

The Western Port Times

Grantville & Districts

Volume 6 Number 11

FREE

March 2024

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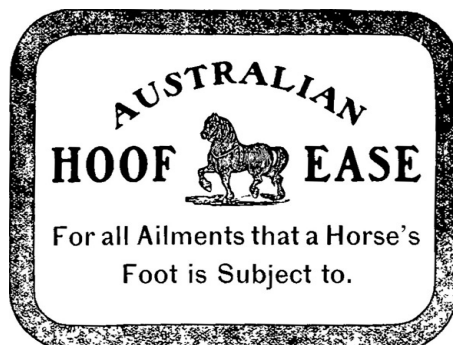
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This magazine is a continuation of the original Western Port Times, which was published in Grantville from 1898 until 1908 by T. C. Monger, and from 1908 to August 1910 by Harold B. and J. A. Sullivan, at which date the premise is said to have been destroyed in a fire and everything lost. Publication never resumed.

At its peak, the paper was distributed from Flinders and Hastings on the Mornington Peninsula, to San Remo and Phillip Island, Inverloch and the Powlett region, through to Jumbunna and Loch, and as far north as Lang Lang.



BEN HUR

with
RAMON NOVARRO
CARMEL MYERS MAY McAVOY

Wattle Pictures

Tuesday & Wed'day

OCTOBER 18th & 19th

PRODUCED BY
METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER

Correction

Lorraine Badger has contacted me with a correction to the section on the jockey, Harold Lindsay Badger, in the article on George Murdoch Buchan by Lee Chase in *The Western Port Times*, November 2018. Here is what she wrote: *I would like to point out the seemingly unimportant error gleaned from an article initially published in the Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 17, (MUP), 2007 regarding Harold's marriage "On 17 May 1928 at St Peters Church, Adelaide, Badger married Frances Augustus Newton, with the forms of the Churches of Christ." For any interested genealogist, St. Peters is actually a suburb of Adelaide with no Church of Christ, but there was a Baptist. From the Genealogy SA database Harold was married in a private residence in St Peters. SA Marriage registration Book/Page: 315/650.*

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 Also: cv.vic.gov.au/organisations/inverloch-historical-society/
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 Lang Lang & District Historical Society: langlang.net/historical.html
 Leongatha and District Historical society: leongathahistory.org.au
 Phillip Island & District Historical Society: <http://pidhs.org.au/>
 Phillip Island Nature Parks, Churchill Island Heritage Farm Collection
<https://victoriancollections.net.au/organisations/churchill-island-heritage-farm#collection-records>
 South Eastern Historical Association: seha.org.au
 Wonthagi Historical Society: wonthaggihistoricalsociety.org.au/
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From the *San Remo Times and Phillip Island and Bass Valley Advertiser*, 4th March 1898, page 2.

Local and General News

Councillor Ward, of Woodleigh, was appointed on Monday by the Executive Council a justice of the peace for the Central Bailiwick.

Large numbers of sheep are dying in the district through the continued drought. Several are found in the mornings and evenings stuck in the waterholes. They go in to drink and have not the strength to get out.

In our report of the Kilcunda bush fires Mr. R. Davis's name was omitted as one of the sufferers, he having lost the whole of his grass and fencing.

The San Remo Court of Petty Sessions will be held to-day. There are a few cases of illegally setting fire to grass.

Phillip Island and Woolamai Shire Council will be held on Saturday, March 5th.

It is rumoured that there are two doctors making inquiries with the intention of starting practice here. If they both make up their minds to remain the district will be better off than it ever was for medical treatment. Some few months ago we could not get a medical man to look at this district.

It is reported that Mr. Stanley Kennon has sold his farm on the Island, and obtained a reasonable figure.

Dr. Jones has purchased a practice in Eaglehawk, and left here on Monday to take possession on the first of the month.

Corinella is very badly off for water. The residents have to depend on Mr. W. Peters's tank for domestic use, and the amount is now reduced to only 3 ft. as he has to water his stock from the same tank.

The waterholes at Kilcunda have all run out, and the residents are carting water for their cattle and domestic purposes. Some of them have to cart from 3 to 4 miles. The Kilcunda dam has a plentiful supply, and of really good quality.

The contractors for carting and spreading gravel on the Bass Landing road have started their work. There is no sign of the contractors starting the main road at Bass Park.

The road from Turnbull's corner, Kilcunda, where the bush fire passed through, is almost in some places blocked for traffic, more especially opposite Gibson's and Atkinson's paddocks.

The land owners are busy cleaning out their dams and making them deeper, so that they will hold more water for the next dry season.

Potatoes are a complete failure in the district this year, there not being enough to supply the necessary wants of the surrounding parts. Several of the farmers are obtaining theirs from Melbourne. Good crops have been destroyed by fire. Onions are more plentiful.

The tanks in San Remo are nearly all dry, and there seems to be no likelihood of rain, which tends to be a serious matter, as there is no place nearer than Kilcunda dam to obtain drinking water. Cowes is situated in a similar way.

Also

From the *San Remo Times and Phillip Island and Bass Valley Advertiser*, 11th March 1898, page 2.

On Friday evening last, at San Remo, an accident happened to John Clarke, aged about 10 years, son of Captain Clarke. He was getting over a fence, when he fell on his hand, and broke his arm an inch or two above the wrist. Dr. Corry was called in and set the limb. The boy is getting on as well as can be expected.

At the Licensing Court on Friday, March 4th, Mr. W. B. Lang was granted a temporary licence on the Grantville and Jeetho Show ground.

Mr. J. West, of Cowes, sued the Commissioner of Railways for £5 11s. damages, for negligence on the part of the Department in not supplying him with trucks for sheep, as agreed upon; but he only obtained a verdict for 16s. damages, with costs.

Dr. Corry has secured the premises of Mr. Pickersgill, where he intends to reside and practice at an early date.

The Genista's crew are all new hands, except the captain. The engineer had been on the boat for about nine years, and left on Monday; and Fred M'Fee left on Friday last, stating that he was going to Bass. He obtained a horse from Mr. Dwyer, and up to the present has neither returned nor sent the horse back, but has returned the saddle. He was seen in Melbourne this week, and it is thought that he rode the horse to Lang Lang and let him loose, expecting it to return, but it has not made its appearance as yet.

Dr. Jones has notified in our advertising columns that he intends holding an auction sale on Friday, 18th March, of household furniture and effects, together with a few milch cows.

(continues on Page 4)

Local and General News (continued from Page 3)

The Bass Hall Committee will hold a concert and ball on Easter Monday night, as will be seen in our advertising columns.

The deputation of the Council, arranged a few weeks ago, to wait on the Public Works Department, did not come off, so another day is arranged for, viz., 23rd March.

On Monday 17 applications by sufferers from the bush fires received assistance at Loch by the board appointed by the Government, to the amount of £700. Seven were refused and one was postponed.

The few hot days have been the means of starting bush fires again. Several small ones have broken out, but no damage is done, as far as we can learn.

Also

From the San Remo Times and Phillip Island and Bass Valley Advertiser, 18th March 1898, page 2.

In our last issue it was stated that Fred M'Fee had hired a horse from Mr. P. Dwyer, of San Remo. Mr. Dwyer informs us that the horse has not been returned, and that he has spent days in looking for it, but without success. He heard that it was let loose at Lang Lang.

The lifting and carting of the rails on the old Kilcunda tram line is being pushed on rapidly. The men have taken up about one half, and expect to be through Anderson's paddock early next week.

A special meeting of the Council will be held to-morrow, at the Council chambers, to consider the appointment of a health officer for the Shire, and any other business that may crop up.

The few showers which have fallen this week have been the means of moistening the ground sufficiently to start the grass growing, but not enough to supply the waterholes for cattle, though it has given plenty water for domestic purposes, as all the tanks have sufficient to last a few weeks longer without any more rain.

Among the 300 cases dealt with in connection with the bush fires fund the following advances have been made to this centre:— French Island, £27; Poowong, £20; Korumburra, £350; Leongatha, £146; Foster, £152; and Dromana, £35.

Mr. M. Murnane, of Powlett River, announces in our advertising columns that he requires tenders for picking up, burning and clearing off scrub and debris left after the fire at Woolamai; and also for splitting 300 posts.

The State school picnic, which was postponed, will be held on Friday next at Cowes. The Genista will take the children over free, and adults will be charged 2s. 6d. return. The steamer will leave Cowes on return at 5 p.m. A good day's sport is anticipated if the weather is fine. Foot racing and all kinds of games will be indulged in.

Sports were held at Bass yesterday in commemoration of St. Patrick. The day was fine, and there was a fairly good attendance. The sports consisted of foot racing, jumping, &c. In the evening there was a ball at the Queen Victoria Hall, which was well attended. Dancing was kept up all night, and refreshments were supplied by the Bass ladies, and are worthy of comment.

A report of the Melbourne City Council's method of encouraging local industry is given in another column. In this connection it is a significant fact that the Mayor of Melbourne (Mr. M'Eacharn), who made such a violent speech against Jumbunna coal, is a member of a big shipping firm which is largely interested in Newcastle coal mines.

Also

From the San Remo Times and Phillip Island and Bass Valley Advertiser, 25th March 1898, page 2.

The Council will hold their usual monthly meeting on Saturday, 2nd April.

The Bass sports and races will be held on Easter Monday, 11th April, at Bass, and in the evening the anniversary ball and concert will be held.

The State school picnic is being held to-day at Cowes. A good number left San Remo, Newhaven and Rhyll this morning by the steamer Genista,

The Woolamai granite quarries have commenced work again. Mr. Finn brought a few quarrymen from Melbourne on Tuesday, and will put some more men on in a few days. The stone is to be used in the building of M'Intyre Bros.' new shop in Elizabeth-street, Melbourne.

There is quite a potato famine in this district. Several of the residents have not had a potato on their tables for weeks past, and those who have them say they are so small they are hardly worth cooking, they being not much larger than marbles.

The Council has elected Dr. Corry as health officer for the Shire for a term. He has commenced practice in San Remo, and may be consulted at his residence, the house lately occupied by Mr. Pickersgill. Figuratively

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Local and General News (continued from Page 4)

speaking, he will not "bleed" his patients as did our late medico.

Constable Thornton, on leaving Burwood for Grantville, had occasion to return to attend the Camberwell Police Court to prosecute two men charged with dog stealing. On the closing of the Court, the Chairman (Mr. Williamson, J.P.) called Constable Thornton, and stated that he hoped the climate of Grantville would be more beneficial to his children, and that they would have better health than they had had at Burwood, and he also spoke in the highest terms of the manner in which the constable had carried out his duties during the 12 months he had been in Burwood. Constable Thornton thanked the Bench for their kind remarks.

The rails on the Kilcunda tram line are being lifted very rapidly. The men will be into Mr. Potter's paddock in a few days, and then there will remain only about 3 miles of the line to be removed. The schooner Petronel is expected every day from Melbourne to start shipping the rails to Queensferry.

In our advertising columns readers will note that a black cape has been lost between Kilcunda and Archie's Creek.

A fire was burning at Cape Woolamai on Wednesday afternoon and night. It looked from San Remo as if the whole of the Cape was burning.

The Phillip Island and Woolamai Shire Council is desirous of carrying out its schedule of works before the winter months. The rate-payers are therefore urged to pay their rates at once.

* * *

From *World's News* (Sydney, 2 January 1954, page 30).

Snakes Alive

Recently Tom Currie, a vice-president of the Wonthaggi (Vic) Miners' Union was changing into working clothes at the local western area mine. In a hurry when picking his helmet off its peg he didn't bother to look inside it. After he'd been wearing it for some time he couldn't account for a strange tickling feeling. Removing his helmet he casually wiped his head with his hand, repeating the action a little while later. Then he nearly dropped dead with fright when he found a 2ft snake's tail waving around directly in front of his nose. Tom grabbed the reptile and hurled it to the ground where it slithered to safety before a group of startled miners could kill it. Now Tom always examines the inside of his helmet before he dons it.

From the *Mercury*, Saturday 30 January 1926, page 11.

Bush Fires

Serious Outbreaks In Victoria Much Damage Done

Melbourne, January 29.

Serious bush fires are burning in a number of centres in the State, and, although the menacing proportions that some of them had attained were lessened by general showers that fell last night, alarm still exists in many places. Rain is again threatening to-night, and it is hoped that a fall in the eastern and north-eastern part of the State will come to the rescue of settlers.

The most serious blaze to-night is near Bright, where, according to a report received at Tallangatta, a wall of flame, 15 miles wide, is advancing towards Jingellis.

Reports from all parts of the State show that much damage has been done in the last few days, and, in many cases, settlers have had narrow escapes, while at times bodies of fire-fighters have been in great danger of being trapped by fires. The most personal damage appears to have been done at Belgrave, where a fire, racing before a north wind, consumed three settlers' homes, and two others which caught alight were only saved by efforts of the fire-fighters. Over 200 men were engaged in the fight against the flames. This fire was practically extinguished by last night's rain, and to-day was under control.

Wonthaggi is the centre of another large blaze, which swept down on a small seaside settlement named Inverloch, about 12 miles away, and last night the township was in danger of being completely wiped out. The railway sleepers and telegraph poles in this area suffered considerably and the flames advancing towards the school caused a panic among the children. The flames swept across the Inverloch cemetery, destroying all the fences.

A good deal of grazing country has been destroyed, particularly round Tallangatta.

The train from Wonthaggi last night travelled practically between walls of flame, and passengers were warned that they travelled at their own risk.

**FARMERS! For Ruddocks
veterinary supplies contact your
agent Mr. R. Harvey at The
"Leeroy."**

From the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, Wednesday 5 November 1884.

Shire of Phillip Island

Friday, 31th October 1884

Present: S. West, (President), Councillors Aldridge, Duffus, Hogan, Clark and Kennedy.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed and outward correspondence approved.

The Secretary was instructed to write to Mr H. H. Budd, solicitor, requesting him to take immediate action in the matter of obtaining possession of the required lands for road deviations in Corinella.

Correspondence

From Mrs. Coleman, Cowes, asking permission to erect panels fronting her house for the purpose of tying horses to.—Granted.

From Joseph Richardson, asking that some improvements be done on the road leading to his place from Cowes.—Clerk of Works to report as to requirements.

From R. S. Peters, Bass, asking that about twenty chains of clearing, half chain wide, between Bergin's and Stevenson's, Bass, be done.—Clerk of Works reported that the work could be done at a small cost.—Tenders to be called on the motion of Councillors Hogan and Aldridge.

From Shire of Buln Buln, asking for information in reference to accounts in connection with area severed from this Shire.—To be supplied.

From Central Board of Health, calling attention to clause in Public Health Amendment Act 1884, requiring the appointment of an analyst by municipal bodies.—Consideration postponed.

Councillor Stewart was granted three months leave of absence from date on the motion of Councillors Clarke and Kennedy.

The Secretary was instructed to order ten copies of the municipal directory for 1885.

The members for the Phillip Island Riding reported relative to bye-laws about to be brought into operation for preservation of fish in Swan Lake, Phillip Island. It was resolved that a special meeting be called on date of next ordinary meeting for the purpose of adopting part 2 of the 13th Schedule L.G.A. 1874, or such other portions of the 13th Schedule as may be considered necessary, so that regulations may be framed for the protection of the fish, on the motion of Councillor West, seconded by Councillor Aldridge.

The Clerk of Works reported relative to drains at Murray's, Phillip Island, that the

water was washing away the banks. To box the drain with planking would cost about £36. It could however, be lined with ti-trees at a cost of about £6.—On the motion of Councillor West, seconded by Councillor Duffus, the work to be done under the supervision of the Clerk of Works with ti-tree.

Payments were passed amounting to £41 7s.

It was resolved to call for applications from persons willing to revise the valuation of the Shire for the sum of £12.

The following tenders were accepted in committee:—Contract 327, L. R. Brown, £30; Contract 328, J. Jewry, £30 15s.; contract 329, G. Peatty, £39.

On the motion of Councillors Kennedy and Clarke the Clerk of Works was instructed to have clearing done at Red culvert at a cost of about £3.

The Clerk of works was instructed to report on improvements necessary on Rhyll road.

Tenders were ordered to be called as follows:—For cutting at Flat Bottom Creek; bridge over Guy's Creek, Corinella; 40 chains forming Eastern Passage road; 10 chains forming at Cleeland's gate; clearing and forming on Carew's road, Kilcunda; 10 chains forming opposite Dwyer's; for the more important of the work on Powlett road, as surveyed by the Shire Engineer, at a cost not exceeding £150

Notices of motion were given for various works:—By Councillor Kennedy — 30 chains forming, &c., Dowell's to Delany's; 8 chains do. along Paul's fence, and for clearing drains, &c., on main Melbourne road, from A. Misson's to the red culvert. By Councillor West.—For two miles of forming on Pyramid road, and two miles forming on McHaffie's road. By Councillor Clarke.—For works on section 1, 2 and 3 on Clarke's road, according to Engineer's plan.

The Council then adjourned.

WEST END CARRIAGE WORKS,
GRAHAM STREET, WONTHAGGI.

Sanderson Bros.,

GENERAL BLACKSMITHS, COACH AND WAGON BUILDERS

All Descriptions of Vehicles Built on the Premises.

FIRST-CLASS SHOEING FORGE. REPAIRS PROMPTLY EXECUTED.

A TRIAL SOLICITED.

From the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, Wednesday 13 August 1884.

Jottings From Western Port

By a Contributor

Fortiter. Fideliter. Feliciter.

(Re-paragraphed for the sake of clarity.)

Two errors appear in my last communication. In remarking about the loss of revenue through the reduction of the license fees to publicans, the sentence "Have the customers received more liquor for their money" should have read "Have the customers received better liquor, &c.;" and the date of Mr. Kennedy's retirement was September 6th, 1879, not 18879.

Messrs. West and Kennedy being the only nominees for the Phillip Island and Corinella Ridings of the Shire of Phillip Island, they have been declared duly elected. For Woolamai, Messrs. Kidd and Hogan are nominated. At the election in August, 1882, Mr. Hogan polled only 15 votes as against Mr. Gunn 18 and Mr. Aldridge 32. As there appears to be a disposition on the part of the electors to have new blood, I think on this occasion Mr. Hogan will head the poll.

I hear that there is a storm in the tea pot at Griffith's Point in consequence of the verdict of the magistrates in a case heard on the 18th ult. I am not seised of the particulars but sincerely hope that it will subside.

Also

From the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, Wednesday 20 August 1884.

I see by the *Government Gazette* that Money Order Offices and Post Office Savings Banks have been opened at Flinders and Grantville in connection with the Post Offices at those places. Why should not Post Office Savings Banks be opened at Cowes, Griffith's Point, Kilcunda and the Bass! I should imagine that many of the residents (workmen particularly) would make use of them when they know that by lodging their earnings therein they not only save the risk of loss by fire and other means, but gain interest thereon. In fact their deposits would increase day by day.

There are hundreds of men and women in the bush who, for want of a save [*sic*] place in which to lodge their hard earned money, carry it about until it burns a hole in their pockets, and what is worse, go to the nearest public house and squander it. Of all banks the Melbourne and Post Office Savings Banks are considered the safest.

I hear that the balance sheet of the Shire

of Phillip Island will show that over £200 belonging to the Phillip Island Riding has been spent in works on the main land. As a ratepayer of the Phillip Island Riding, I object to money being I expended outside the Riding whilst there are plenty of ways of doing so inside it.

And a tendency has been displayed in expending monies towards the eastward of the Centre road on Phillip Island, where as the roads to the Nobby and on the west side of the Centre road have been neglected. Again, Swan Lake has been reserved for the use of the public, and as we may expect to require a large area of water there, I hope the Council will vote a little money occasionally for the extension and improvement of the lake.

As a member of the "Bass District Agricultural, Pastoral and Horticultural Society," (would not "The Bass Cultural Society" have suited better) I received a notification that the annual meeting of the above Society would be held on the 2nd inst., at the Bass hotel, &c. I have been informed that the meeting was duly held, and that matters occurred which might have a tendency to interfere with the future success of the Society.

I note that no record of the proceedings has been published in this paper, and would draw the attention of this fact to the committee, as the nature of the Society is such that full publicity should be given. I have been told that an attempt was made to shift the locale of the Show, and that a little bit of what is called "dodgery" was done.

In the absence of the rules of the Society, and every member ought to be favored with a copy, I shall not express any opinion. I have great pleasure in subscribing my mite towards any movement for progress, although, as in this case, I have no individuality and shall not renew my subscription until I hear further.

A selector named Forrest, living on the south portion of Phillip Island on the road to Newhaven, has been compelled to remove his residence to a more congenial locality, owing to the sand from the back beach becoming a nuisance. It got so bad at last that, when the wind blew very strongly the

(continues on Page 8)

Jottings From Western Port (continued from Page 7)

sand entered the crevices of the building and got mixed with the bread and butter whilst it was being eaten.

The result of the election for the Woolamai Riding of the Shire of Phillip Island is as follows:—Kilcunda, Hogan 32, Kidd 22; Griffiths' Point, Hogan 28, Kidd 12; majority for Hogan, 26. 94 votes were registered of a possible 128. I think Mr. Kidd's defeat was caused by a previous statement by him that he would not stand.

Rumor says that Councillor Kennedy aspires for the position of Chairman. The Local Government Act provides that the Chairman of every municipality during his tenure of office shall be a J.P., &c. Provided that the Governor-in-Council may remove any such Chairman from being a J.P. Section 69 states that this position is subject to the provisions of any law now or hereafter in force.

The J.P. Amendment Statute, 1876, provides that the Governor-in-Council may prohibit any person, by virtue of the offices hereinbefore mentioned, &c., from acting as a J.P. These provisos, I suppose, are made in order to prevent any objectionable persons from holding such responsible positions.

Also

From the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, Wednesday 27 August 1884.

Friday, the 29th inst., being the date of the next ordinary meeting of the Council of the Shire of Phillip Island, the first business to be disposed of will be the allowance to the incoming President. From the returns to hand I find that there has been a general feeling all over the colony to keep the allowances as low as possible and [I] only know one case where the full allowance by the Act of three per cent. was granted. Judging by the state of the finances, I think it would be wise on the part of the above Council to follow suit.

Considering that I had the honor for two years of receiving the usual allowance of £30 per year, it may appear invidious on my part to propose a reduction, but at the present moment there does not appear to be any urgent requirements of the district to demand more than sufficient for current expenses, which ought not to exceed £20. Although the Act fixes the allowance to the chairman for "his own use," it is to be presumed to mean "for his own use as chairman of the Shire."

If the paragraph headed "Bass" in a local contemporary is a true record of the proceedings of the meeting of the "Bass Agricultural

&c. Society," held on the 2nd inst., I am confirmed that the proceedings were slightly irregular. The general meeting of the members having been adjourned for a fixed time, any business performed by a committee "ad interim" should be laid before the members on resumption of business for confirmation or otherwise.

I note that a sum of £25 per year has been voted to the Secretary, which is all I suppose that can be allowed out of the funds. But having accepted a position of profit is it wise of the Secretary to accept a position on the committee? I think the new committee should make strong exertions to pay their Secretary at least £50 a year so that he can devote more time to the advancement of the Society.

* * *

From the *Great Southern Advocate*, Thursday 28 April 1898: Local Topics.

Whose Horse?

Grantville.—A peculiar incident happened on the night of the 7th April. Mr. Einsedel tied his horse up at the Lang Lang Hotel, and at about 11.30 went outside with the intention of returning home, and found the animal missing. Information was given to Constable Thornton. On the Tuesday following Constable Thornton was on his way to Lang Lang, and on nearing Gurdie's [*sic*] Creek he saw a man riding a grey horse, which he identified from the description he had received as the one stolen. He stopped the rider, and told him he wanted the horse, as it was a stolen one. The rider stated that the horse had been in his possession for six months, and was owned by the Rev. Mr. Hitchcock, who had left it in his charge. He removed the bridle and saddle, and gave the animal to the constable, who proceeded on his way to Lang Lang, and the owner at once recognised the horse. He stated that it was bought out of the pound a few days before, and it appeared that someone had stolen the horse and ridden it along the road to some spot between the Gurdie's [*sic*] and Grantville, and then let it go and hid the saddle and bridle in the scrub, as they have been found and restored to the rightful owner. The horse when let loose went to his old home at Gurdie's [*sic*] and was only missed for a few days. The first owner, thinking that the horse had only wandered away and came back, rode him not knowing that he had been put in the pound and sold.

The Dr. Rohner Saga

From *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, 6 Oct. 1886.

Shire of Phillip Island

Friday, October 1, 1886

Present—Councillors S. West (President), A. West, Cleeland, Hogan, Hoddinott, Anderson, Kennedy and Clarke.

The minutes of previous ordinary meeting were read and confirmed.

Correspondence

The Secretary reported that Dr. Smeal had refused to accept the position of Health Officer offered to him by the Council.—On the motion of Councillor Hogan, seconded by Councillor Cleeland, the application of Dr. Rohner to be accepted on terms similar to those of Dr. Smeal's appointment.

From *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, 17 August 1887.

Phillip Island

by Numskull

...The time of engagement of our local Officer of Health will expire on the 30th proximo. What is the Shire Council going to do in the matter of re-engagement? I have not had the pleasure of acquaintance [*sic*] of Dr. Rohner, either privately or professionally, but like a good many other residents I have heard much about him. The only complaints I have heard have been that his fees are too high. That is a general complaint about nearly all doctors, but, is genius to be placed in the scale against skill, especially when life is concerned? As a rule people try to do without a doctor till they begin to get frightened. After the doctor has appeared on the scene and prescribed, and the patient gets better in consequence, it is then that the fees are too high. Is it known what study is required to be proficient as a medical man, or the years of toil previously to the attainment of a qualified certificate, to say nothing about cash out of pocket, either of the student or his parents before he is fit to charge a legal fee. There may be other discontents, but I think it is generally admitted that our doctor is sufficiently skillful for the district. Then comes the question, can the ratepayers afford to pay him the same salary? I do not know what private income he has derived from the other Ridings, but judging from the one in which I reside, I should imagine that his total receipts for the twelve months have not been sufficient to retain him in the district. I know this, that the ratepayers have had

much difficulty at different times in obtaining the services of a resident doctor, and they should not rashly destroy the work of years. He cannot reside in each Riding at once, but there would not be any harm done, if he would occasionally, and at notified times, visit different parts of the district in his capacity of local Officer of Health. The bush as a rule is more healthy than the town. "The country for health and the city for wealth." But I have seen the surroundings of many bush residents disgusting. There are two sides to the question. Will the doctor consent to stay?

Talking of doctors reminds me of a time thirty years ago. Our family doctor was an all round genial man. There was geniality in the shake of his hand, which was warm even during winter time when the snow was a foot thick. He would sit down during his visits and enter into a cheerfully general conversation. When about to leave, if he was asked "What medicine am I to take," he invariably replied "None whatever. Rest and quiet."

From the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, Wednesday 5 October 1887.

Phillip Island Shire Council

Present—Councillors Clarke (President), Hoddinott, Anderson, Norton, Cleeland, Daly, Tulloch and Harbison.

The minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed, and outward correspondence approved.

Correspondence

From C. W. Rohner, M.D., stating his willingness to renew his agreement with the Council as Health Officer on same terms as before.—A committee consisting of Councillors Clarke, Anderson and Hoddinott, was appointed to wait on the doctor with a view of making it a condition that he should visit Grantville fortnightly.

From the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, Wednesday 2 November 1887.

Phillip Island Shire Council

Friday, October 28, 1887

Present— Councillors Clarke (President), Hoddinott, Anderson, Norton, Daly, Cleeland, Tulloch and Harbison.

The minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed and outward correspondence approved.

(continues on Page 10)

The Dr. Rohner Saga (continued from Page 9)

Correspondence

The President reported result of interview with Dr. C. W. Rohner as to continuance of his position of Health Officer at £100 per annum, contingent upon his visiting Grantville once a month. Dr. Rohner was willing to give it a trial for three months to see if it would pay him; if so he would continue to act as Health Officer, if not he would give it up.—On the motion of Councillor Tulloch seconded Councillor Hoddinott, Dr. Rohner's terms were agreed to conditional that his stay at Grantville was at least for four hours.

From the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, 25 July 1888

Phillip Island Shire Council

Saturday, July 21, 1888

Present—Councillors Harbison (in the chair), Cleeland, Anderson, Hoddinott, Daly and Cleveland.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed and outward correspondence approved of.

Correspondence

The President thought it right that Dr. Rohner should have immediate notice of Council's intention to discontinue his allowance of £100 per annum, after the 30th September.—A motion to that effect was read by the President, seconded by Councillor Anderson and carried.

From *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, 7 August 1889.

Justice! Justice! Justice! Justice!

Claudis: Death is a fearful thing.

Isabella: And shamed life a hateful.

Measure For Measure.

To the Editor of the *S.B. and M. Journal*.

Sir—I see from advertisements which have recently appeared, and are still appearing, in both *Age* and *Argus* that the good people of Westernport Bay are again making a high bid for a resident doctor and health officer, offering the munificent sum of £100 a year as salary, supplemented by another £100 a year directly from the pockets of the inhabitants. Now, as I have had the distinguished honor of acting both as resident medical man and health officer to the Shire of Phillip Island for over two years I flatter myself to know a trifle about the state of affairs in that celestial region—a paradise ruled by fools, if not worse. Such being the case, I shall, in a few words, tell the would-be medical candidate for this most enviable position what kind of

treatment I received during my stay at San Remo at the hands of both the Shire Council and a few leading (misleading would be an apter term) citizens. My original agreement was to stay in the place for a term of twelve months for the sum of £100 a year. This I did apparently to the satisfaction of both Council and public, and this statement I can corroborate by written testimonials received by me from my only true supporter in and out of the Council chambers, viz., John Cleeland, Esq., J.P., of Newhaven. At the end of the first term, finding that my monthly revenue, including the Shire subsidy, did not average more than £16, a very *particular* friend of mine, Thomas Bergin, senr., storekeeper and publican, of San Remo, offered to start a subscription list with a view of supplementing my meagre income, and of inducing me to stay on a another term. I did so, and some £25 were subscribed, but were never collected by my *particular* friend, Thomas Bergin, senr., storekeeper and publican, of San Remo; and this sum, minus £2 paid by my second best friend, Mr. Griffith, of Wonthagie [*sic*], remains still unpaid, to the lasting shame and disgrace of those—and especially of *him* who were friends to my face and enemies behind my back. The reason why this promise was so shamefully violated and the Shire subsidy withdrawn from me is well known to many people, but best known to my *particular* friend, Thomas Bergin, senr., storekeeper and publican, of San Remo. I say of this man what Dante's guide, Virgil, said to him on his tour through "Hell" and "Purgatory" when confronted with a group of Hades, whom the poet characterised by saying of them that—

"This blind life of theirs is so debased

They envious are of every other fate.

No fame to them the world permits to be

Misericord and justice both disdain them."

Let us not speak of them, but look and pass. *Quarde e passa*. Look at *him* and pass! And now I shall pass on to the members of the Council of Phillip Island Shire, who ruled during my regime as their health officer, looking at them also with the same sad eyes as I now still do at my *particular* friend, Thomas Bergin, senr., storekeeper and publican, of San Remo. In the course of the second term of my holding office it occurred to the minds of the good people of Grantville that I should pay a monthly visit to that beautiful place on the beautiful shores of Westernport Bay.

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The Dr. Rohner Saga (continued from Page 10)

Although this was a breach of my original agreement with the Council and the people; still I tried to comply with the wishes of the Council and the people, with the result that each visit proved a dead loss to me of £2 per trip, which I could ill afford out of my £8 subsidy per month, and consequently I was compelled to discontinue visits. This disobedience of mine to the arbitrary ukase of the Council brought about a silent conspiracy against me, ending in my dismissal, or rather in the withdrawal of my subsidy, at the same time robbing me of the £25 collection, which was honestly earned by me and due to me on the 1st October, 1888. This is the way the Phillip Island Shire Council, with the sole exception of John Cleeland, Esq., J.P., and Thomas Bergin, senr., storekeeper and publican, of San Remo, treated me; and if their treatment is anything to go by as an indication of the future good-will of the Council and this misleading man, Thomas Bergin, senr., towards the future resident doctor and health officer of the Bass(!), all I can say is—God help the man who gets the billet. Before bringing this Epistle to the Gentiles to a close I may be pardoned for singling out a few of the Councillors by name—such for instance as the ex-President Clarke who slaughtered me like a lamb on the altar of selfishness; secondly, another who robbed me of an honestly earned fee of £8 8s., adding to the insult the fine of £3 3s., for trying to recover my own; and last but not least that millionaire and moral hero of Brighton, Harbison, the present worthy President of the Shire; finishing as I started with Measure for Measure I say with Isabella:

Justice, O royal duke! Vail your regard
Upon a wrong'd, dishonor not your eye
By throwing it on any other object,
Till yon have heard me in my true complaint
And give me Justice! Justice! Justice!
Justice!

Yours respectfully,
C.W. Rohner, M.D.
Hastings, August 5, 1889.

Strayed.

STRAYED from Loch, about three months ago, one CHESTNUT HORSE, bald face, branded SXB near shoulder, sore back. Finder rewarded on returning same to
**A. SUDING,
Royal Hotel, Loch.**

From the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, Wednesday 6 November 1889.

Dr. Rohner V. The Council Of Phillip Island

To the Editor of the S. B. and M. Journal.
Sir—

Motto: Sic transit gloria mundi.

The agony of the past—it is finished; the fever is at last played out; the new Health Officer for the Shire has been appointed, and all that is now left for me to do is to bow my head to the verdict of this *vox vulgi*—this Barabbas voice—and quietly give up my ghost! But some doctors die hard, and as thunder and lightning has accompanied the death of many a dying martyr and hero, I, although claiming to be neither martyr nor hero, to a very exorbitant extent may, perhaps, be excused to call upon the holy spirit of Moses to proclaim the eleventh commandment of his hitherto defective decalogue, saying unto the children of the earth—from thundering and spitfire Mount Sinai—“Man thou shalt be fair and just in thy dealings with thy brother.”

It is somewhat hard for a doctor to die to order, when the convalescent patient snaps his fingers at his medico and does him out of his honestly earned fee, as my friend Harbison, the now notorious millionaire and moral hero of Brighton and his docile myrmidons in the Council, with all its holy and unholy Joes, has done.

For, be it known to all men, and above all to the powers of the Central Board of Health, the last twelve months I honestly and invariably, and alas also gratuitously, acted as health officer to this recreant and mean spirited body of Councillors, who are just about as fit to act in the capacity of a Local Board of Health as they are unfit to keep a dirty pig sty *[sic]* clean. I don't believe that there is another body of public men in the country who, sworn to conduct public business publicly and openly, have dealt with the business of their Shire in as secret, underhand and clandestine a manner as the Councillors of the Phillip Island Shire have done—in fact a few men, if it be fair to call them men, with the President for bell weather, conduct the whole business of this Shire quietly by themselves and let the other members and the public at large know just as much of their star chamber transactions as suits their own whims or interests.

A greater degradation of popular represent-
(continues on Page 12)

The Dr. Rohner Saga (continued from Page 11)

ative Government cannot be witnessed anywhere in the colony than may be seen in full working order in the Shire Hall of San Remo. O Holy Remus! For twelve long months have the Government allowed this Shire to do without the aid of a qualified Health Officer in spite of the repeated cases of invasion of zymotic disease into their territory.

To these cases and to other work I was called upon to attend and have done so, vainly depending upon the honesty and generosity of at least one of the Councillors; but this one alas turned traitor, giving me the usual parting kiss of Judas—fair words, without a soul of meaning in them. Peace to his ashes whenever he falls to pieces! Thus the twice elected President and bright moral hero of Brighton has succeeded in introducing his private business principle—meanness and vindictiveness—into the operations of a public body, and many an officer of this Council before me has, like me, suffered through the stealthy manner and through the dark cowardly ways adopted by preference by this corporate body of public scourges.

May he and all his mates—all the holy and unholy Josephs of this unholy alliance—prosper on their mean tactics against a doctor truly poor in pocket, but not yet quite so impoverished in spirit as to lack the courage and manliness to call a spade a spade, and to expose wickedness in the high places from the Prince of Wales down to the moral hero of Brighton.

In conclusion I say, with my great Master, forgive the President of the Phillip Island Shire and his worthy fellow Councillors their debts and above all the debt of £100 which these good and honest Christians(?) owe me for work and labor done for them and the public without fee and reward, from 1st October, 1888, to 1st October *Anni Domini* eighteen hundred and eighty nine. Adieu!

C. W. Rohner, M.D.

Quondam Health Officer of Phillip Island Shire.

Hastings, 27/10/89.

P.S.—I consider it my bounden duty to caution my lucky(?) successor in office and colleague, Dr. Samuel Wilson, not to allow the management and collection of his promised subsidy into the over deft hands of Thomas Bergin, senr., storekeeper and publican, of San Remo, otherwise he might find out at the end of his term, as I did to my sorrow, that for two years faithful work I could not get even the paltry sum of £25 subscribed for

by a grateful people as a subsidy to a poor but contented doctor. But this debt also of not only not collecting the duly subscribed subsidy, but of even influencing the would be donors not to give me anything, shall be forgiven to my hostile friend, Thomas Bergin, senr., storekeeper and publican, of San Remo.

C.W.R.

From the *Victoria Government Gazette* No.5, 17 January 1890, page 150.

HEALTH OFFICERS,

THE Central Board of Health, by virtue of the power conferred on it by *The Public Health Amendment Statute 1883*, has approved of the undermentioned appointments by the Local Board of Health concerned, namely:—

FRANCIS LEOPOLD HOOPER, M.R.C.S. Eng., of Mornington, to be Officer of Health for the West Riding, Mornington Shire;

ALFRED HOBART STURDEE, M.R.C.S. Eng., of Frankston, to be Officer of Health for the North Riding, Mornington Shire;

CHARLES WILLIAM ROHNER, M.D., of Hastings, to be Officer of Health for the East Riding, Mornington Shire.

J. W. COLVILLE,
Secretary, Central Board of Health.

Government Offices,
Melbourne. 10th January, 1890.

From the *Argus*, Tuesday 21 January 1890, page 5.

Strange Disappearance Of A Doctor

[Note: spelling of Rohner as Rohring as per original text].

An increasing interest is felt in Hastings and around Westernport and Philip Island in the mysterious disappearance of Dr. Rohring. Dr Rohring is an old practitioner in various parts of Victoria, having been for many years in various towns of the North Eastern district, but more recently at San Remo where he officiated as health officer, and at Hastings. The story of the mysterious interest which at present surrounds him is as follows:—His daughter who had acted as his housekeeper, was in the habit of calling him about 8 every morning, but on the morning of the 9th inst. found his room vacant, nor did he return through the day. But by the afternoon train his wife, from whom he had long been estranged, arrived from Melbourne. By evening his daughter became alarmed, and was by no means reassured on finding that he had left behind his watch and jewellery, and that certain entries in an unknown tongue were made in his diary. This diary was submitted to Mr Flemyng M.A., an old resident of Hastings, who declared the inscriptions to be in Latin and Greek, the one being a slight modification of the familiar "Hic jacet," the other being rendered roughly

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The Dr. Rohner Saga (continued from Page 12)

as "It is finished." Below there was some undecipherable matter of Greek and German mixed. On the following day the police were informed, and Constable M'Caig, in charge of the district, commenced to make inquiries. He discovered that Dr. Rohring had not left the district by tram or coach or by boat, or by any conveyance whatever. He could hear nothing of him in the neighbourhood, not in view of the peculiar diary inscriptions and articles of jewellery, without which the doctor never appeared, he reported the matter formally to headquarters so that inquiry might be made by the police throughout the colony. Since Thursday last, the *Police Gazette*, containing a full description, has been in the hands of every constable in Victoria, and careful inquiries have been made in every city, township, and district, but so far without effect.

The daughter, who is deeply attached to her father, is in much distress, and cannot think that he would have left without some notification, or have remained away so long without making some communication. It has further been ascertained that prior to the 9th, the date of the departure, Dr Rohring drew out all the funds remaining to his credit in the bank, and left the amount, except a very few shillings, with his daughter.

Dr Rohring is by birth an Austrian, and retained always a soupcon of his native accent. He is described as tall, 6ft. 1in. in height, with full grey beard and moustache, a man who would be marked in any company. His physical development was indeed something remarkable and he had on several occasions rescued men from drowning. He was well read and intellectual, inclined to spiritualism in the matter of belief. Constable M'Caig, it may be mentioned, has made some search about the pier, and has scoured the country around very thoroughly, but without effect.

From the *Ballarat Star*, 24 January 1890, page 3.

The Disappearance Of Dr Rohner Supposed Case of Suicide

An *Argus* wire from Benalla says:—"With reference to the mysterious disappearance of Dr Chas. W. Rohner (not Rohring) at Hastings, the opinion here is that he committed suicide. A letter dated Hastings 20th December, was received from him by Mr F. Wurm, jeweller, of this town, who, besides being a fellow countryman, was one of his personal friends. The communication, which was written in German, was marked

throughout by a despondent tone. The writer stated that a dark cloud, which he was afraid he was powerless to dissolve, had haunted him for some time, and he went on to speak of the happiness to be obtained in the next world as in every sense preferable to the present. He referred specially to the death of Mr Wm. Crawford, a well-known resident of Benalla, who committed suicide by drowning here a few weeks ago, and gave it as his opinion that his (Crawford's) act of self-destruction was due to the influence of evil spirits which he had come in contact with. It is also known that Dr Rohner felt very keenly the death of his eldest son, who fell a victim to typhoid at Shepparton some months ago, and this fact, taken in conjunction with the strange communication referred to, forces Mr Wurm and others to the opinion that the doctor has done away with himself. For some time he practised his profession in Benalla. He was a man of exceptional literary attainments, and was perhaps best known to most people as a strong opponent to vaccination. His son, who carries on a watchmaker's business at Tungamah, passed through Benalla, *en route* for Hastings, on Tuesday.

From *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, 14 May 1890.

Hastings

From our own Correspondent.

This quiet little village was thrown into a state of great excitement early in the week, by the report that a skeleton had been found in the neighborhood of the creek. The news was conveyed to the places of business by youths who had been sporting in the locality, which set some long heads and ears to work, to conjecture who the interesting remains represented. Of course Dr. Rohner was in everybody's mouth (and a good mouthful too), who, having disappeared from the scene of his medical labors in a manner both sudden and mysterious, and was at once fixed upon by the learned in such manners as the party referred to. This hasty decision was caused chiefly by the desire of those who had prophesied the doctor's melancholy end to prove their penetration involving this problem not yet decided. Mr. Petrie, Storekeeper, and Constable McCaig were amongst those informed by the news, and with others, proceeded to the spot indicated and searched for the bones of a human being, but could find nothing to satisfy their

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The Dr. Rohner Saga (continued from Page 13)

curiosity, the only bones to be found being those of a cow that had fallen into a creek some time previous, and, which from their knowledge of anatomy they were at once able to pronounce as no part of the human frame divine. Although the affair turned out an entire *fiasco* yet it did some good as it imparted for the time being fresh life into some depressed constitutions who required a new sensation to arouse them from their lethargy.

From the *Argus*, 17 February 1891, page 6.

The Widow of Dr. Rohner

To The Editor Of The Argus.

Sir,—On behalf of the widow and family of the late Dr. C. W. Rohner I have made an appeal to the medical profession in particular (by circular herewith enclosed), and will thank you to take charge of any contributions which may be sent to you, and also ask you to allow acknowledgements to be made through the columns of your paper.—Yours, &c.,

S. Jacoby.

Esplanade, St. Kilda, Feb. 14.

[We will acknowledge subscriptions.—Ed A.]

* * *

From *The Western Port Times and Phillip Island and Bass Valley Advertiser*, 19 June 1903, page 2.

Sudden Death

A young man named William Rosevear, aged 17 years, died suddenly at Bass at 8 o'clock Saturday night in the presence of his father, Charles Rosevear. Deceased was in the employ of Mr Blake for the last six months and had been complaining of a severe cold in his chest. His father often desired him to see a doctor, but he put it off and was taking Hearn's Bronchitis Cure, but it seemed to do him no good. The deceased was working up to 4 o'clock on the evening of his death, his father went to see him at the cow shed, as he was not so well, and got him to go home with him. They arrived at Mr W. O'Meara's (brother-in-law of deceased) house, where he was given some brandy, which seemed to relieve him, but some little time after he gave a few gasps and died.

The Coroner was notified, but he deemed it not necessary to have an inquiry and gave an order for his burial. The deceased was interred in the Bass Cemetery on Wednesday afternoon, the Rev. Hitchcock reading the burial service.

From the *Age*, Wednesday 26 September 1923, page 13.

Country Teacher's Fix

A School, But No Residence

A deputation from Almurta State school committee, which waited on the Minister of Education yesterday, asked that a residence be provided for the teacher, a single man, on the ground that he could not obtain accommodation in the district. Mr. Downward, M.L.A., who introduced the deputation, said at Mornington for fifty years there had been no teacher's residence, but there were boarding houses in the district, and the teacher usually had no difficulty in getting accommodation. Messrs. J. Sweet and J. Walker said the people at Almurta were engaged in dairying pursuits, and the duties claimed their time in the morning and evening, just when the teacher required attention. There were 37 children attending the school, and the teacher had to sleep in an empty house. Sir Alexander Peacock said the Government had no fund to devote to the erection of teachers' residences. All the money at the disposal of the department was required for the remodelling of existing schools and the erection of new ones. As the teacher's term would not expire until 16th October, 1924, he could not apply for transfer before then. The parents should make a move. They might hold a meeting, with a view to overcoming the difficulty, or, failing any satisfactory arrangements before the Christmas holidays, the teacher might call on him (Sir A. Peacock) in regard to the matter.

[See also the *Argus*, 26 September 1923, page 23: School Committees' Requests – Ed.]

From the *Great Southern Advocate*, Thursday 27 April 1905, page 2: Grantville.

The Grantville Mission

The Rev. E. B. Williams, who has been in charge of the Methodist mission at Grantville for the past three years, and has now been transferred to Bacchus Marsh, must have been a favorite in his circuit, judging by his send-off. At Bass State School he was presented with an oak inkstand and solid leather pocket-book. At Grantville the State School children presented him with a Gladstone bag, and his Almurta friends donated a silver inkstand with two cut-glass bottles, and at Kilcunda a dozen little girls presented the rev. gentleman with a leather bound copy of Tennyson's works, suitably inscribed.

The McLeod Prison

Part Seven: 1955-1975

From the *Koo Wee Rup Sun*, Friday 19 January 1955, page 1.

Three Escapees Recaptured

Police on Saturday captured three young convicts who escaped from the French Island prison settlement on Friday night. They are Ernest Fay, 22, George Maxwell Edwards, 21, and Richard Slattery, 21. Slattery was captured by Constable I. Porter, of Bass, on the Bass-Wonthaggi road, 11½ miles south of Bass on Saturday morning. Slattery was in prison clothes. A Wonthaggi policeman recaptured the other two at gunpoint in thick bush country later in the day, 11 miles from where they are believed to have come ashore at Corinella. He surprised them hiding in brush and scrub while he was patrolling rough country between Bass and Woolamai on foot. Police said the three escapees would be brought to Russell Street police headquarters for questioning. Police said two of the escapees had previously escaped from goals and one was serving a sentence for escaping from French Island in 1951. The three escaped from the settlement about 8.50 on Friday night. Telephone wires were cut and French Island officers were unable to alert mainland police for two hours after the escape. First news of the break came when a warder from the island reached Cowes in a fishing boat and two armed police wireless-patrol crews immediately left Melbourne to help local police in the search.

From the *Koo Wee Rup Sun*, Friday 26 January 1955, page 1.

French Island Escapees Sentenced

Three prisoners, who escaped from McLeod Penal Settlement at French Island on January 14, swam to a launch, started it and escaped, a constable told the Melbourne City Court on Monday. Constable Porter, of Bass, said that one of the men, Richard Norman Slattery, 19, told him that he and two other men made their plans only eight hours before. Slattery was sentenced to six months, Ernest Ignatius Fay, 21, and George Maxwell Edwards, 21, received 12 months. James Hayter, superintendent of the penal settlement, said that the three men were discovered missing from their jobs and the penal launch was seen heading for the mainland. Lang Lang police could not be notified because communications had been cut.

From the *Argus*, Friday 17 June 1955, page 1.

Three Convicts Stage Night Gaol Breaks

He's Out

'Trusty' Jumps Wall

Three daring convicts made almost simultaneous escapes from Pentridge gaol and French Island penal settlement last night to set off Victoria's greatest manhunt in history.

The Pentridge escapee, Cornel Subik, 28, a 'trusty' prisoner with special privileges, scaled a 20 foot wall with a rope and dropped to freedom, in Champ st., Coburg, between 6.10 and 6.15.

At 6.15 Donald Frederick Lucas, 20, and Frederick Charles Bollinger, 23, vanished from the French Island settlement.

Pentridge warders believe that Subik, "the Czech who took up crime when his suicide bid failed," was hiding near the main bluestone wall at 6 p.m., waiting for his chance to make a break as the evening muster began.

He was to have been locked up in his cell a few minutes later.

Prison officials think he clambered up the wall while warders were taking roll call between 6.10 and 6.15.

Police were not told of the breakout until 6.50, after warders had made a thorough check of the prison grounds.

D24 immediately sent six police cars and squads of local foot police to cordon off all surrounding suburbs.

Patrol cars, with headlights switched off, hid in side streets, while others cruised along Sydney rd., and other main streets, stopping all trams and taxis heading towards the city.

Subik, a well-known house and shop breaker, was serving a 2½-year sentence on nine counts of shopbreaking and stealing, and one of attempted shopbreaking.

He was a trusted prisoner, and had been working as a steward in the prison officers' club during the 14 months since his conviction in the Criminal Court in April, 1954.

At his trial the Court was told that he had returned to crime because an arm injury received in an abortive suicide attempt prevented him working.

Police received two reports that he had been seen in Preston soon after the break-out.

The first report sent local constables racing to the West Preston tram depot, where

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The McLeod Prison (continued from Page 15)

a woman said she had seen a man wearing white moleskins.

The other also proved fruitless.

Detectives believe that Subik, a skilled house breaker, will attempt to burgle a house in a bid to change his distinctive white prison overalls for civilian clothes.

He is 5ft. 8in. tall, slimly built, with dark hair and complexion, and brown eyes.

Late last night squads of armed police with warders and local farmers combed French Island for Lucas and Bollinger.

Warders are convinced the escapees are still on the island.

They have posted armed guards on all boats on the island, and those farmers not helping police are guarding their homes and families with shotguns and rifles.

Lucas was serving a sentence for shop-breaking and stealing, and Bollinger for an unnatural offence.

From the *Koo Wee Rup Sun*, Friday 22 June 1955.

Farmers Catch French Island Escapees

On Friday night French Island farmers marched two escapees to their local prison at gunpoint. They found the two men, Donald Lucas, 20, and Frederick Bellinger, 26, trying to steal a boat to leave the island. The escapees, who had been at large for almost 24 hours, were seen by Mr George Flanders trying to steal his 30 ft. fishing boat to get to the mainland. He rang neighbors Jack King, Ken Wood and Cec Duscher, and, armed with rifles and shotguns, they surrounded the men and closed in on them. Lucas and Bellinger did not resist.

From the *Koo Wee Rup Sun*, Friday 22 June 1955.

More French Island Escapees Captured

Three more French Island escapees have been returned to custody. They are William Basil Blake, 28, David John Tulk, 26, and John Maxwell Carroll, 22. The escape was the second from French Island penal settlement in five days. Naval ratings armed with tommy-guns recaptured them on Flinders Naval Depot range [sic] on Monday. The men surrendered without a fight after a daring daylight crossing to Sandy Point in a 35 ft. supply launch.

RUBBER Pillows are just marvellous. McLeod's, Kooweerup.

From the *Argus*, Wednesday 17 August 1955, page 1.

Back To Gaol For 2 Sick And Sorry Boys

"You have to be mad to do it"

That is how Senior-constable F. J. Hewett described yesterday the escape from French Island on Monday night of two young prisoners who set out in a stolen dinghy at the height of a storm to battle death for freedom.

Soaked, cold and exhausted, Leonard Finch, 21, and Gerald Overmars, 17, were recaptured in a snake-infested swamp near Lang Lang yesterday afternoon.

They made their escape using shovels for oars.

Three hours and six miles later the current grounded them near Corinella.

Only frantic bailing kept the boat afloat as the strong tide swept them on.

"We didn't think we had a dog's chance," they told police, "You wouldn't think the sea could be so rough."

A senior officer at Flinders [sic] Naval Depot told police when the escape was reported they had no chance of making shore.

Late yesterday morning a woodsman reported seeing the men in thick scrub near Lang Lang.

Police closed in on a swamp which seeps into the sea.

Constable W. Jones stood on a snake, crushing its head.

Overmars and Finch were found huddled together in dense tea-tree.

At the point of collapse, soaked to the skin, and frozen, neither offered resistance.

From the *Argus*, 18 December 1956, page 5.

Police Hunters Close On Escapee

Police who have been searching thick scrub near Grantville since Sunday for William Thompson, French Island convict, now think they have him cornered.

They have surrounded a 10-square-mile area where he is believed to be hiding.

They say it will only be a matter of time before hunger forces him to try a breakout.

Thompson was serving 12 months for shop-breaking. He escaped to the mainland on Saturday.

At 7 p.m. on Sunday, two police saw a man who they believed to be Thompson in tea-trees, but he disappeared.

He was wearing faded overalls, a grey shirt, dirty white jumper and sandshoes, and carried a bag under one arm.

Police are also investigating a report that Thompson was seen near Lang Lang.

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The McLeod Prison (continued from Page 16)

From the *Canberra Times*, 18 December 1956, page 15.

Cornered, But Outwits Police

Melbourne, Monday.—A prisoner from French Island was cornered in thick scrub country in South Gippsland to-day, but was able to outwit a police trap.

The prisoner, William Thompson, a convicted shopbreaker, escaped from the island early on Saturday morning.

Late yesterday police saw a man, believed to be Thompson, near Grantville. They approached the man but he disappeared into the scrub.

A road block was immediately set up, but Thompson was able to escape.

Inspector G. Denyer, of Wonthaggi, said to-day that police would probably have to wait until Thomson [*sic*] came out for food.

From the *Canberra Times*, 19 December 1956, page 13.

French Island Escapee Recaptured Escapee Recaptured

Melbourne, Tuesday.—French Island escapee, William Thompson, was recaptured by police in a hay loft six miles from Koo-Wee-Rup late to-day.

The spot where he was recaptured is about 20 miles from where he disappeared in the bush at Grantville yesterday, after escaping from a carefully planned police trap.

Thompson, a convicted shopbreaker, was found cowering behind bales of straw on the property of Mr. J. Greaves. He offered no resistance.

The arrest was made by Senior Constable McInnes of Koo-Wee-Rup, and climaxed a concentrated manhunt through 10 square miles of bush country.

Thompson told police he had not eaten since he escaped from French Island last Friday.

From the *Argus*, Friday 11 January 1957, page 7.

Escapee Had To Eat Grass

An escaped prisoner who was forced to eat grass during a four day chase was committed for trial from the City Court yesterday.

William Thompson, 36, pleaded guilty to charges of escaping from French Island penal settlement and trying to steal a car.

Detective First-constable S. Seymour, of Warragul, told Mr. Pyvis, S. M., Thompson said he escaped because he feared extradition to N.S.W.

In a statement to Seymour Thompson said, "I tore open the door of my cell at mid-night on Friday (December 14, 1956) with a file, a

piece of iron, and my issued knife.

"I broke open the back door of the boatshed and took one of the boats and rowed to the prison launch.

"There I removed two buoys as I cannot swim and did not want to drown if the boat turned over," he said.

"No Keys"

He spent the night at a rifle club near Grantville (about seven miles from French Island), and next day tried to take a station wagon, but it had no keys in it.

Soon after police chased him into the bush, Thompson said in his statement.

"On Monday I reached near exhaustion and had started to eat grass to stop my hunger."

Senior-constable D. C. McInnes, of Koo-wee-rup, said with Mr. William Burns, a railway employee he found Thompson in a hay loft near Caldermeade railway station.

Thompson said, "You've got me, I'll come quietly."

Detective R. H. Crisfield, of St. Kilda, said he was present in court last April when Thompson was sentenced to 12 months' gaol for receiving stolen goods.

From the *Canberra Times*, 26 August 1963, page 3.

Mystery Escape

Melbourne, Sunday.—Three escapees from French Island prison in Westernport Bay were recaptured at pistol point today, after eight hours of freedom.

However, prison authorities and police were still puzzling tonight how the three men escaped to the mainland, six miles away over treacherous waters.

The three men were recaptured at Seaford, near Frankston, after a quarter mile chase down the beach at 12.30.

The men, Jack Kurzke, 40, Daniel Frederick Stubbs, 42, and Lloyd William Hanlon, 34, were all serving three to four year terms for shopbreaking and stealing. They were doing hard labour. They will be charged with escaping from legal custody.

From the *Canberra Times*, 5 September 1963, page 15.

Prison Life 'Drab'

Melbourne, Wednesday.—Three prisoners who escaped from French Island because they found life there "a bit drab," were sentenced to additional imprisonment in the Lang Lang Court today.

The men, Daniel Frederick Stubbs, 43, seaman, of Bermuda, Lloyd William Hanlon,

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The McLeod Prison (continued from Page 17)

36, seaman, of Nova Scotia, and Jack Kurzke, 41, labourer, pleaded guilty to being "incorrigible rogues" in having escaped from legal confinement.

Police withdrew charges of having escaped from custody.

Stubbs and Kurzke were sentenced to three months' imprisonment and Hanlon to four months.

The court was told that the men twice slipped away from the island by an old rowing boat to the mainland "for a change." The third time they miscalculated the tides and their boat became stuck.

Knowing they would be missed at an 8 a.m. parade, they decided to escape and were picked up by police while walking on the Nepean Highway at Seaford towards Melbourne.

From the *Canberra Times*, 17 October 1963, page 11.

Long Swim To Escape

Melbourne, Wednesday. — An escapee from French Island prison, in Westenport Bay, told police on his capture today that he had swum for 6½ hours to escape.

The escapee, Antal Tompos, 23, had been missing since Saturday morning. He was recaptured at Korumburra, 20 miles from the bay.

Tompos was serving an eight-year sentence for armed robbery.

Police said Tompos had told them he had hidden in thick scrub on the island until yesterday and then made his escape attempt.

When he reached the mainland he found clothes hidden for him and after reaching Korumburra this morning bought food with money given to him by a friend.

He was picked up by a police car outside Korumburra soon afterwards.

From the *Koo Wee Rup Sun*, Friday 27 May 1964.

McLeod Settlement Hopes To Aid Local Hospital

Prisoners at the McLeod Penal Settlement, French Island, are hopeful that some scheme can be adopted whereby they can contribute towards the need of the Local District Blood Bank.

The demand for plasma often exceeds the supply on hand; therefore creating extreme measures to be instituted. It is to be hoped that this suggestion becomes a positive and practical answer to the needs of our local hospital.

Perhaps this scheme could serve as a

tribute by the men of McLeod to Doctor Allan Hewitt, who for many years acted in the capacity of visiting Medical Officer and was respected as a person of the highest standing.

No doubt, there would be initial problems associated with the formation of a blood donors group at McLeod, but such problems can be overcome. An approximate donation of 400 pints per year could be provided from McLeod and this could prove a veritable acquisition to the ever present demand by the Westernport Memorial Hospital.

Though isolated, McLeod has a gift that they hope the local authorities will consider as the answer to a most human need. Blood donors can offer so much to those who suffer. Can we assist this worthy cause? J.W.

From the *Canberra Times*, 25 July 1964, page 3.

Escapees At Large

Melbourne, Friday.—Police believe that five young men who disappeared from the French Island penal settlement yesterday morning were still on the island.

Trackers and dogs were brought in today but they will not be used until it is known the convicts have not left the island.

The five prisoners, one of them described as dangerous, could be hiding in the 20,000 acres of thick scrub on the island.

Rough weather and high winds have made it doubtful that they have got to the mainland.

Local residents, both on the island and on the mainland, have offered to help in the search.

From the *Canberra Times*, 21 October 1967, page 1.

Armed Police in ACT Search

Armed ACT police were searching last night for two men, believed to be prisoners, who escaped from French Island Gaol, Victoria, on Tuesday.

A stolen Victorian car was found at Gundaroo on Thursday and at 2pm yesterday an Austin A40 sedan was stolen from a sales yard in Civic.

The Victorian car was identified as a car stolen from Hastings, a few miles from French Island, about the time of the escape.

Queanbeyan police were told that two hitchhikers were seen near Murrumbateman 25 miles from Canberra on the Barton Highway about 1pm.

The escapees are both about 25. One is 6ft and fair and the other 5ft 9in and has brown hair.

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The McLeod Prison (continued from Page 18)

From the *Canberra Times*, 9 August 1971, page 3.

Jail break

MELBOURNE, Sunday. — Armed police and jail officers were combing French Island tonight for two prisoners who escaped from the island's prison farm on Saturday. Police say the escapers, both Yugoslavs, could be dangerous.

From the *Canberra Times*, 16 August 1971, page 3

Boat found

MELBOURNE, Sunday. — The dinghy used eight days ago by two escapers from French Island Prison Farm, Mr Frank Derkovic, 29, and Mr Ibrahim Dedukic, 30, was found on the mainland early today by four young children.

From the *Canberra Times*, 3 January 1973, page 3.

Body found

MELBOURNE, Tuesday. — Police believe the body of a man washed ashore on French Island is one of two escapers from the island prison. However, the body was badly decomposed, preventing identification.

Mr Cecil Henry Porter, 36, and Mr Barry William Minchington, 25, escaped from the island prison farm on Christmas eve and are thought to have tried to swim to Hastings, about three miles away.

From the *Canberra Times*, 7 March 1973, page 3.

Search In Victoria For Seven Escapers

Melbourne, Tuesday. — Police and prison warders were searching tonight for two men who escaped from French Island Prison Farm.

The men, Mr Herbert John Davey, 35, and Mr Graham Moylan Hindle, 29, were missing at a roll call at about 5pm.

Seven prisoners are now missing after escaping from Victorian penal institutions in the past two weeks.

The governor of the jail, Mr J. E. Dihn, said tonight the prisoners had returned from a work party on the island at about 3.30pm but failed to report to dinner.

Police are still searching for Mr James Colrain, 22, who escaped from Pentridge on February 25, Mr Noel Brown, 22, who jumped from a train near Tallarook, 55 miles north of Melbourne, last Thursday, and Mr Keith Raymond Hull, who escaped from Mayday Psychiatric Hospital at Beechworth a week ago.

From the *Canberra Times*, 4 April 1973, page 3.

Escapers

MELBOURNE, Tuesday. — Police believe that Mr Leonard Allan Knape, 29, and Mr Alan James Bentley, 25, who escaped from French Island prison farm on Friday night might have reached the mainland today in a dinghy.

From the *Canberra Times*, 7 April 1973, page 3.

Caught

MELBOURNE, Friday. — Two prisoners who escaped from French Island last Friday, were recaptured today, back inside the prison. Mr Leonard Allan Knape, 29, and Mr Alan James Bentley, 25, were found hiding under the floor of a cell-block.

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The McLeod Prison (continued from Page 19)

From the *Canberra Times*, 1 June 1974, page 3.

Prisoners Watched Reports

Melbourne, Friday. — Two prisoners watched reports of their “escape” on television while still inside a cell at McLeod Prison, on French Island, the County Court has been told.

The prisoners, Mr Leonard Allen Knape, 30, and Mr Allen James Bentley, 26, were charged in the County Court with having escaped on or about March 30 last year.

They conducted their own defence during the week-long trial and were acquitted by a jury today. They had pleaded not guilty.

The prosecutor, Mr. P. Martin, said it was alleged that the men had failed to appear at musters and later a makeshift raft was found on the shore outside the prison boundaries.

“Tried To Get Off Island”

He said it was alleged that the men had tried unsuccessfully to get off the island in a raft and later a boat. They had given up the attempt and gone back to prison, where prison officers later had found them under the floorboards of a community cell.

Mr Knape told the jury he and Mr Bentley had gone under the floor after getting drunk on home brew. When they awoke they heard they had been listed as escaped and feared they would be sent back to H Division at Pentridge.

Mr Knape said that when the cell was locked at night they came out of the hole and watched reports of their escape on television.

From the *Canberra Times*, 14 December 1974, page 3.

Escaped Again

Melbourne, Friday. — A recaptured prisoner escaper escaped again today when he fled from a police escort at the Melbourne Magistrate’s Court and disappeared in the city lunchtime crowds.

Police searched all large department stores and checked many trams and cars leaving the city but without success.

The escaper, Mr Trevor John Stammers, 26, is described by police as being built like a jockey. He was to have appeared at a committal hearing on charges of escaping and rape.

Mr Stammers escaped from French Island Prison Farm on July 16 while serving a three-year sentence for rape.

Pianos, organs, bicycles, cash or terms at the Melbourne Furnishing Coy., Wonthaggi.

From the *Canberra Times*, 13 December 1975, page 3.

Tests On Bone

Melbourne, Friday. — Tests and x-rays were carried out today on what is believed to be a human thigh bone found wedged in a rock ledge near Sorrento, about 95 kilometres south of Melbourne.

Government experts are trying to determine the sex and age of the bone.

Police said today there was now “some doubt” whether the bone was human.

“Until this is determined, there will be no further search for remains”, a police spokesman said.

Police also believe the bone might belong to one of several prisoners who tried to swim to freedom from the now closed French Island Prison.

The results of the tests on the bone should be known by the end of next week.

Endnote

As can be seen (or rather not seen) from the newspapers of the late 1960s and early 1970s, interest in the prison farm on French Island waned. About the only exception was, of all papers, the *Canberra Times*. When the prison closed around March 1975 – and I have been unable to determine the exact date – no one seems to have noticed.



The vandalised and deteriorating rear of the prison, 2014, then the McLeod Eco Farm and shut to the public. Photo by editor.

GRIFFITH'S MILK BAR

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NOW AVAILABLE

BE EARLY

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