement for passengers and it was greatly appreciated by patrons for its fast running time of fifty minutes in both directions.



The Tiger rail car and its driver Harold McDonald at the Forreest railway station platform after arrival from Birregurra. Passengers could not enter the car from the platform so had to walk to the end of the platform and come around to the far side of the car.

Traffic on the railway began to decline from the late 1940s owing to depletion of the timber resource and competition from road transport. The Tiger was withdrawn in 1952 but the goods train service continued to operate for a while later. Floods damaged several of the railway bridges in the wet winters of the early 1950s and caused the line to be closed for long periods for bridge repairs. By the mid-1950s the traffic could not justify continued maintenance and the railway was closed on 1 March, 1957. The sawn timber from Forreest mills was then carted to Birregurra for transfer to rail or sent direct by road to end user.

The old railway station yard continued to host the sawmills for a number of years and following the closure of Sharp's mill the northern end was eventually converted to public space and a caravan park placed on it in 1976. The southern end was given over to Henry's mill.

The Road System

When the railway arrived in 1891 it was seen as more useful to form and open roads to the south from Forrest, rather than to the north to Barwon Downs and Birregurra, so by 1893 the cleared track to Barramunga was formed into a dirt road.

A mail coach service began running from Forrest to Apollo Bay two times a week, meeting the train from Birregurra on these days. The journey to Apollo Bay took the better part of six to eight hours with rest and refreshments stops for horse and passengers at Barramunga and Mount Sabine. Bullock and horse powered farm and timber carting wagons also used the route.

The road was further improved in the years from 1922 to 1927 when it was made into an all weathers gravel surface. This road was narrow, full of bends and landslips occasionally blocked it during winter but it was, nevertheless, a vast improvement on the old dirt road.

Compiled by :
NORMAN HOUGHTON
Author and Archivist

From the Archive of:
FORREST AND DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

With the assistance of:



The road system in and around Forrest was primitive until well into the 20th century. Forrest was not on any main route to anywhere until very late. The main road to Apollo Bay originally ran from Colac to Barongarook, along Porcupine Creek, went up the high ground to Barramunga and then to Mount Sabine and Skenes Creek. Forrest was first connected to this main road in 1887 when a very rough cleared track was blazed from Forrest to Barramunga purely for local use.

One of the main roads at Barramunga in about 1900. These types of roads were earth formed and were adequate in summer time but less perfect in winter when they turned to bottomless mud pits if used by too many vehicles.

The next improvement was to run a motor road to Beech Forest via Turtons in order to tap the Otway Ridge because at that time there was no all weathers routes direct between Colac and Beech Forest. The Turtons route opened in 1927 and was metalled in full by 1929 and this gave Beech Forest traffic an outlet via Forrest.

A direct access road north-west from Forrest to Colac via Gerangamete and Yeo was formed in 1928 but sections of it were sometimes cut in the winter and it was not until the early 1930s that reliable all weathers surfaces were laid down for the full distance.

The Forrest to Apollo Bay coach near Apollo Bay. This coach service was operated by Forrest people from the 1890s to the late 1920s.



Motor services between Forrest and Apollo Bay, to meet the train, and an Apollo Bay to Colac service were initiated at this time for passengers, parcels and mail. Harry Cunningham of Colac also began running a road carrier service to Beech Forest via Forrest for the cream and parcel trade. A measure of roads improvement was in the time taken for the full Apollo Bay to Colac route dropping from 12 or so hours in 1910 to four and a half in 1926 on the formed dirt road to two and a half on the metalled surface.

The direct north road from Forrest to Barwon Downs remained impassable to anything but bullocks until the late 1930s. The route was a difficult one involving side cuts on the high ground and bridges over the swampy low ground, hence reluctance by the Shire Council and Country Roads Board to do any work on it. There was a modern road built from Birregurra to Barwon Downs in the 1920s but it halted at the latter place. Travellers from Forrest to Barwon Downs were required to use the train and in winter the Forrest Football Club had to run special trains for the team to get to Deans Marsh for a match. The road was finally formed and built to motor vehicle standards by 1940.

Forestry roads for timber extraction and fire-fighting purposes in the ranges behind Forrest were a late development and these were mostly initiated after the Second World War when heavy machinery such as bulldozers and graders were first available through the sawmilling companies and Forests Commission. Kaanglang Road was the first of the forestry roads and it was initiated in 1938 by the Forestry and finished in stages by 1945. A main road along the crest of the range from Sunnyside to Benwerrin was built in sections from 1944 to 1950 and feeder roads and tracks down the spurs subsequently constructed as required for logging.

The main through roads to Apollo Bay, Colac and Barwon Downs were improved from time to time and were re-aligned, widened and repaved in a major way by the early 1970s when the last of the gravel surfaces were eliminated.

Background pic - By the mid-1930s the road over the range from Forrest to Apollo Bay was all weathers gravel, not very wide, but sufficient for the traffic of the day. View shows a load of timber from the Sunnyside sawmills heading to the Forrest railway station.



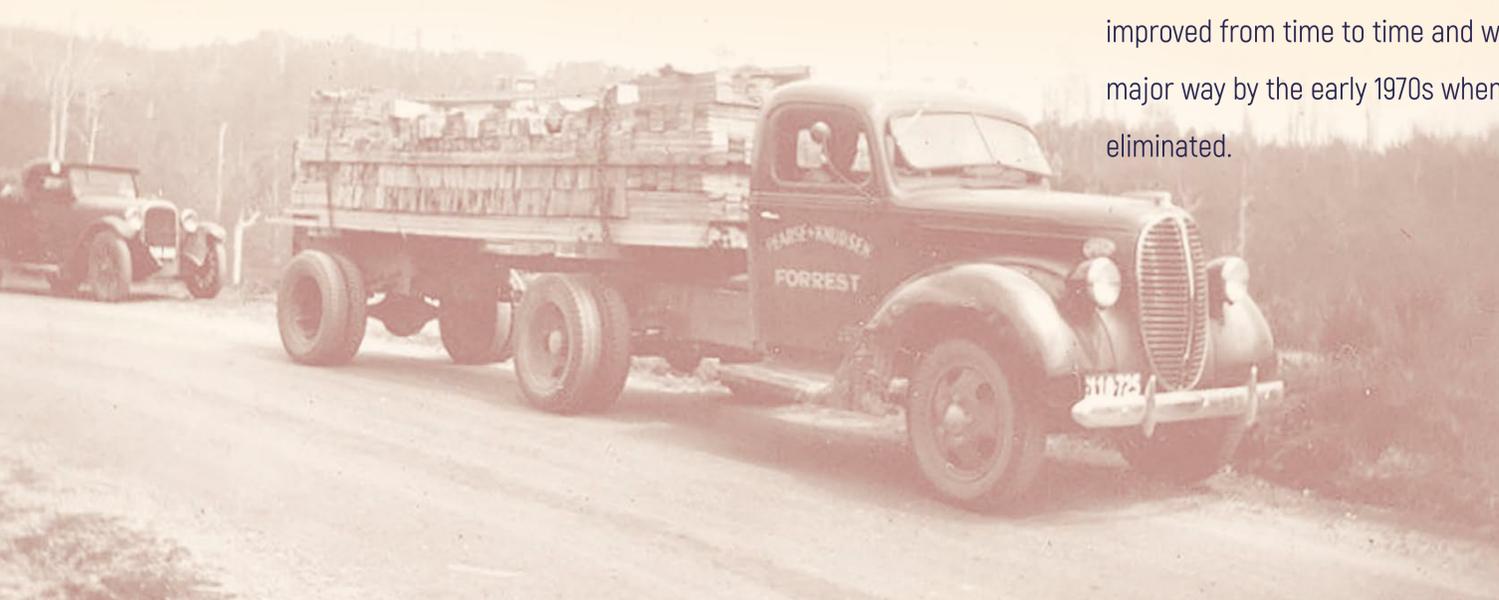
Road workers widening one of the tight spots on the Apollo Bay Road during the 1920s.



Road building gang with their plant, early 1950s, doing work on a road at Tanybryn.



The train has arrived from Birregurra and is met by the coaches running the service to Apollo Bay. Here the passengers transfer themselves and their luggage from the train to the coach prior to departing for the 'Bay.



The Timber Industry

Forrest was the foremost timber town in the entire Otways from start to finish, being superior to places such as Barwon Downs, Beech Forest, Gellibrand, Wyelangta and Lavers Hill.

This status was derived from its positioning at the foot of the ranges and the siting of timber tramway and road links into and over the folds and spurs to Kaanglang, Barramunga, Sunnyside, Mount Sabine and Tanybryn.

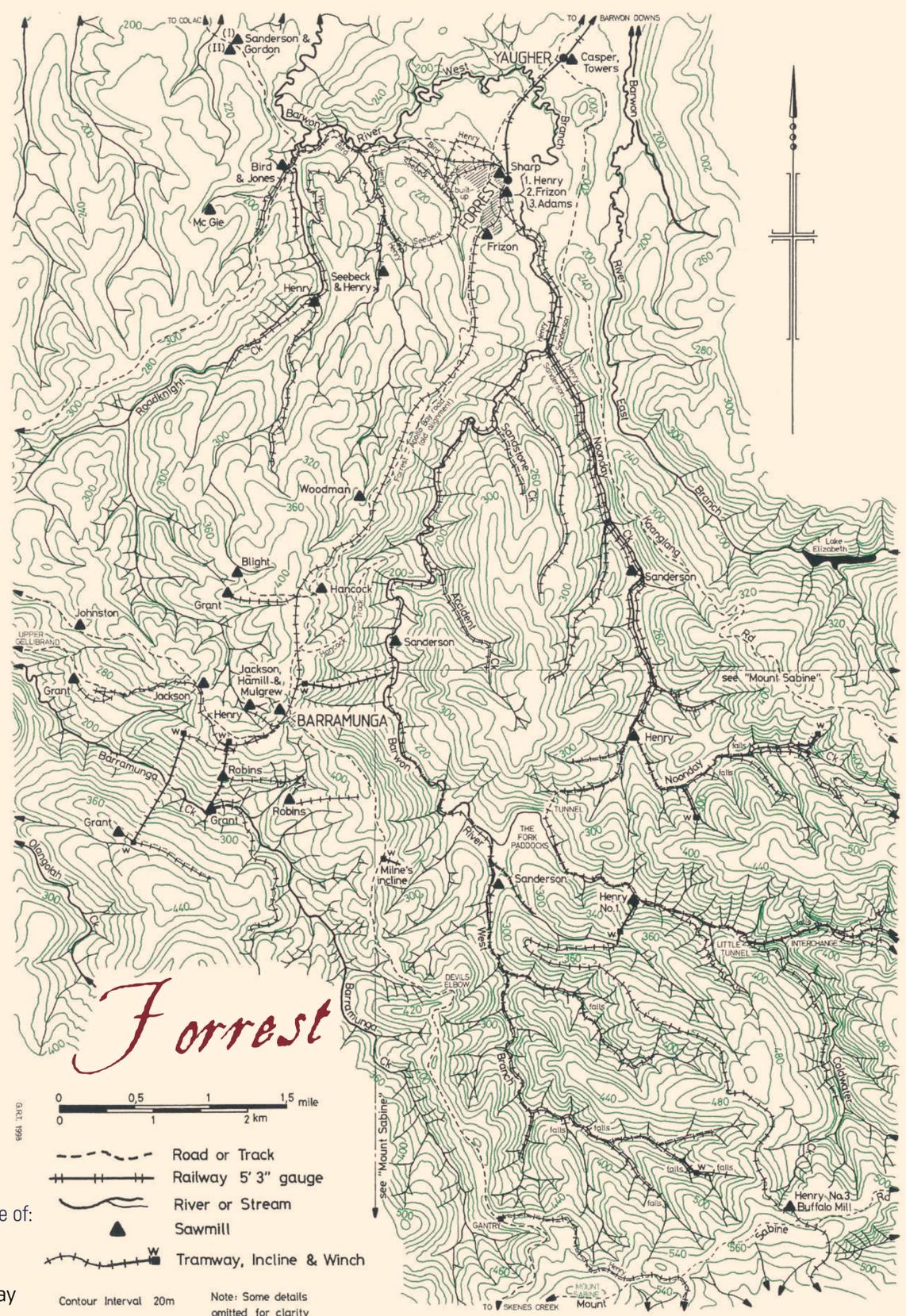
Starting with a couple of small mills in the 1890s, the trade ballooned from 1897 when large timber companies commenced operations immediately south of Forrest in the Noonday Creek valley. Operations then spread to the West Barwon valley, Barramunga Creek and further south.

In the period from 1890 to the mid-1930s the sawmill companies drew logs from a radius of 20 kms of Forrest and used tramways and steam winches on logging and tramways for sawn timber cartage. When all weather roads were provided on trunk routes over and along the ranges the sawmillers turned to motor trucks so the mills moved further into the bush. The cycle was reversed after the Second World War when mills in State Forests were compelled by policy to move out of the bush and site themselves in towns. Logs were then drawn from a very wide area over a network of main and side roads and logging tracks.

Forrest came into its own in the 1950s and 1960s as a sawmill centre when three large mills operated here and another at Yaugher. Administration of the forests was also centred at Forrest where the Forests Commission established a district office with the necessary staff to oversee the industry.

The output from the ranges at the back of Forrest was initially less than 10,000 cubic metres annually to 1914 but it rose through the decades and during the post war construction boom in 1951 was 30,000 cubic metres, rising to 59,000 cubic metres in 1956 from public and private forests. That was the peak when 10 mills were operating in the district and providing employment for around 200 persons. The resource then began fading so the outputs and mill numbers declined until by the 1970s when there was only one remaining in Forrest. This mill operated to 2003 and then relocated to Birregurra after experiencing problems with amenity from its location within the town limits of Forrest.

Forrest's time as a timber town was over.



Compiled by :
NORMAN HOUGHTON
Author and Archivist

From the Archive of:
FORREST AND DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

With the assistance of:

Colac Otway
SHIRE

0 0.5 1 1.5 mile
0 1 2 km

--- Road or Track
---+--- Railway 5' 3" gauge
--- River or Stream
▲ Sawmill
---+--- Tramway, Incline & Winch

Contour Interval 20m Note: Some details omitted for clarity

Sawmills

The first of the district mills were opened between Forrest and Barramunga in the 1880s to supply railway building timbers. These mills of Johnston Bros, Footer & Higginbotham, Woodman & Kittelty and Taylor & Owens had closed by the mid 1890s. The first permanent mill at Barramunga was established by Edwin 'Cocky' Robins in 1890 and it operated to 1908, including a second mill set up off the Apollo Bay Road. A timber tramway connected these mills with the Forrest railway station.



Sanderson

The first of the large sawmill operations at Forrest was that of Alex Sanderson, who in 1897, built a mill in the Noonday Creek valley some five kms from Forrest. The mill was connected to Forrest by a 3 ft 6 in (1067 mm) gauge iron railed tramway that ran to the railway station. Sanderson employed small steam locomotives on his tramway and over the years he acquired seven of these.

In 1902 Sanderson moved operations to the West Barwon valley and laid a new tramway from Forrest for 14 kms along the river to the bottom of Mount Sabine. He established a large mill on one of the river flats below Barramunga and logged the valley for almost twenty years. Sanderson was killed in an accident in 1907 and his successors eventually extended operations west into Barramunga Creek, Upper Gellibrand and the head of Roadknight Creek, where another four mills were built. Tramways were laid to all the mills and after the 1923 flood, a new main tramway was built along the Apollo Bay road and motor-powered rail tractors used to haul the timber. The Sanderson & Grant company ceased milling in 1939 after bushfire damage.

Forrest was the premier sawmilling town and district in the entire

Otways from the 1880s to the 1990s.

These are its sawmills:

The Sanderson & Grant mill on Barramunga Creek that was placed here in 1923 after the Barwon mill was closed. This mill and its two successors worked the area until 1939 when the company closed down due to bushfire damage.



Sanderson's Barwon sawmill situated in the West Barwon valley, just below Barramunga. Wide open flat spaces were rare in the normally tight valley so the mill and settlement was squeezed in here. This mill operated 1902 to 1923 when it was washed out by a flood.

Bird & Jones

The first permanent sawmilling operation at Forrest itself was that belonging to John Bird from 1890. Bird initially began pit sawing the timber. Not long after the railway opened Bird partnered with Jones installed a steam powered mill on Roadknight Creek about 200 metres south of the present Forrest to Colac Road on Wilson's selection. The sawn timber was conveyed to Forrest by a wooden railed tramway. The mill worked through to 1904.



Henry

The next milling operation to start at Forrest belonged to the Henry company that was initiated in 1897 in the Noonday Creek valley. A tramway connected the mill to the Forrest railway station. In 1904 Henry moved into the West Barwon valley and did so by building a tunnel between the Noonday and the Barwon to continue tramway access. Henry's main mill was built on the east arm of the river, some 11 kms from Forrest and was called the No.1 Mill.

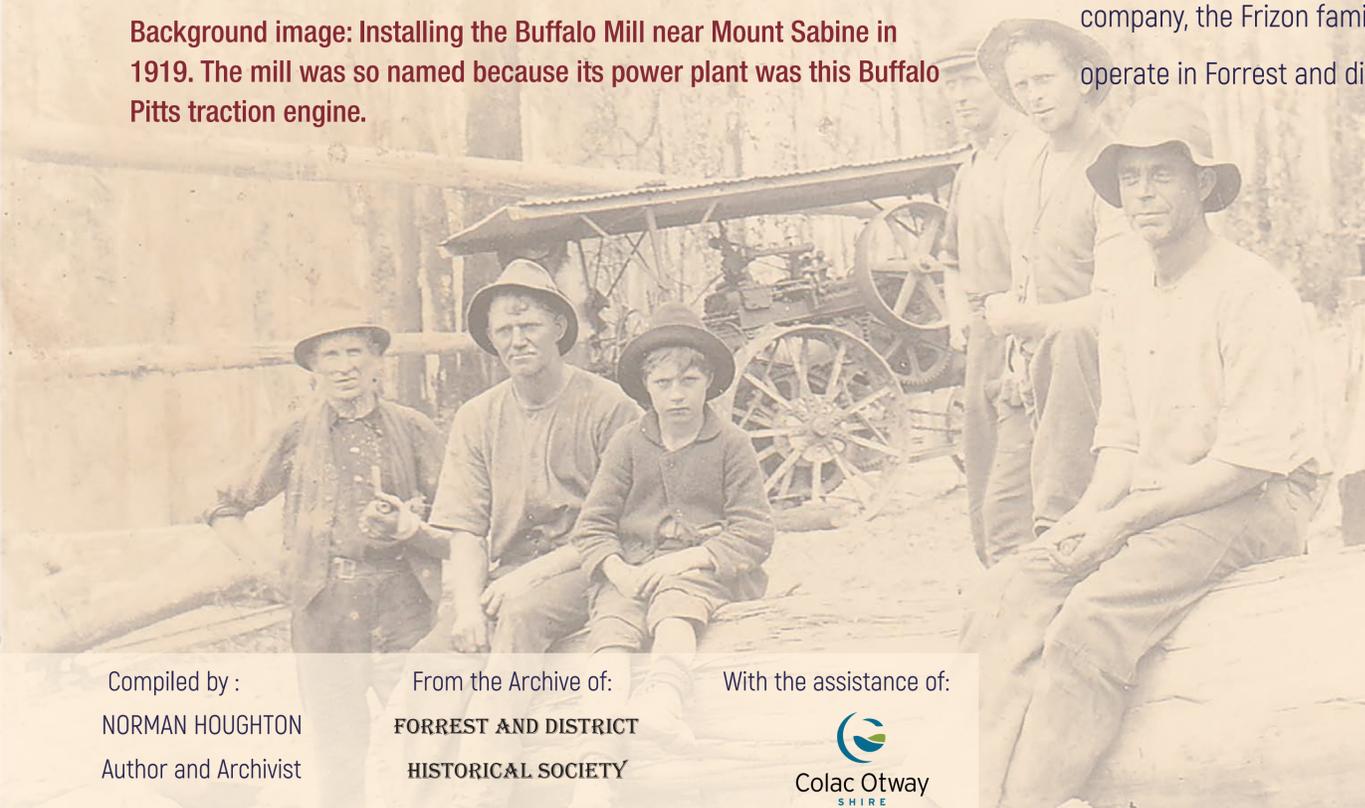
Henry logged the valley using 20 kilometres of tramways and extended operations over into the head of Kennett River with three more mills. The No.1 mill burnt down in 1927 and Henry moved to Roadknight Creek and

Background image: Installing the Buffalo Mill near Mount Sabine in 1919. The mill was so named because its power plant was this Buffalo Pitts traction engine.

Henry's first mill at Forrest was this plant erected on Noonday Creek in 1897.

laid a tramway from the Forrest railway station into the creek valley, taking over and expanding an earlier operation of Bernie Seebeck. Milling ceased here in 1935 and logging was then shifted to Mount Sabine and the Carisbrook Creek area where three more mills were erected with their supporting tramways. The sawn timber was taken to Forrest via road trucks from a transfer point at the Sunnyside Road corner on the Apollo Bay road.

In 1948 Henry abandoned the bush mills and built a new plant in the Forrest station yard. The mill operated here under various re-builds and re-arrangements through to 2003 under the ownership of the Henry company, the Frizon family and Peter Adams. It was the very last mill to operate in Forrest and district.



Compiled by :
NORMAN HOUGHTON
Author and Archivist

From the Archive of:
FORREST AND DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

With the assistance of:

Colac Otway
SHIRE

Working the mosquito bench at Henry's mill situated in the Forrest railway yard, circa 1965. Cutting smalls.



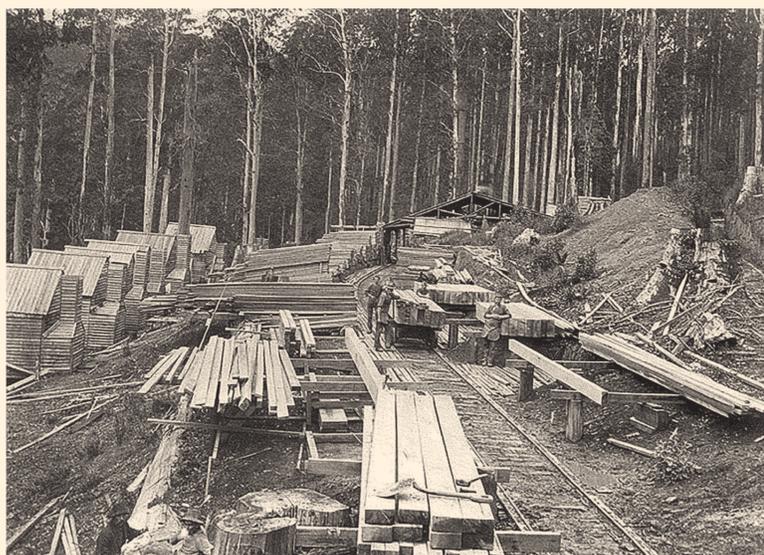
The log yard at Henry's Nettle mill on Nettle Creek, south of Mount Sabine. This mill and the nearby Carisbrook Creek mill operated during the 1930s to the late 1940s.

Sharp

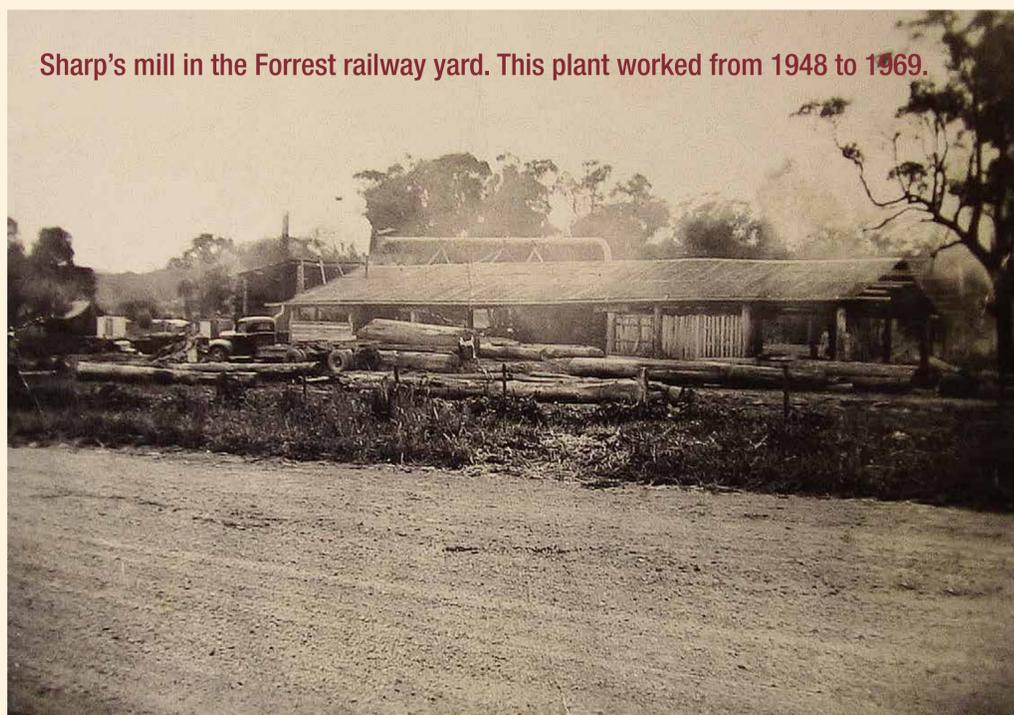
Once the Apollo Bay road was built and formed to modern standards in 1927 it allowed road trucks to be used for sawn timber cartage to Forrest. The Melbourne company of John Sharp opened mills on the head of Wild Dog Creek at Turtons from 1934. Three plants were erected here through to 1948, using tramways and winches on the log supply. Local managers were employed and these included Len Armistead, Rupert Day, Albert O'Neill, George Chamberlain, Scotty Sanderson and Charlie Dreier. In 1948 Sharp moved the milling operation to the Forrest station yard and here erected Forrest's first town mill. It was a large plant, cutting about 18 cubic metres a day. Logs were carted in by road from coupes deep in the ranges. Local managers employed at this mill were Jim & Frank Mulgrew, Mulgrew Bros & Wynn, Jim Dale and Frank Whitehead. The mill closed in 1969 when falling markets caused head office to direct the Forrest plant to cease work.



Henry's No.1 mill was situated 11 kms from Forrest in the West Barwon valley. It was a substantial site holding the mill and associated infrastructure plus a small township of huts and houses for mill workers and their families. It operated 1904 to 1927.



Henry's No.2 or Siberia mill, situated several kms south-west of the No.1 mill. This operation ran from 1911 to 1919 when bushfire wiped out the log supply.



Sharp's mill in the Forrest railway yard. This plant worked from 1948 to 1969.

Frizon / Adams

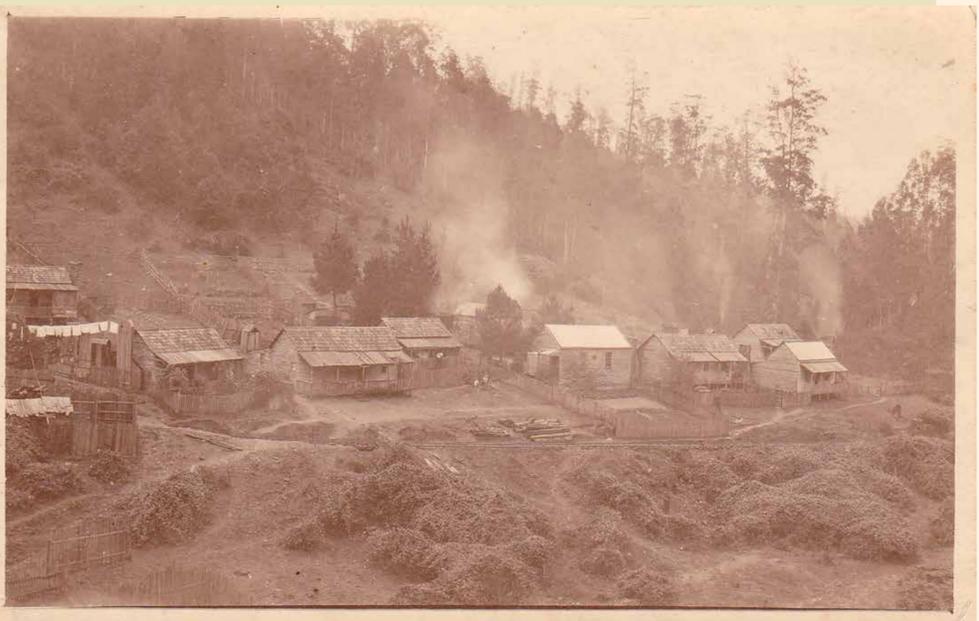
Alf Frizon was an employee of the Henry milling operation for several years until he struck out on his own in 1947 by opening a small mill in Forrest in Frizon Street. Logs were sourced from coupes all over. In time Cliff, Frank and Alan Frizon took over running the mill. During 1972 the company bought into Henry's mill at Forrest, rebuilt the plant in 1977 with the latest sawing gear and maintained the business until retiring in 1990. Peter Adams bought the business at this time and re-equipped the plant with new sawing installations and inserted a dry mill and kilns so as to specialise in value adding, particularly for blackwood timbers. The business quit Forrest in 2003 to start again at Bennett's former sawmill in Birregurra.



Alf Frizon's first sawmill in Forrest. This small plant was situated in Frizon Street and operated here from 1947 to 1972.

Casper, Towers

In 1948 Frank Caspar, Barney Towers, Bill Biddle and George Chamberlain entered the sawmilling trade with a mill near Beech Forest. The plant was soon moved to McPhee's property at Tanybryn and the sawn timber carted to the Forrest railway station. In 1952 the firm bought Westwood's mill at Gerangamete and moved both mill plants to a site near the Yaugher railway station where operations were then concentrated in a large operation. The mill worked until 1967 when its allocation was acquired by the Bennett company and the mill closed.



The residential section of the No.1 mill site for married couples and their children was a collection of ten dwellings and a schoolhouse known as Port Arthur.

Others

Other mills in the outer Forrest district to use Forrest as the railhead in the 1940s were those of Tom Armistead, on the Wild Dog Road, a Henry plant at Tanybryn operated by San Gard, Len Hill and Jim Mulgrew, Jock Fisher & Sons and a broom handle plant of Gordon Thomas, Cyril Fox & Roly Clark, both at Tanybryn, Gordon & Sanderson on the Colac Road, Laurie Jackson / Howard Dedman at Barramunga, Hamill Bros & Mulgrew near the Barramunga junction and Cole, Lidgerwood and Sanderson (later Hancock) on the slopes at Barramunga above the dam site.



The No.1 Mill in about 1915. The mill building is to the left and around it to the top and to the right are single men's huts, Henry's house and the boarding house and meal room. The river is to the bottom of the image.

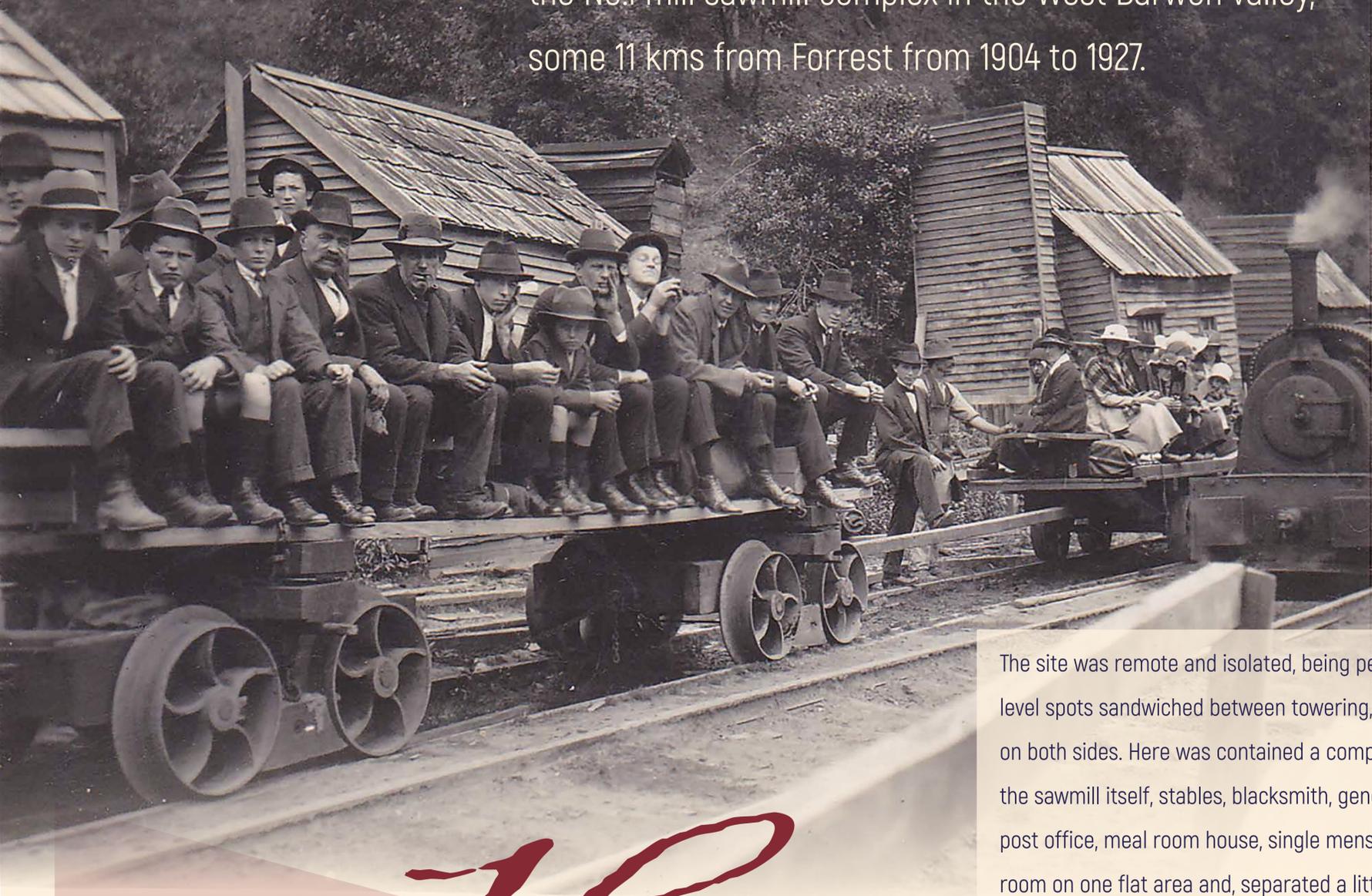
Compiled by :
NORMAN HOUGHTON
Author and Archivist

From the Archive of:
FORREST AND DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

With the assistance of:



The W.R. Henry timber company of Geelong operated the No.1 mill sawmill complex in the West Barwon valley, some 11 kms from Forrest from 1904 to 1927.



Background Image: Mill workers and their wives and children readying for travel to Forrest for the Sports Day. Temporary seating for passengers has been fitted to timber bogies. Women and children on the front truck. The Hunslet loco can be seen on the right.

The site was remote and isolated, being perched on two small level spots sandwiched between towering, tree covered slopes on both sides. Here was contained a complete township with the sawmill itself, stables, blacksmith, general store, butcher, post office, meal room house, single mens' huts and billiard room on one flat area and, separated a little to the west, a school and houses for 10 families. The settlement population was around 80 to 100 persons.

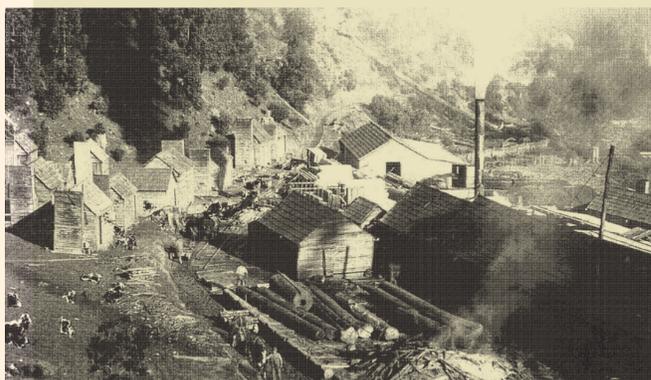
The mill was a large plant, cutting 23 cubic metres cubic metres a day and was the node point for logging and transport operation running back to Forrest and heading up the West Barwon valley towards Mount Sabine. The valley slopes along the river and its creeks and gullies were picked over for logs, which were carted to the mill by tramways, where they were sawn and the cut timbers taken to Forrest for despatch to market by rail.

The daily rhythm of the mill involved a tram link to Forrest when the small steam loco hauled a load of timber to town, turned around and brought back mail, newspapers, stores and supplies.

On special occasions such as the Forrest Sports, the mill people were taken to and from Forrest by the tram, assuming their seats on timber bogies converted to carry passengers. The mill was subject to stress at times such as floods and bushfire but averted disaster until 1927 when a spark from the sawdust burning heap blew into the mill shed late at night and started a major fire that destroyed the plant. Henry abandoned the site at this time, pulled down the buildings, removed the plant and machinery and lifted the iron rails in the tramways for re-use at his next site.

Henry's No.1 Mill

Left: View of the central portion of the No.1 Mill. Log yard centre foreground, mill building right, blacksmith shop at left end of mill, stables further around and single men's huts to the left along the access tramline.



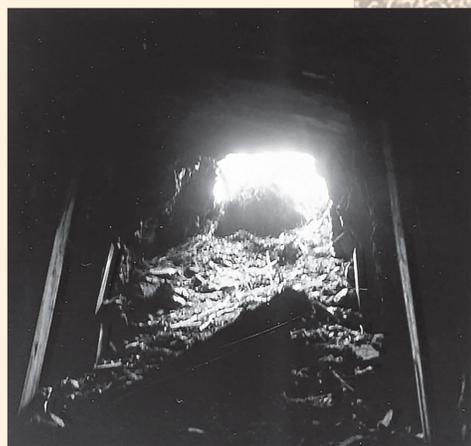
Right: When the mill closed in 1927 the entire site was stripped of buildings and machinery, leaving virtually nothing behind. All that could be seen afterwards was a small clearing in the bush, such as this view from year 2000.



The Henry sawmilling company built two tunnels on its timber tramway network in the West Barwon valley. Tunnels on Victorian timber tramways were rare so Henry's tunnels were a significant highlight for the Otways.



North portal of the main tunnel on the Noonday Creek side. The tunnel entrance was excavated at the head of a very narrow wet gully so needed timber brace pieces to its approach.



The little tunnel was not destroyed when Henry quit the No.1 mill in 1927 but natural erosion and collapse has worn away most of it. Image inside the tunnel taken many years ago. It shows the timber work installed to support the walls and roof.

The first and longest tunnel was constructed to join the Noonday Creek valley with the West Barwon valley so as to make a short-cut route from the No.1 mill to Forrest. This tunnel was 437 metres in length, constructed by Ballarat miners with wall props and roof cap pieces installed, tram rails laid through and opening in 1903.

The tunnel was used by the mill for log and sawn timber cartage plus residents at the mill and a family of farmers who occupied the Fork Paddocks at the south end of the tunnel. Those who used it say that it was very dark and wet inside and those riding on the timber trucks had to lie flat when passing through. One section was subject to floor heave and these rises had to be chipped back from time to time to maintain the specified clearances.

Henry had two steam locos at different times and these used the tunnel. The larger loco was fitted with a hinge on its tall funnel so that the funnel could be lowered clear of the tunnel roof when the loco travelled through. The second and smaller tunnel of 30 metres, was constructed on the log line about 1.5 kms upstream of the No. 1 mill to pass through an intervening spur that projected into the river valley. This tunnel was not very far below the spur crest.

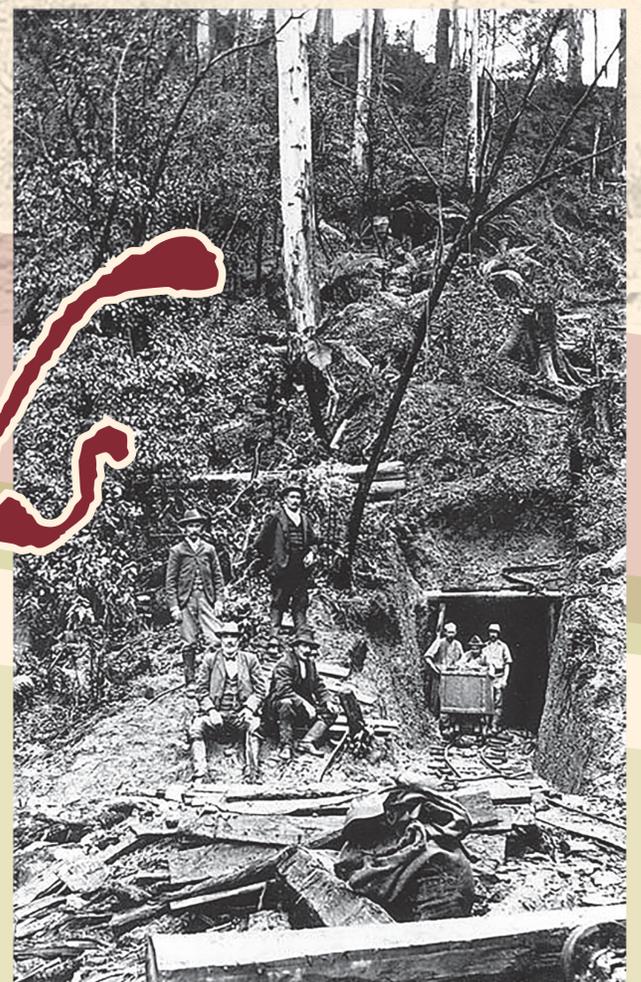
When the No. 1 mill closed in 1927 the tunnel remained in use for logging for another two years and was then abandoned. Soon after, either 1929 or 1930, the Forests Commission closed off the Noonday-Barwon tunnel, dynamiting both portals, for safety reasons. The little tunnel was not blown in but was of such light construction that it gradually eroded from rains over the years and mostly collapsed of its own accord.

Background image:
South portal of the main tunnel in a view taken after many years of tunnel usage.

The Tunnels



View of the little tunnel situated upstream of the No. 1 mill. This short tunnel cut through a projecting spur on a river bend.



Miners building the main tunnel between the Noonday Creek valley and the West Barwon valley. View from the south or Barwon River side.

The two major millers at Forrest, Sanderson and Henry, both employed a variety of small steam locomotives to work their tramlines in the period 1897 to 1933.

The two major millers at Forrest, Sanderson and Henry, both employed a variety of small steam locomotives to work their tramlines in the period 1897 to 1933. There were nine steam locos at Forrest, making the place Victoria's premier timber town for steam. The steam engines at Forrest were distinctive and all were given names by their owners.

Sanderson acquired the most steam engines, some Forrest locals saying he was a steam fanatic as shown when he named three of his sons after steam engine manufacturers – Clayton, Baldwin and Marshall. Sanderson bought seven engines, turned over his machines, selling some, converting others to winches and abandoning one in the Forrest railway yard.

Sanderson's first steam loco was a 2-4-0 T.O.C called Parrot which had an usual indirect drive and was probably of Fowler manufacture, possibly 4150 of 1881. The loco came to Sanderson from Queensland in 1899. Parrot ran on the access tramway hauling sawn timber to the Forrest railway station. It appears it was undersized for the work demanded so Sanderson sold it in 1901.



One of the Coffee Pot locos capsized into the Barwon river following a bridge bearer collapse. Alex Sanderson and son Marshall were riding this engine at the time and were killed in this incident. It was said at the time that the Coffee Pots were top heavy and prone to sway so this loco was more likely than not to tip off the bridge when the beams moved.

The second loco was a 2-4-0 T.O.C of Bagnall make, probably 682 of 1885, named Westward Ho by Sanderson. It came to Forrest in 1901 and was used on the Noonday and Barwon tramlines.

When Sanderson moved to the West Barwon valley in 1902 he required more powerful

locomotive power so acquired Tom Cue. This machine was a Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0 T.O.C, number 378 of 1891. Tom Cue arrived in Forrest in 1902. Another loco was needed within a short time to meet Sanderson's sawn timber and log cartage needs on the longer tramlines so in 1904 he bought Black Angel, a Baldwin product, 7556 of 1885. This loco was used on the log line south of the mill. In 1907 Black Angel was involved in an accident that resulted in the death of its driver Jack Southall so Sanderson retired the loco and acquired two more machines, this time from the Victorian Railways. These were former steam rail cars, Kitson 0-4-0, numbers T69 and T70, Sanderson buying the engine units only. They were regauged from 5 ft 3 ins (1600 mm) to the Forrest gauge of 3 ft 6 ins (1067 mm), and were called Coffee Pots.

Steam Loco's

Compiled by :
NORMAN HOUGHTON
Author and Archivist

From the Archive of:
FORREST AND DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

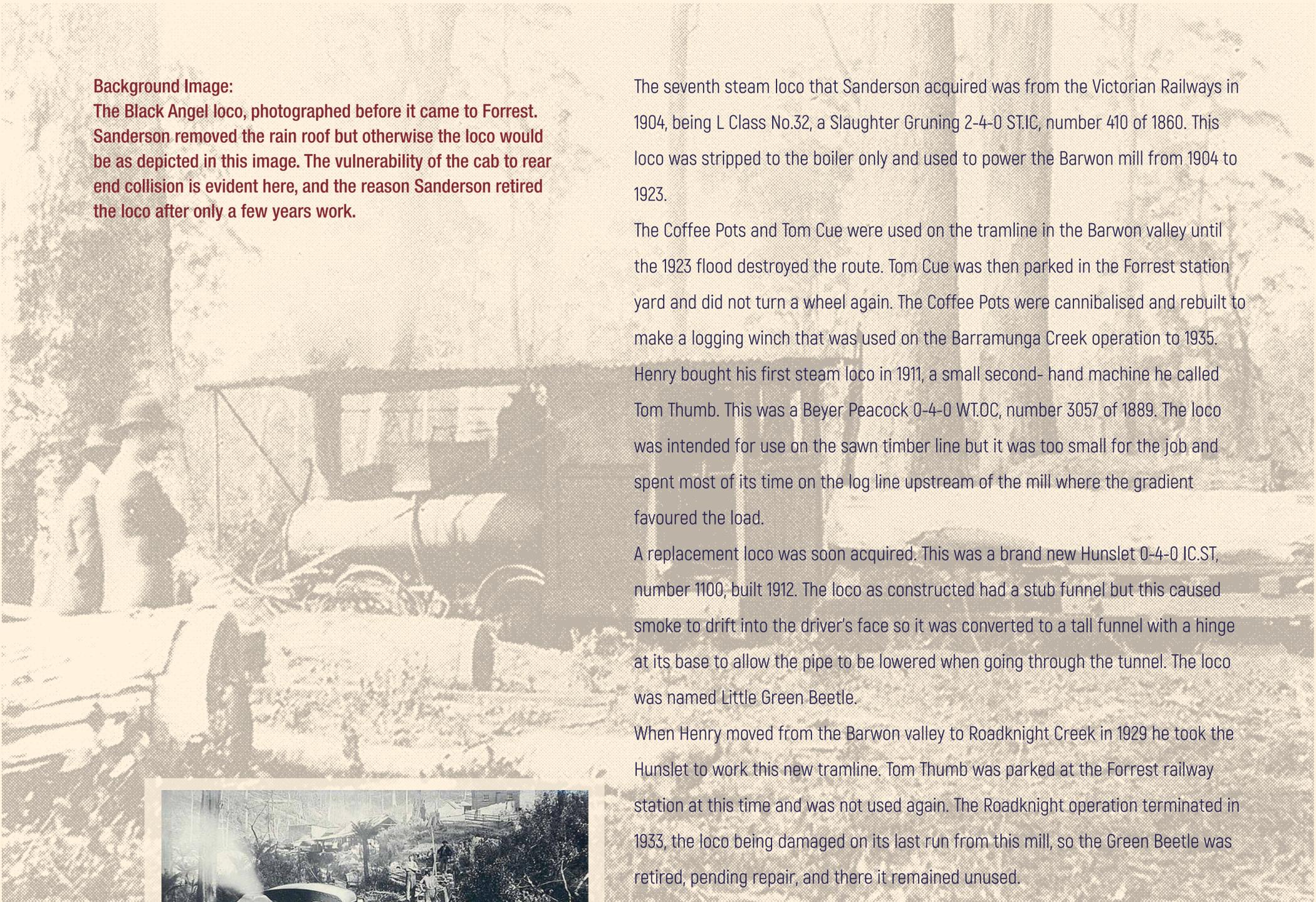
With the assistance of:



Background Image: Coffee Pot loco at Sanderson's Barwon mill in about 1910. These locos had a vertical boiler and a horseshoe shaped water tank wrapped around the boiler.

Background Image:

The Black Angel loco, photographed before it came to Forrest. Sanderson removed the rain roof but otherwise the loco would be as depicted in this image. The vulnerability of the cab to rear end collision is evident here, and the reason Sanderson retired the loco after only a few years work.



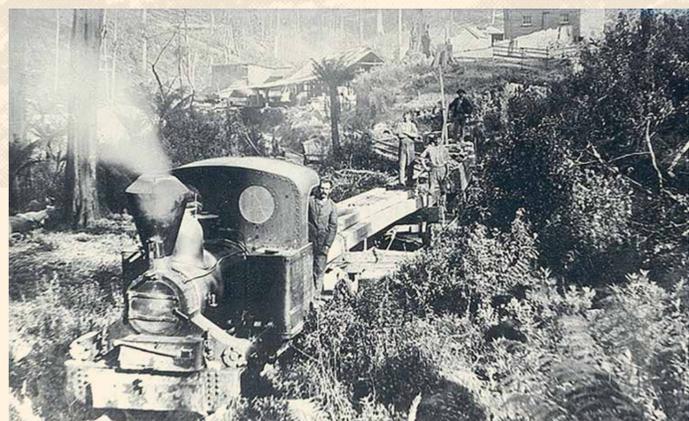
The seventh steam loco that Sanderson acquired was from the Victorian Railways in 1904, being L Class No.32, a Slaughter Gruning 2-4-0 ST.IC, number 410 of 1860. This loco was stripped to the boiler only and used to power the Barwon mill from 1904 to 1923.

The Coffee Pots and Tom Cue were used on the tramline in the Barwon valley until the 1923 flood destroyed the route. Tom Cue was then parked in the Forrest station yard and did not turn a wheel again. The Coffee Pots were cannibalised and rebuilt to make a logging winch that was used on the Barramunga Creek operation to 1935. Henry bought his first steam loco in 1911, a small second-hand machine he called Tom Thumb. This was a Beyer Peacock 0-4-0 WT.OC, number 3057 of 1889. The loco was intended for use on the sawn timber line but it was too small for the job and spent most of its time on the log line upstream of the mill where the gradient favoured the load.

A replacement loco was soon acquired. This was a brand new Hunslet 0-4-0 IC.ST, number 1100, built 1912. The loco as constructed had a stub funnel but this caused smoke to drift into the driver's face so it was converted to a tall funnel with a hinge at its base to allow the pipe to be lowered when going through the tunnel. The loco was named Little Green Beetle.

When Henry moved from the Barwon valley to Roadknight Creek in 1929 he took the Hunslet to work this new tramline. Tom Thumb was parked at the Forrest railway station at this time and was not used again. The Roadknight operation terminated in 1933, the loco being damaged on its last run from this mill, so the Green Beetle was retired, pending repair, and there it remained unused.

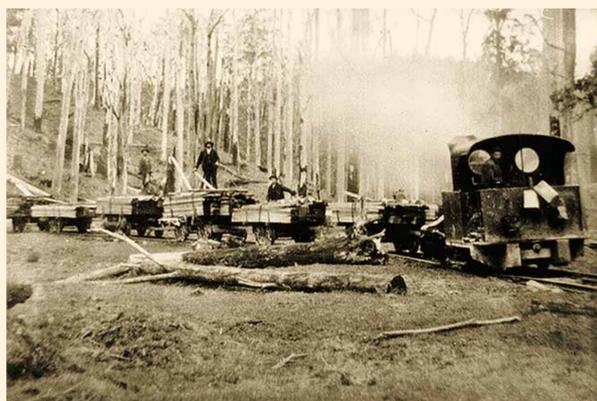
All of the steam machinery, such as winches, boilers and locos, left in the railway yard from the 1920s to the late 1940s by Sanderson and Henry were gone over from time to time by their bush engineers to remove parts for re-use on winches and hauling equipment. The derelict loco hulks of Tom Cue, Tom Thumb and the Green Beetle were finally removed for scrap metal in about 1951.



Sanderson's first loco was a small Fowler built machine that he called Parrot. It was used on the Noonday Creek tramline, shown here departing the mill and heading to Forrest with a timber load.



The Tom Cue loco on the log line above Sanderson's Barwon mill bringing in a load of logs.



The Westward Ho engine approaching Forrest with a load of sawn timber from Sanderson's mill.



After retirement from the tramline, the Coffee Pot locos were eventually cannibalised and rebuilt as a log winch that was used at Sanderson & Grant's mills along Barramunga Creek. One of the water tanks remains in the bush to this day, as shown here.

Some?? It was not all work for Forrest residents. Time was found for various cultural and social activities.



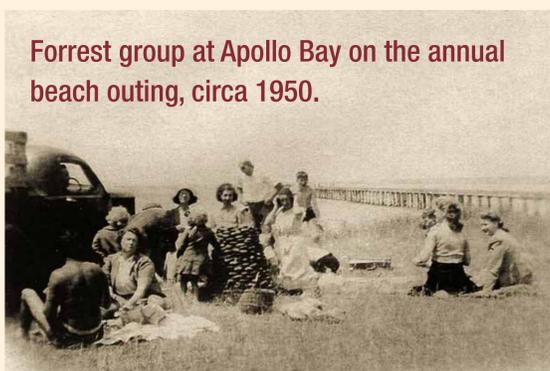
Forrest children rambling along the Barwon River. Outdoors was the way to go in those days.



Anglican Church Fete in the hall during 1936. Always an occasion for jollity and picking up a nice cake and bit of needlework.



Concert Troupe getting ready for a big show in the public hall.



Forrest group at Apollo Bay on the annual beach outing, circa 1950.



Forrest friends on an outing to Apollo Bay, 1947, in the latest fashion gear. Dawn Day, Margaret Sharp, Gwen Wood.

The type and role of these functions have varied over the years but all have involved community get togethers just for the heck of it or to celebrate events or be fund raisers for various causes and groups. In the early days it was the church groups and ad hoc sports and recreational gatherings of like-minded souls that provided stimulation.

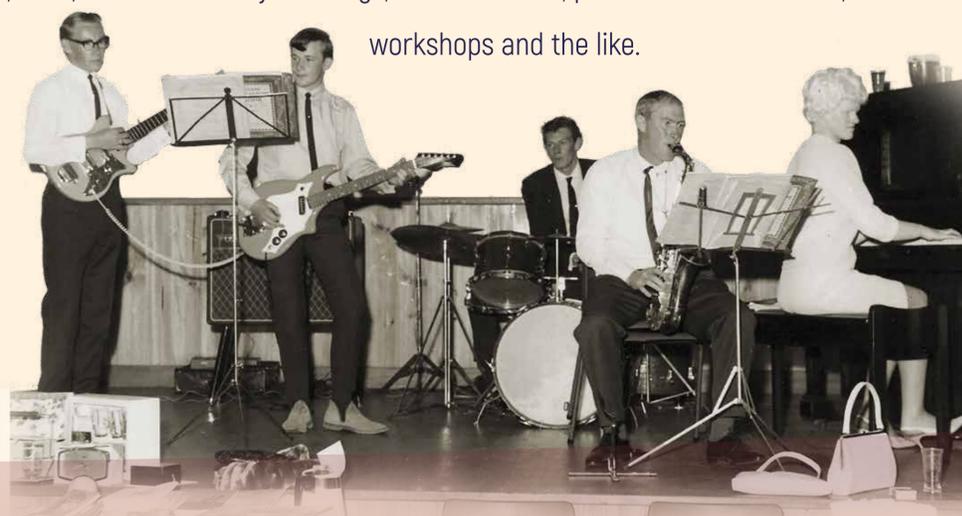
The sawmill workers out of town had limited opportunities in this regard because of the long hours and residing at the mills deep in the bush so they made their own entertainment. Reading was very popular, as was card playing, and those at Henry's No.1 mill had access to a hall and billiard hut. An occasional kick of the football on a rarely found flat spot, the odd boxing match and fishing in the nearby rivers and creeks were other diversions.

During the 1930s when economic activity was slow around town there was the time to take an interest in matters other than work, particularly during winter when outdoor activities could be hampered by damp weather and mud. In 1932 the Forrest Dramatic Club was formed. An Anglers Club was initiated in 1934 and it promoted fishing for trout and blackfish in the east and west Barwon. A Gymnasium Club was started at the same time in connection with the football club rooms and here parallel bars, horizontal bars, boxing gloves etc were available for club members to use. A Boy Scout troop was also commenced as was a branch of the Country Women's Association. There was also an Oddfellows Lodge and an Independent Hall, both social and medical benefit societies, and these organisations put on socials, dances and card nights.

Feature Balls and dances were promoted by the Football Club, the Sports Committee, the Oddfellows Lodge and the Anglican Church. Regular Saturday night dances were held with piano and violin music being provided by local players. In later years formal bands were set up by local musicians and these featured piano, drums, guitar and saxophone. No matter what, there was always someone around who could play an instrument and offer their musical skills for the dance.

In the period after the war, from the late 1940s to the late 1950s there were community excursions to the beach at Apollo Bay. Most of the town ventured to these days for a swim, picnic and lots of yarning.

The original dance hall in Station Street burnt down in 1963 and it was replaced with a modern facility in Grant Street that gave a great boost to entertainments and recreational pursuits. The new hall opened in February 1966 and has been the venue for any and every type of local event including public meetings, dances, balls, club and society meetings, staff farewells, private social functions, community workshops and the like.



Local band 'The Otways' performing at a dance in the 1960s.

Entertainment

Pic 1496

The Bush Nursing Cottage and consulting room at Forrest. One of the Nursing Sisters on horseback about to attend to her rounds.

Pic 1504

Forrest Bush Nurse May Hewitt photographed in 1929 on her graduation and shortly before she was posted to Forrest.

Pic 1503 Use if need be, otherwise leave out

No caption needed.

Medical services in the infant township of Forrest were no existent for many years. The sick and injured needed to travel to Birregurra for attention. This situation changed for the better in 1920 when the Bush Nursing Association was inaugurated and it operated out of rented premises. Funds for the service and the nurse's salary were provided by subscribers, sometimes up to 100 local and district members, and through fund raising activities by the Sports Committee and other groups.

The nurses were double certificated for general medical and maternity and could offer assistance for most routine conditions and minor accident cases, particularly involving deep cuts, abrasions and sprains which were commonplace in an environment where most tasks around the farm and sawmill were manual. A lot of the work involved horse riding to the patients or to attend to mothers and babies. The nurses rarely stayed long at Forrest, most being from interstate, because they found the climate too wet and cold and were career building. Nursing Sisters to serve at Forrest have been Mesdames Amos, Raphael, Johnstone, Haig, Hewitt, Smart, Clark, Martin, Kerr, Edmondson and Dowie.

In 1935 a nursing cottage was built in Grant St opposite the school on land donated by Bert Ireland and with timber donated by local sawmills. Sister Polly Dowie was the first occupant here and she later purchased the cottage and continued to offer a local service after the BNA formally withdrew its sponsorship in 1937. After the second world war the nursing service was supplemented by a visiting doctor and dentist from Birregurra and these professionals used either the Dowie cottage or a room at one of the shops. The visits stopped by the 1970s following the nurse's retirement and residents were required to travel to Birregurra for attention.

The Bush Nurse

Medical services in the infant township of Forrest were no existent for many years. The sick and injured needed to travel to Birregurra for attention.



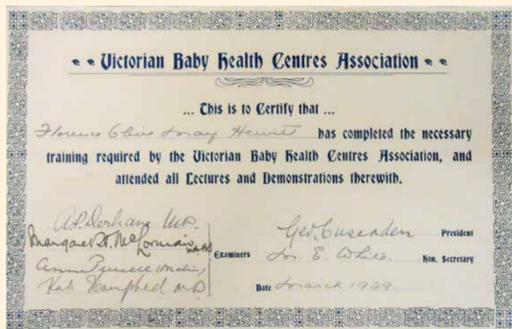
Forrest Bush Nurse May Hewitt photographed in 1929 on her graduation and shortly before she was posted to Forrest.

This situation changed for the better in 1920 when the Bush Nursing Association was inaugurated and it operated out of rented premises. Funds for the service and the nurse's salary were provided by subscribers, sometimes up to 100 local and district members, and through fund raising activities by the Sports Committee and other groups.

The nurses were double certificated for general medical and maternity and could offer assistance for most routine conditions and minor accident cases, particularly involving deep cuts, abrasions and sprains which were commonplace in an environment where most tasks around the farm and sawmill were manual. A lot of the work involved horse riding to the patients or to attend to mothers and babies.

The nurses rarely stayed long at Forrest, most being from interstate, because they found the climate too wet and cold and were career building. Nursing Sisters to serve at Forrest have been Mesdames Amos, Raphael, Johnstone, Haig, Hewitt, Smart, Clark, Martin, Kerr, Edmondson and Dowie.

In 1935 a nursing cottage was built in Grant St opposite the school on land donated by Bert Ireland and with timber donated by local sawmills. Sister Polly Dowie was the first occupant here and she later purchased the cottage and continued to offer a local service after the BNA formally withdrew its sponsorship in 1937. After the second world war the nursing service was supplemented by a visiting doctor and dentist from Birregurra and these professionals used either the Dowie cottage or a room at one of the shops. The visits stopped by the 1970s following the nurse's retirement and residents were required to travel to Birregurra for attention.



Background Image:
The Bush Nursing Cottage and consulting room at Forrest. One of the Nursing Sisters on horseback about to attend to her rounds.

The Bush Nurse

Town

The township of Forrest was formed in 1890 as a private subdivision within the Shire of Colac.

Forrest was included in the relevant voting Ward and returned a member to the Shire from the earliest days. In 1919 the Otway Shire Council was formed and Forrest found itself administered from Beech Forest. The first and longest serving Councillors for Otway was Jim Hennigan, who had a dairy farm between Forrest and Yaughar. Hennigan was renowned for his dedication to Council matters. He rode his horse from Forrest to Beech Forest for Council meetings in the days before the roads permitted motor cars to be used.

Forrest was an unsophisticated town and initially sought little from Council apart from attention to roads, bridges and drains. But change did come about with the passage of time. The first lifestyle facility to be offered by the Shire was a pan sewage service in 1936 for the 63 tenements in and around town. A Fire Brigade came in the 1940s, mains electricity in 1955 and reticulated water in 1967.

Councillors involved in schemes for a new public hall and Infant Welfare Centre were Jim Mulgrew and Jack Turner. Mulgrew is best remembered as the Councillor who had the dusty gravelled Station Street sealed with bitumen and thereby abated the noise and dust along the street from the timber and log trucks that motored into the two sawmills that operated in the railway yard. Forrest women of the house were grateful for the absence of wafting dust on washing day.

The present Forrest Park is largely through the lobbying efforts of Councillor Jim Speirs who backed the Progress Association in its efforts to secure the old railway station yard for public purposes. The Otway Shire bought the land from the Government and turned it over to local management, who erected a caravan park on the site as a tourist drawcard. Since those early days in the 1970s the Park amenities have been expanded to the fine facility that it is in the 21st century.



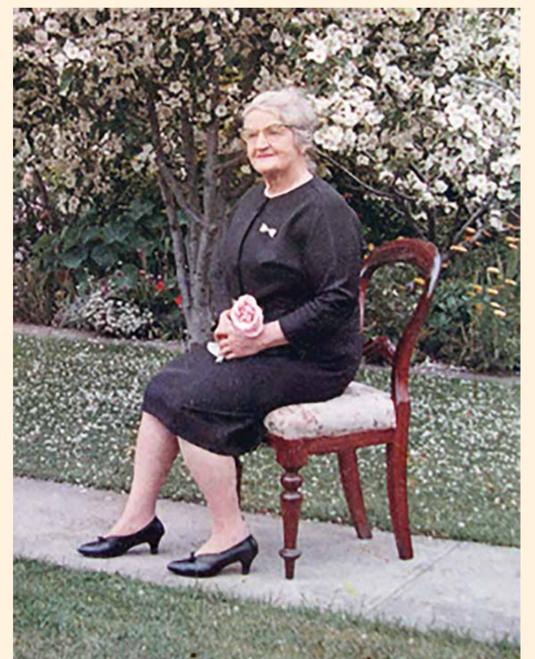
Alex Sanderson. The Sandersons were responsible for establishing the economic base of Forrest through sawmilling and retail (with a general store opened in Station Street). Sandersons assisted in the formation of the Tennis Club and Methodist Church and other causes in town.

Administration

On Municipal Amalgamation in 1994 administration of Forrest returned to Colac through the Colac Otway Shire.

The streets in Forrest were originally named as per their roles and included labels such as Station, Bridge and Main streets. Some imagination was subsequently applied and most streets renamed in later years to commemorate those individuals and families that have contributed the most over the years.

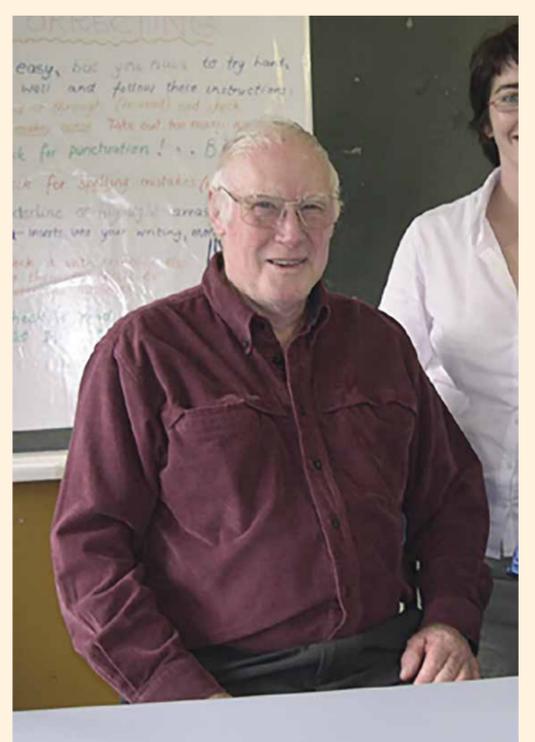
Station Street refers to the adjoining railway station and reason for Forrest's existence. Hennigan Cres refers to one of the early settler families and Jim Hennigan. Turner Drive is after the family that was involved in the timber industry and Councillor Jack Turner. Sanderson Lane commemorates the contributions of Alex Sanderson and family and brother George's families in the timber industry and contribution to town life. Blundy Street is after the Blundy family who pioneered Yaughner and farmed there for many decades. Grant Street remembers Jim Grant and family and their involvement in timber and the general community. Frizon Street is associated with the Frizon family who were involved with commerce, sawmilling, sport and community affairs at Forrest.



Queenie Frizon. The Frizon family were notable contributors to the town from the 1920s to the 1980s. Queenie was the matriarch of the family who ran the Post Office and Telephone Exchange from 1943 from her shop in Station Street.



James Mulgrew. The Mulgrews were early settlers at Barramunga and played a significant role in economic and social affairs there. James Mulgrew had sawmills at Barramunga and managed Sharp's mill in Forrest in the 1950s.



James Speirs. The Speirs family from Tanybryn had an active role in Forrest affairs from the 1950s to the 1990s. James Speirs worked for the Forestry and was a live wire with many groups in town, plus serving terms on the Otway Shire as local representative.

Compiled by :
NORMAN HOUGHTON
Author and Archivist

From the Archive of:
**FORREST AND DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

With the assistance of:

