

# The Western Port Times

## Grantville & Districts



Volume 3 Number 2

FREE

June 2020

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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.

This version of *The Western Port Times* is produced for the U3A Local History Group, based in Grantville.

\* \* \*

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The Bass Valley U3A Local History Group is looking for photos and information on places of significance to our local history.

If you have anything you would like to share with us, we have the facilities to scan or photograph your items so they do not have to leave your possession.

**Links to other historical groups**

- Bass Valley Historical Society: <https://bassvalleyhistoricalsociety.com.au>
- Friends of Churchill Island Society: <https://focis.org.au/about-churchill-island/>
- Grantville History: [grantvillehistory.com.au](http://grantvillehistory.com.au)
- Hastings–Western Port Historical Society: <https://www.hwphs.org.au/>
- Inverloch Historical Society: [cv.vic.gov.au/organisations/inverloch-historical-society/](http://cv.vic.gov.au/organisations/inverloch-historical-society/) Also: <http://inverlochhistory.com/>
- Koo-Wee-Rup Swamp Historical Society: [kooweerupswamphistory.blogspot.com.au/](http://kooweerupswamphistory.blogspot.com.au/)
- Korumburra & District Historical Society: Janet Wilson 5657 2267 or PO Bo 293, Korumburra 3950
- Lang Lang & District Historical Society: [langlang.net/historical.html](http://langlang.net/historical.html)
- Leongatha and District Historical society: [leongathahistory.org.au](http://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](http://seha.org.au)
- Western Port Historical Society Inc.: [hwphs.org.au/](http://hwphs.org.au/)
- Wonthaggi Historical Society: [wonthagghihistoricalociety.org.au/](http://wonthagghihistoricalociety.org.au/)



## From the Original

From the *The Western Port Times* on 23 June 1899

### Local and General News

Court of Petty Sessions will be held at San Remo on Friday next, 30th inst.

Cr. Sloss will give a lecture on "Beef-producing cattle" in the Grantville Mechanics' Institute to-night at 8 o'clock.

In our advertising columns we beg to draw special attention to the "Greatest bargain in the History of Bookstelling." The Encyclopaedia Britannica complete in 25 volumes will be delivered to those who subscribe, with the privilege of paying monthly, one guinea. This is only half price.

To hand are a set of Chas. M. Sheldon's Famous Works from Mr. Palmer. They are really well got up, and very interesting and instructive, and can be had by forwarding sixpence in stamps. The following are the titles "In his steps," "The crucifixion of Phillip Strong," "His Brother's Keeper," and Macolm Kirk." These are books which should be in every house.

The Rev. H. V. Roget will conduct divine services on Sunday next at Queensferry 11 a.m., Bass 3 p.m., and San Remo 7 p.m.

Mr. G. T. Doherty, Wesleyan Missionary, will hold services on Sunday as follows:—Glen Forbes 11 a.m., Kilcunda 3 p.m., and Grantville 7.30 p.m.

A Social and Dance will be held in the Grantville Mechanics' Institute, on next Friday evening, June 30th.

Mr. Geo. Harris, Dental Surgeon, of Carlton will visit Grantville to-morrow (sale day), when he may be consulted at Lang's Hotel.

Cr. Rose of Korumburra, whilst riding from Bena one day last week, was thrown from his horse and sustained a fracture of two ribs, and slight concussion of the brain.

The annual meeting of the Grantville Rifle Club will be held on Tuesday evening 27th, inst., at 8 o'clock. During the evening a poll will be taken for the committee for No. 6 District.

It is rumoured that the mortgagees of the Great Victoria Colliery Company have purchased all the rails, railway and tramway materials from the mine to Queensferry, also mining leases connected with the same company, sold by the Sheriff's Officer on

Wednesday at the Law Courts, Melbourne.

A strike of miners employed in the Pacific Co-operative Colliery, Newcastle occurred on Wednesday. On Monday the manager of the mine commenced to weigh all coal, and the result is that 250 men and boys have been thrown out of work.

The half-yearly meeting of the Corinella Lodge M.U.I.O.O.F. will be held on Wednesday next when election of officers for the ensuing half year will take place.

### State School Cookery.

The cookery classes recently organised by the Education Department, are conducted at the Queensberry Street School, under the supervision of Mrs. Story. The number of children being taught are 48, chosen from the sixth classes of the various State Schools, and tuition is free. About 16 persons attend each day for dinner, the charge of which is 6d. The meals are served in an adjourning room, and comprise four courses, being admirably prepared and well cooked. The pupils take great interest in their work, and they are carefully taught the exact amount of heat for each dish. The classes are now almost self-supporting. Mrs. Storey notifies that anyone desiring beef tea, jellies or other delicacies for invalids, can always be supplied by the school.

### Correspondence.

To The Editor Of The Western Port Times.

Sir.—In you last issue a Corinella ratepayer writes a suggestion re-subdivision. Although a Woolamai ratepayer I am quite in the same way of thinking, and would help in my part of the shire, as it is a well-known fact that when you are on the boundaries of each riding you get no money laid out. Within a mile of us ratepayers in each riding have paid over £20 for rates for several years, and have no had £5 laid out within miles of us, and this is because we have no one to represent our part of the Shire. Since residing here [I] have not seen a councillor pass by my holding except on two occasions, and that was just before an election, to solicit my vote. Let us have re-subdivision which we can get by working for it.

Yours etc.,  
Woolamai Ratepayer.

## Beware Of The Dog Cow

Four short pieces on the dangers of cows and calves.

From the *Age*, Wednesday 18 September 1912, page 11

### Peculiar Accident

Grantville, Tuesday.

A serious accident occurred to Mr. A. H. Paul, a well known resident of Almurta. He was feeding a cow, when the animal tossed its head, and catching him in the eye with its horn, tore the eyelid open and wrenched the eye from its socket. Mr. Paul is now progressing favorably.

From the *Age*, Thursday 14 November 1912, page 7

### Injured By A Calf.

Wonthaggi, Wednesday.

An elderly lady named Mrs Asher met with a serious accident on Tuesday at Glen Alvie. She was outside the house of her daughter, when a calf, which was gambolling about, knocked her over. She was bruised about the body, and the bones in her left wrist broken in two places.

From the *Age*, Thursday 12 December 1912, page 10

### Attacked By A Heifer.

Grantville, Wednesday.

Mrs. George Thompson, wife of a resident of Grantville, was severely injured while feeding a young heifer yesterday. The animal attacked the lady, and held her in such a position that made her escape impossible. But for the timely assistance of a lad passing on his way to school, who was attracted by cries for assistance from Mrs Thompson, the result might have been fatal. Mrs Thompson is suffering badly from bruises and abrasions.

From the *Powlett Express and Victorian State Coalfields Advertiser*, Friday 12 July 1918, page 2

A most unusual accident befell Mr. J. Robertson, manager of the Bank of Victoria, on Wednesday evening. Just near the bank in McBride Avenue, a cow, which was being chased by dogs, charged into him. He was knocked down and received a severe wound from the cow's horn in the neck. Under the careful attention of Dr. Sleeman he is progressing favorably.

Wonthaggi's Leading

## FLORIST & FRUITERER

— IS —

# M. M. DENNIS

115 Graham Street, Wonthaggi. Phone 132

From the *Sporting Globe*, 30 November 1938

From the *Powlett Express and Victorian State Coalfields Advertiser*, Friday 9 July 1915, page 2: Correspondence.

## Our Wounded Soldiers

(To The Editor Powlett Express.)

Sir,—Will you kindly grant me space to appeal to the residents of the Phillip Island and Woolamai Shire on behalf of the Red Cross fund and the fund for sick and wounded Australian soldiers. The work of the Red Cross Society is so noble and so vitally important that it is our duty to support it to the utmost of our ability. An opportunity to assist in this work is afforded by the sale of the new red cross button, supplies of which may be obtained through the Shire Secretary, Mr. H. Bonwick, San Remo. The Victoria Cross fund for sick and wounded Australians has already evoked a splendid response in the metropolis. But this is a work in which every true Australian should deem it a privilege as well as a duty to take part, seeing these men have suffered in defence of our country and of those ideals of freedom and humanity which we all count sacred. May I suggest that where committees in connection with the Belgian Relief Fund already exist, they might undertake the work of organising the sale of the Red Cross buttons and the collection of subscriptions for the sick and wounded Australians. In places where such committees do not exist the work of organising the movement might be undertaken by leading residents, who would adopt the methods most suitable to their particular localities.—Yours, etc.,

A. S. McIlwraith,

President Shire of Phillip Island and Woolamai.  
Rhyll, 30/6/1915.

## Bogus Traveller Wanted By Police

From the *Age*, 8 May 1922

The plain clothes police are looking for a plausible rogue who has been travelling through the country as an optician and obtaining money from unsuspecting persons. Two cases have been reported – from Grantville and Stratford. The offender stated that he represented “the firm of Thompson’s” opticians, in the city, and after testing the sight of a woman at Grantville secured a deposit of £3 3/, and informed her the glasses would be posted to her. He repeated the deception at Stratford, secured the sum of £5 5/.

## No-No and Oh, No! Ads

As beach bathing and swimming became popular in the early 20th century, so did the beach beauty contest. In Gippsland, various seaside towns held their own versions, most notably Inverloch. These were usually fundraisers, not taken particularly seriously, and often had an accompanying male version. Harmless fun? So it seemed until the mid-1970s when they were increasingly decried as archaic, objectifying women, demeaning the contestants, reinforcing artificial notions of beauty, reinforcing patriarchy-mandated ideals of femininity, and a relatively new socio-cultural concept: sexist. If this advertisement was published today it would lead to lots of extra buses arriving at Lang Lang beach for the event – carrying protestors, not spectators. Among these protestors would be disability advocates hurling accusations of ‘ableism.’

### BATHING BEAUTY QUESTS

LANG LANG BEACH.

AUSTRALIA DAY,  
Monday, January 28th.  
Full tide 2 p.m.

Trafalgar Brass Band Recital.

**SENIOR QUEST**, girls over 18 years. Trophy valued £12/15/- and inscribed sash. Winner eligible for “Sun” Sungirl Quest.

**JUNIOR QUEST**, girls under 18 years. Trophy valued £5 and inscribed sash.

Boat and Pony Rides, Treasure Hunt, etc.

Hot and Cold Water, Soft Drinks and Ice-cream available. Good shelter provided.

Adults 2/-, children under 14 free.

Cr. Geo. Ridgway, Hon. Sec.. Lang Lang Foreshore Committee.

From *KooWeeRup Sun and Lang Lang Guardian*, 23 Jan.1952

From the *Age*, Monday 24 March 1930, page 13

## Good Dairying Season Conditions At Almurta

Almurta, Sunday.—Although more rain is needed to ensure a supply of winter grass, the season has been very favorable for both the dairyman and the grazier. The growth of grass during the spring was particularly heavy, and good autumn rains have consolidated the position. Owing to conditions in the wool market it is more than likely that many small sheep farms will go out of business. As far as this district is concerned this would not mean an economic loss, as most of the land could be used for dairying and mixed farming.

Dairying has been the main factor in the progress of this district, and each year more land is being reclaimed, and brought up to its full productive value. Most dairy farmers are taking advantage of the good conditions to improve both their herds and their pastures.

Fodder crops, especially maize, which is largely grown for green feed, were mostly a failure owing to want of rain at the right period. Good crops of potatoes and onions will be harvested in the Glenalvie district. A great source of trouble to landholders in the Kernot and Woodleigh districts is the blackberry bramble. Efforts to eradicate it seem to be unavailing.

From the *Mornington Standard*, Thursday 21 September 1893

## Supposed Loss of Yacht Safe in Mosquito Creek

San Remo

Much excitement has been caused here during the last few days owing to the sudden disappearance of a yacht. It appears that she belonged to Mr. J. Donolly, of Brunswick, and left Port Melbourne on Tuesday week last enroute to the village settlement in French Island. She was seen in Western Port Bay on Thursday last, about 4 miles south-west of Stoney [sic] Point, by Mr. Isaac Ross and Mr. C. Martin, who were on their way from San Remo to Stoney Point with crayfish. The yacht was known to be in the charge of two men, the name of one being Hansen. As it was blowing very hard at the time fears have been entertained for the yacht's safety. By latest advices, however, it appears that the yacht and its occupants have arrived safely, and anchored early on Monday at Mosquito Creek, opposite Corinella.

From the *Argus*, Monday 4 August 1941, page 3

## Seals Ruining Fishing Industry Open Season With Machineguns Urged

Hastings, Sunday — An open season for thinning out of seals in Westernport Bay by machinegun fire was urged by Cr. P. J. Gaskin at the shire council meeting.

There were 100,000 seals in Westernport Bay at present he said. They controlled the entrance and were destroying fish as they entered.

Four seals at the Aquarium cost £1 each a week to feed and they refused to eat other than good fish such as salmon and bay trout. On these figures he estimated that more than £100,000 worth of fish was being consumed by seals weekly in Westernport Bay. The fishing industry was being ruined, fishermen's nets were being destroyed and those connected with the industry at Westernport were losing many thousands of pounds because fishermen were left without fishing grounds.

Cr W. J. Oates said the fishing industry was imperilled. If fruit-growers were protected by the Government, fishermen also had the right to Government protection. Good fishing grounds in bays were being cleared of fish by seals.

Cr. F. H. Wells, shire president, said he could see no beauty in seals. When he went on an excursion to see the seals in Westernport Bay he regretted he had not taken a gas mask with him.

Council resolved to request Mr. Kirton MLA to arrange a deputation to the Premier on granting of an open season to thin out the seals.

From the *Argus*, Thursday 7 August 1941, page 6

### Westernport Seals

Sir.—Cr. P. J. Gaskin, of Frankston Shire, has been listening to a fish story from the romancing fishermen of Westernport. His statement of 100,000 seals and the loss of £100,000 weekly (which means only £5,200,000 annually) is away off the mark. A liberal estimate taken at breeding time — November — is from 8,000 to 10,000. Frequently less than 5,000 are at Seal Rocks and adjacent waters. In 20 years crossing Westernport I have never seen a total of 10 seals over the period.

There are 185 licensed fishermen in and around this bay. Several years ago some Italians fished with miles of lines day and night without cessation, and certainly must have cleaned up some fish. The experiment granted a little time back by Mr. Macfarlan — then Chief Secretary — provided a killing of some 100 seals and 400 or more wounded, most of which lined the shores of Westernport, putrefying through the summer, to the disgust of thousands of visitors. The remedy is in the hands of the fisherman sufferer, who has the right to shoot on sight any marauder seal. The "seal mirage" has become a hardy annual, always securing some supporter who does not check up with the Fisheries and Game Department.—W. Dawson Davie (Cr.), president, Phillip Island Shire.

Sir,—With 5,000 seals consuming only 6lb. of fish daily, the total per annum would be near 11,000,000lb., which is as much as the total fish catch of Victoria. It is time the Victorian fish industry was placed on the same basis as NSW, where, for some years, there has been a governing body known as the NSW Fish Advisory Council, composed of scientists and representatives of all fishing interests, including professional fishermen. NSW has increased its annual fish catch by over 10,000,000lb. This is in striking contrast to Victoria's fish catch becoming enormously less each year, resulting in prohibitive prices.—W. J. Abbott (Mordialloc).

Sir,—Mr. Lewis's report on seals in Westernport is timely and accurate. For the most part they are confined to the seal rocks, and their numbers do not seem to alter materially. They live not only on barracoota [*sic*] and salmon but on kelp and squid. Mr. Lewis's examination of their stomachs was conclusive. Furthermore, I have seen and caught the better kind of fish such as pike among them close to the rocks. A small number of young ones stray into Westernport, but in 30 years I have seen only 3 at Flinders. These strays, as Mr. Lewis states, can be destroyed. Seals at the Pribilof Islands [*sic*] are another matter. Their number had risen, when I last inquired, to 750,000. But the interest for us lies in the fact that they eat fish, and yet when they are abundant so are the fish. Some sort of symbiosis seems to exist. Finally, seal rocks are an asset to Phillip Island.—James W. Barrett (Melbourne).

## Putting the 'Grant' in Grantville

by

Geoffrey Guilfoyle

Until the early 1870s, the area in which the township of Grantville came into being was known as Deep Creek after the eponymous creek which, ironically, was shallow even in winter (but with very steep, or deep, banks, a feature which likely provided the name). It was one of the ways, each as difficult as the other, of reaching the Corinella Coal Mining Company workings about six miles inland from the creek.

This company held a lease on 640 acres of land on both sides of the Bass River (but mainly the west side) near today's Almurta where it sunk five shafts. Despite hitting coal seams of various thickness, no commercial operation was started and the various land leases including a swathe of territory around Deep Creek held by speculators were cancelled by the government, opening the area for settlement.

With the land now available for selection, settlers arrived in large numbers. This was primarily done along the Western Port Road, also known as the Main Coast Road (the future Bass Highway) which, in the late 1860s, was nothing more than a roughly cleared trail. (This was another of the difficult ways of reaching Deep Creek as mentioned earlier).

With no workable coal discovered, the eyes of many turned towards the thick forests covering the hills all around them. The Woods and Miller sawmill was established at Almurta with the base of operations at Deep Creek. Although the venture was shortlived, its presence likely influenced Edmund Colbert when he surveyed the area between Deep Creek and the creek to the south (later named Colbert Creek) as a township site in 1870.

This new settlement was officially declared the township of Grantville in the *Victorian Government Gazette No.64* of 20 September 1872:

*Now therefore I, the Governor of Victoria, with the advice of the Executive Council, do by this my Proclamation, in exercise of the power vested in me by the said Act, define the boundaries of a Town in the county of Mornington, and do distinguish such Town by the name prefixed to the description thereof, that is to say:—*

*Town of Grantville,*

*county of Mornington, situate on the eastern shore of Western Port Bay: Commencing at*

*the mouth of Colbert Creek; thence by that creek to the road from Corinella to Melbourne; thence by that road bearing north-easterly to a point thereon fifteen chains north-easterly from the intersection thereof by the Hurdy-gurdy Creek\*; thence by a line bearing N. 70 (insert degree sign) 31' W. eleven chains, more or less, to Western Port Bay; and thence by that bay southerly to the commencing point.—(72.H.15906.)*

Lots 1-9 were put up for sale on the 25th February 1873, with sawmiller John Quiggin purchasing three and the rest selling quickly.

Though intended to be the centre of the new town, for some reason yet to be satisfactorily explained, perhaps because a number of businesses set up there, the town slowly migrated south, coalescing around today's Bass Highway, Grantville-Glen Alvie Road and Pier Road intersection.

But who named the town and after whom is it named?

There being no other obvious individual, Colbert is likely the answer to the first part of the question. As for the second...

### Candidate One

In 1800, British naval officer James Grant, shortly before being promoted to Lieutenant, was given command of the *Lady Nelson*, a 60 ton survey ship designed by John Schanck with a sliding-keel system which allowed it to work in shallow water. Because he lacked technical survey qualifications, Grant was instructed to proceed to Australia where the ship would be passed to Matthew Flinders while Grant would then take charge of the *HMS Supply*.

On his arrival in Sydney he discovered that Flinders had already left for England and the *Supply* had been condemned. Governor King kept Grant in command of the *Lady Nelson* and sent him to chart the south-west coast of Australia or, more accurately, Francis L. Barrallier to do the actual mapmaking; however the lateness of the season confined the survey to Bass Strait.

The *Lady Nelson* entered Western Port Bay on the 22nd March 1801 and spent the next two months surveying it. Churchill Island was named, a hut built there and a garden planted.

*(continues on Page 8)*

\* Deep Creek was sometimes (erroneously) referred to as the Hurdy-gurdy.

Putting the 'Grant' in... (continued from Page 7)

Grant also gave Capes Schanck and Woolamai and other landmarks their names. Local legend has it that whilst in the bay Grant sent a crew ashore to draw fresh water from Deep Creek.

A successful investigation of the Hunter River and surrounds in N.S.W., going as far as Maitland, followed his Bass Strait venture. Based on the report of Lieutenant-Colonel William Paterson who accompanied this expedition, Governor King established an outpost, the future city of Newcastle, at the mouth of the river.

Grant left Sydney for London on 9 November 1801 and arrived in England in April 1802 where he wrote an account of his explorations entitled (take deep breath here): *The Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery, performed in His Majesty's Vessel the Lady Nelson, of sixty tons burthen, with sliding keels, in the years 1800, 1801, and 1802, to New South Wales.*

Promoted commander in January 1805 he was severely wounded in a fierce action off the Dutch coast. Although granted a pension of £150 the following year, he later resumed service. He died on 11 November 1833 at St. Servan, near St. Malo, France.

As romantic or exciting as Grant's life and reputation as a sailor and explorer might be, by 1870 he had been in his grave for 37 years and it is doubtful whether any of the settlers had even heard of him or the *Lady Nelson*, though Colbert likely had.

### Candidate Two

A more practical and prosaic explanation of Grantville's naming is found in James MacPherson Grant, who was born in 1822 at Alvie, Inverness, and emigrated to Sydney in 1836 where he practised law. Moving to Melbourne he became the 'Grant' in the company Hancock Duffett & Grant. A land reformer and radical he entered politics, becoming M.L.C. for the electorate of Sandhurst and later Avoca (until April 1885). If he is remembered at all today it is as the lawyer for the Ballarat miners of Eureka Stockade fame (or infamy) at their trial.

Appointments:

Vice-president, Board of Land & Works, and Commissioner of Public Works (20 Feb. 1861 – 14 November 1861);

Vice-president, Board of Land & Works, and Commissioner of Railways & Roads (27 June 1863 – 5 September 1864);

President, Board of Land & Works, and

Commissioner of Crown Lands & Survey (5 September 1864 – 6 May 1868);

President, Board of Land & Works, and Commissioner of Crown Lands & Survey (11 July 1868 – 20 September 1869);

President, Board of Land & Works, and Commissioner of Crown Lands & Survey (19 June 1871 – 10 June 1872);

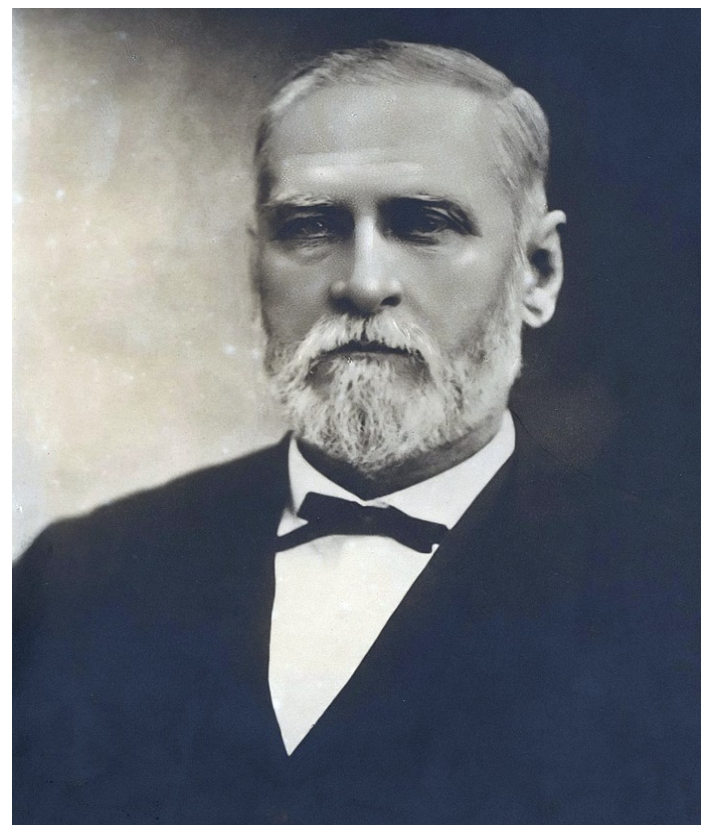
Minister of Justice (9 Aug. 1875-20 Oct. 1875, 22 May 1877 – 5 March 1880);

Chief Secretary and Minister of Public Instruction (9 July 1881 – 8 March 1883).

Naming a location after a local or regional notable was, and still is, a time-honoured way to flatter and potentially curry favour with the prominent and powerful. James McPherson Grant was, indirectly, Colbert's boss. This almost certainly makes Edmund Colbert the likely culprit in regard to the naming of the settlement. The only caveat here is that the McCulloch Government (and therefore Grant) was out of office in 1870; however, Colbert may have already settled on the name before beginning the land division.

There is also a possibility that the locals selected the name themselves, less to flatter and more in gratitude. In 1869 Grant proposed a new land bill which allowed the selection of up to 320 acres with conditions of residence, cultivation and improvement at a yearly

(continues on Page 9)



James Macpherson Grant, circa late 1870s-early 1880s.  
Source: State Library of Victoria (10381/153630).



Putting the 'Grant' in... (continued from Page 8)

payment of two shillings an acre, with liberal terms to convert into freehold. The act came into force on 1 February 1870 and became the basis of all subsequent land settlement. It was, to put it mildly, a popular measure.

There is, as yet, no decisive evidence in favour of either James Grant as the origin of the town's name – though the odds surely favour the man who controlled the settler's most precious asset and main concern – so feel free to choose the one you like most.

Sources:

*Alexandra Times*, 5 August 1876, page 3: Mornington and South Gipps Land.

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<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/grant-james-macpherson-3652>.  
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*Victorian Government Gazette No.53*, 17 May 1867, page 904; *No.105*, 28 August 1868; *No.38*, 6 August 1869, page 1202; *No.64*, 20 September 20 1872.

White, Joseph. *100 Years of History*, Shire of Bass & Shire of Phillip Island, 1974.

Wikipedia:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Macpherson\\_Grant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Macpherson_Grant) (viewed June 2020).

From the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, Wednesday 12 June 1878

## Phillip Island And Woolamai Shire Council

Saturday, June 8th 1878

Ordinary Meeting:—Present: Councillors S. West (the President), Turnbull, Monk, Duffus, Stewart, Watson, and Kennedy.

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

### Correspondence

From S. Stevenson, stating that he had abandoned the Kilcunda Coal Mining Association, and would no longer pay rates thereon.

From the Maffra Shire Council, in reference to closing roads.—Consideration postponed.

From the Richmond Council, re loan conference.—The President was appointed the delegate of the Council.

From J. Tickell, asking leave to grub and cut timber on the Settlement Point road.—Granted.

From Mr. Murphy, surveyor, offering to survey a water reserve in Corinella.—The Secretary was instructed to get the survey effected.

From the Mining Department, with tracing of coal leases.—The Secretary was instructed to make a separate valuation of same.

From Mr. Hewitt, asking what action had been taken regarding the promise made by the Minister of Public Works to the Council to assist the Shire in making two bridges across the Bass river to the new settlements.—Councillor Monk moved, seconded by Councillor Duffus, that the Secretary reply that action would be taken at once, and the Clerk of Works take the necessary grades and levels of one bridge, and report at next meeting.—Councillor Kennedy moved as an amendment, seconded by Councillor Stewart, that the writer be informed that action would be taken as soon as possible.—The amendment was lost and the motion agreed to.

### Petition

A numerously signed petition was received from ratepayers and residents of the Shire, praying that the road to Bass and Kilcunda from Griffith's Point might be made passable, or a new road surveyed through more level country.

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General Blacksmith,

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**SHOEING DONE**

BY A

**First-class Shoeing Smith**

From the *Great Southern Advocate*, Thursday 23 April 1914

From the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, Wednesday 7 August 1878

## Phillip Island And Woolamai Shire Council

Saturday, August 3rd, 1878.

Present: (Councillor West, President) Duffus, Kidd, Turnbull, Sunderland, Monk and Watson.

The minutes of last ordinary meeting and Revision Court were confirmed, and correspondence sent read.

Mr. A. Alridge and Mr. Misson's request to remove dead wood from two roads were granted.

Letter from Jas. Deacon, tendering his resignation as Inspector of Slaughterhouses on Phillip Island held over until later in the day.

On motion of Councillor Monk and Turnbull, a letter from Town Clerk of Richmond, in reference to the resolutions passed at the conference was received, and the Secretary was instructed to inform him that this Council coincide fully with the resolutions, and also to write to their representative (Mr. Purves) requesting him to attend the deputation.

Letter from Mayor of Melbourne, re Pearce Testimonial Fund.—Received, on motion of Councillors Monk and Turnbull.

Moved by Councillor Monk, seconded by Councillor Duffus, that the letter from Lands and Survey Office, stating that if the survey of water reserve in sec. 83 Corinella be not effected in *[sic]* with fourteen days the land would be granted to Mr. Peters, be received, and the Secretary was instructed to get the survey executed at once.—Carried.

It was moved by Councillor Sunderland, seconded by Councillor Kidd, that letter from Mayor of Melbourne asking for subscription to Chinese Famine Fund be received, and £5 5s. granted.—Carried.

A letter was read from Messrs. Bergin and Harris, who were appointed at a public meeting to wait on the Shire, and ask that body for a deputation of three members to accompany them to Melbourne to wait on the Chief Secretary, relative to the construction of a railway from Griffiths' Point to Kilcunda, and Councillor Turnbull moved seconded by Councillor Watson that the President, Councillor Turnbull, and Councillor Watson accompany the deputation, and also wait on the Minister of Public Works about the promised jetty at Grantville.

The charge preferred against Constable J. Deacon as Inspector of Slaughter-yards, by the President, of inducing persons other than

slaughtermen to supply him with meat, was gone into, and Mr. Sharp, who was present, stated that he had supplied him with meat on six different occasions at his request.—It was moved by Councillor Turnbull, seconded by Councillor Sunderland, that as the charge had been substantiated, Constable Deacon's resignation be not accepted, but that he be dismissed from the office of Inspector, and the Secretary be instructed to inform the Police Department of the circumstances of his dismissal.—Carried.

Councillor Watson presented a petition from residents and ratepayers of Kilcunda, praying for the establishment of a post office at Kilcunda with the aid of the Council, and on the motion of Councillors Kidd and Watson the deputation were requested to present the petition to the Postmaster General.

The report of the Committee appointed to negotiate with the owners of the land through which the proposed road to Bass and Kilcunda was to go was read. It was moved by Councillor Watson, seconded by Councillor Turnbull, that the Shire Engineer be requested to survey the road in question, and prepare plans and specifications in accordance with Section 354 Local Government Act.—Carried.

The Clerk of Works reported having made survey of bridge over Bass river, it was moved by Councillor Monk, seconded by Councillor Kidd, that the Shire Engineer be instructed to prepare plans and specifications for the same in order to obtain the Government assistance promised to the Shire.—Carried.

Moved by Councillor Monk, seconded by Councillor Kidd, that if Emery's contract on Douglas flat be not in a fair way for completion within seven days from date the Clerk of Works give it to the next lowest tenderer.—Carried.

The Secretary was instructed to take legal proceedings at once against all defaulting ratepayers, on the motion of Councillors Kidd and Monk.

Moved by Cr. Turnbull and seconded by Councillor Sunderland that an approach be made to Mr. West's store from the main street, Cowes.—Carried.

Moved by Councillor Sunderland and seconded by Councillor Duffus that a two rail fence be erected along the embankment

(continues on Page 11)

*Phillip Island And Woolamai... (continued from Page 10)*

of cutting at Cowes for about five chains.—Carried.

Moved by the President and seconded by Councillor Turnbull that the question of extra work on contract 132 be referred to the Shire Engineer, and that a bonus of £25 be granted to the contractors in consequence of the difficulties placed in their way.—Carried.

Payments to the amount of £132 were passed.

The tender of Grant and Co., for contract 138 for £36 17s., was accepted.

Moved by Councillor Turnbull and seconded by Councillor Sunderland that the Government be requested to grant the sum of £250, or more if required, for the purpose of furnishing and completing the Shire Hall together with the necessary fencing and stabling, and that the deputation already appointed wait on the Minister of Justice and urge the matter on his attention.—Carried.

Moved by Councillor Kidd and seconded by Councillor Turnbull that about ten chains of formation be done between Stevenson's corner and Bass bridge.—Carried.

Moved by Councillor Sunderland, seconded by Councillor Duffus, that the sum of £5 be paid each Councillor on the deputation.—Carried.

Moved by Councillor Kidd seconded by Councillor Turnbull that the sum of £5 to be voted to Mr. S. R. Jones.—Carried

The Council then adjourned.

*From the Powlett Express and Victorian State Coalfields Advertiser, 3 August 1917, page 1: Glen Alvie.*

## **Roland Pitt, M.C.**

Amongst those who have gained the distinction of the Military Cross is Lance-Corporal Roland Pitts, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. R. Pitts, of Glen Alvie. When he joined up he was a leading shot in the local rifle club. He enlisted at the same time as Private T. Wallace and the late Corp. John Luke, and succeeded in tying with Private Wallace for top place in the musketry course in Egypt. He remained in the fighting line in Gallipoli until the evacuation. Since that time he has been continuously at the front in France with the exception of a short furlough to England last January. When in a tight corner he stuck to his gun, and averted defeat, and then carried his gun away, although badly wounded. He is the first Australian soldier from this district to be awarded the decoration.

## **The South Gippsland Coal Area**

This may be briefly described under two headings, viz., the Hill area, and the Plains. The whole occupies about 2000 square miles, and it is practically isolated from the mountains of older rocks lying to the northward. The Hill area of about 1300 square miles may be described as being bounded on the west by the Koo-wee-rup Swamp and Westernport Bay. To the south lies Bass Straits. The south-eastern limit is marked by the silurian and granite masses in the vicinity of Corner Inlet. A line extending north-east ward from Welshpool marks the eastern boundary, and to the north is the Latrobe Valley. In the western half of the coal-bearing rocks the two main ridges are the Bass and Strezlecki Ranges. The former constitutes the watershed between the Bass and Powlett rivers, and the latter separates the Latrobe and Tarwin valleys. The highest point in South Gippsland is Mt. Fatigue, which rises to 2110ft., but the majority of the hills seldom exceed 1000ft. above sea level. The plains occupy an area of some 700 square miles, and consist of healthy country traversed by swamp and river flats of extremely rich soil, under which at from 10 to 60ft. lie extensive areas of coal-bearing rocks. The average surface level of the plains is from 20 to 120ft. above sea level. The low-lying flats within this area are more or less wet and swampy for about seven months in the year, but surface drainage will make valuable much land that has hitherto been considered of poor quality.

*Source: Powlett Coal Fields and Coal History of Victoria 1825-1910. Published by Rae Bros., The Strand Publishing House, likely 1911 (no date on book).*

*From The Wonthaggi Sentinel and State Town Miner, Saturday, June 25, 1910*

## **Jilkes Jinxed?**

A well-known identity of Archie's Creek named Harold Jilkes was driving a young horse in a brake one evening last week, when the animal shied. The vehicle struck a tree guard and turned completely over. Jilkes's leg was broken, and he was otherwise so seriously injured that he was at once sent to the Melbourne Hospital. During the past 12 months Jilkes has been rather unfortunate, as this is the second occasion on which he has been seriously injured. Much sympathy is felt for him in the district.

From *The Age*, Saturday 27 July 1929, page 7

## Historic Victoria

### Romance of South and West Gippsland

#### The Hardy Pioneers

(Re-paragraphed for the sake of clarity.)

Pages of the history of the discovery, exploration and development of Southern and Western Gippsland contain many stories of hardship, grit and endurance. For years many of the settlers suffered acutely because of the lack of proper transport facilities, some of the so-called roads being in an atrocious condition; there were devastating bush fires, the great fires of 1898 swept across about 1000 square miles of country with considerable loss of life and property – and there was the menace of noxious weeds and vermin; in more recent years the invasion of rabbits. But with grim determination many of the pioneers hung on to their holdings until better times were encountered.

The Gippsland district was discovered by Angus McMillan, who, in the year 1839, reached Omeo from New South Wales and formed Nublamungee Station, on the Tambo River. But it was Strzelecki – who named Gippsland after Governor Gipps – who was mainly responsible for the exploration of what is known as South Gippsland.

In 1840 he was the leader of a party which proceeded from Settlements on the Murrumbidgee (N.S.W.) with the object of reaching Wilson's Promontory, which, in the year 1797, or ten years after the settlement of Port Jackson, had been explored by Bass on his way to Westernport Bay, and which, in 1800, was visited by Lieut. Grant.

A stream which was encountered near Rosedale Strzelecki named the Latrobe, after Governor Latrobe. The party was now finding progress difficult. The horses were becoming exhausted, the country getting rougher, and the provisions very scanty. The rations were one biscuit and a slice of bacon daily. When the little band reached a point near what is now known as Boolarra, it was found necessary to abandon horses, instruments, and a large number of specimens.

It was considered impossible to proceed to Corner Inlet, to which attention was drawn by the wreck of the steamer Clonmel in 1841, as had been intended, and Westernport was made the destination. But it took the explorers 22 days to negotiate the 55 miles journey from Boolarra to Westernport. In these days of automobiles and aeroplanes the fact appears incredible.

#### Roads Development

About this time a party of settlers from Melbourne (one of whom was named *[unclear name]*) chartered a vessel, the *Singapore*, and discovered and named Port Albert. Sending the vessel back to Melbourne, the party explored the country, and subsequently, after many unpleasant experiences in the very rough country, a more practical road to Gippsland was discovered through the forests between Kooweerup Swamp and the head waters of the Latrobe River. Eventually a road was made along this route.

The largest and one of the earliest efforts at road surveying in South Gippsland, however, were made in 1862, when G. T. McDonald completed the track which bears his name. It has since been made a two-chain road. The track ran easterly and north-easterly from Tobinyallock to Morwell – about 70 miles, and mainly through big scrub country.

The first survey of part of McDonald's Track as a road was made in 1876. In 1878 a Government grant of £240 was obtained for clearing the track, which was 7 feet wide, and two miles of it was cleared a chain wide from Poowong eastward.

Unfortunately the authorities in the early days displayed little foresight in the matter of roads, and as a result many of the settlers were compelled to abandon their blocks because of their inability to get their produce to market. The so-called roads were merely a succession of bog holes in many cases, and frequently the settlers had to use sledges if they wanted to travel any distance!

The establishment of the Country Roads Board and the excellent work performed by that body, especially in the hill country of Gippsland, in providing splendidly surveyed and constructed roads is causing a revolution as far as transport facilities are concerned, and incidentally is greatly improving the prospects of many settlers and their families, who have had a heartbreaking experience in trying to gain a livelihood.

#### Early Railways

The main Gippsland line had been constructed to Sale in 1878, and, needless to state, there was a great deal of satisfaction among

*(continues on Page 13)*

*Historic Victoria (continued from Page 12)*

the practically marooned settlers of South Gippsland when in the year 1887 the first contract in connection with the Great Southern Railway was let for the construction of the line from Dandenong to Korumburra, and soon afterwards the second section, from Korumburra to Welshpool.

The line was opened on 11th November 1890, to Loch, which was its terminus for 60 months. In the following year the line had been extended as far as Kardella, with the result that saw mills were started, and the population steadily increased in the areas adjacent to railway stations. Finally, the line was extended via Foster to Port Albert. In more recent years the construction of the railway via Kooweerup to Strezlecki has proved a boon to many settlers who were practically isolated in the hill country.

### Dairying, Coal and Gold

It is generally accepted that dairying, which proved a leading Gippsland industry, was first commenced about 1876. The early settlers had a hard task in clearing the scrub and contending with fires in summer, with mud in the winter, and with noxious weeds and vermin all the year round. The construction of the Great Southern railway, the introduction of the cream separator, the installation of refrigerating machinery, and later the introduction of milking machines, combined to revive the industry when it was languishing badly.

The first co-operative factory in the district was a cheese factory established at Woodleigh in 1888. Soon afterwards co-operative better factories were established at Poowong, Bena, Moyarra, Leongatha, Korumburra and other centres, and some of them were particularly successful.

Coal deposits were noticed in the very early stages of exploration, and a Dr. Anderson sent samples of black coal to Sydney. In the "forties" a coal miner named George Davis is said to have carried on his back from Cape Patterson a small bag of coal to show the Governor, Mr. Latrobe. He claimed, and later received, a sum of £1000 offered by the Government for the discovery of a working field. Subsequently a company was formed to work the Cape Patterson seams, and a mine was opened near the coast. About 1800 tons of coal were shipped to Melbourne.

In later years in exploring for coal in other parts of South Gippsland. Mr. Reginald A. F. Murray, F.G.S., had some very trying experi-

ences, from which he emerged as a result of fine powers of endurance and resource.

A discovery, which has since proved of almost incalculable value, was made by a prospector named David Ryan in the "seventies." He discovered the great bed of lignite or brown coal on the banks of the Latrobe River at a point which, at Yallourn, is the headquarters of the great State electricity scheme.

In 1865 a black coal mine was established at Kilcunda, and other companies followed with operations at Korumburra, Jumbunna and other centres. Over 1,000,000 tons was sold by the Jumbunna company.

The next interesting event was the establishment in 1909 of the State coal mine at Wonthaggi. Nearly 4000 tons of coal was sent to Melbourne by road to Inverloch, and then by steamer, before direct railway communication was established to the mine.

Payable gold was found in some parts of Gippsland as far back as 1850. The rich Walhalla "diggings" were commenced about 1863. From the celebrated Long Tunnel mine at Walhalla 822,993 fine oz. of gold were produced, the dividends of the company amounting to £1,283,400.

### Leading Centres

During the twenty years since the State coal mine was established, Wonthaggi has developed out of [all] recognition, and is the largest town in Southern Gippsland. The population of the borough, which is divided into three wards, is now only a few short of 10,000. Besides being a prosperous coal mining town it is contiguous to popular seaside resorts, such as San Remo, Kilcunda and Anderson's Inlet, and thus derives a fair amount of business from tourist traffic. Some idea of the town may be gained from the fact that, in addition to State and technical schools, there are three banks, six churches, three hotels, picture theatres and two brass bands. There are recreation grounds and other facilities for the sport loving citizens. Last year's output from the State coal mine was 596,032 tons, of which 489,652 tons were supplied to the Railway department. The average number of persons employed at the mine was 1543, about £490,900 being disbursed in wages for the year.

Another well-established town is Warragul, which is situated on the main Gippsland line. It is the centre of an agricultural district, and is one of the important gateways to Gippsland. It has butter and casein factories,

*(continues on Page 14)*

*Historic Victoria (continued from Page 13)*

and gas works, and it is a leading business centre, as may be judged from the fact that there are four banks in addition to the savings bank. There is a hospital, athenaeum and public library, also an agricultural society, a racing club and swimming baths.

A steady tourist traffic is maintained – the popular Princes Highway passes through the town – and tourists are catered for by five hotels, in addition to several boarding houses. Prominent buildings include the County Court, five churches and three halls, and, needless to state, the township is well catered for in the matter of “movies.” For several years saw milling was an active industry in the district, the output exceeding 1000 tons a month.

Situated in the centre of an agricultural, dairying and coal mining district, Korumburra is one of the best-known of the South Gippsland towns. For some years the output of the mines at Korumburra and adjacent places of Jumbunna and Outtrim was about 70,000 tons annually, but in recent years the industry has fallen away. The Farmers' Club commenced a butter factory at Korumburra in 1900 with a capital of £3000. About 120 tons had been produced in the first half-year of the new enterprise, but many years had not passed before the output of the factory was considerably over 1000 tons a year.

A store attached to the factory boasts an annual turnover of about [*unclear amount, looks like £66,000*]. There are almost 3000 residents in the Korumburra township, in which there are five churches, three banks, three hotels, State school, Masonic and Mechanics' halls, and County Court. The local agricultural society has two show days each year.

### Leongatha Development

In the centre of a dairying and grazing area, Leongatha, with its population of nearly 2000 people, is also one of Gippsland “solid” towns. Adjacent is a fairly extensive soldiers' settlement. Weekly stock sales are held at Leongatha, and good business is transacted. Many fat cattle are railed to Melbourne and other centres each week.

There is an agricultural society and a racing club, the race meeting being very popular. In the educational sphere, there are a State school and an agricultural high school, other institutions including four banks, Masonic, Rechabite and Soldiers' Memorial halls, four churches and a convent. The Leongatha

Butter and Cheese Factory Co., which was formed in 1894, with a capital of only £670, had a hard fight for its existence in its early days, but in recent years the output of butter has reached 1,000,000 lb. annually.

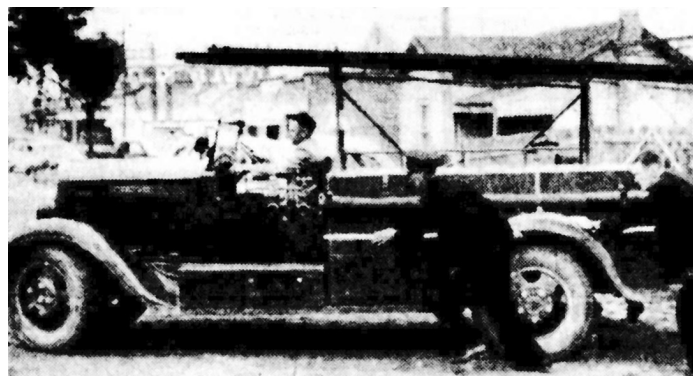
In 1908 the company manufactured electricity for its own use and for the lighting of the town, and in 1914, a batch pasteuriser, the first machine of its kind in Australia, was installed, with considerable success. A year later a larger refrigerating plant was installed to enable the company to freeze rabbits. In 1916 a desiccator for creating butter milk was erected, and in 1917, a gram-crushing and milling plant was added.

\* \* \*

From the *Argus*, Friday 19 February 1954, page 7

## Old Betsy Scrapped

For years and years “Old Betsy,” Wonthaggi's faithful fire engine, served the local brigade. But when the time came for retirement, Betsy was stubborn. She refused to move — there was still a few years left for her yet. So some of the strong firemen got behind her and (below, top) they coaxed her down to the C.F.A. graveyard at Spring Vale. And (below, bottom) is the brand new engine that has taken “Betsy's” place. Mr. J. Purdie, regional fire officer, hands the truck over to Fred Loughran.



## The Wreck of the S.S. Speke

From the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*,  
24 February 1906

### The Speke Wreck

Further particulars of the wreck of the ship Speke, near Cowes, on the Victorian coast, show that the vessel crashed on the rocks and immediately afterwards swung broadside on to the reef. Two boats were put out, and were soon smashed. The men in them had a terrible time. They managed somehow to get a line ashore, and most of the crew got ashore by that means. News of the catastrophe reached Cowes on Thursday night, when a settler drove in with a number of survivors, who, in their tattered, sodden clothing, presented a pitiable spectacle. Vehicles had gone out to bring in others of the survivors, who accommodation was provided by charitable local residents.

Williams, the chief mate, in an interview, said:—"It is only by God's mercy that matters are not worse as regards loss of life. Both anchors parted, and it was not possible to do anything to save our ship, and she went right up alongside the rocks. A gale blew all the time, and anyone who knows the coast thereabouts will understand what it meant to be wrecked there, and to have to save lives in such a place. We have lost everything. All that is left us are the things we stand up in. We sighted Wilson's Promontory on Tuesday night. Land was sighted at noon next day, and when we tried to wear ship she would not answer, and fell back on to the port tack. Then she struck and became a hopeless wreck."

The second mate, Mr. Cook, readily followed a request by the captain that he should go over the side, and carry a lifeline ashore. This was a perilous undertaking, and was pluckily and successfully accomplished. He got on to the land, and passed the line around the rocks.

"None of the men would venture to pass along the line," says Captain Tilston. "It was necessary to hearten them, in view of the most imminent danger of all being drowned. I led the way, and the remainder followed. Of course, I wanted to be the last to leave the ship, but I felt it was my duty to give the men the necessary lead. When the vessel struck the seas dashed over her as high as the topgallant yard. If the men had tried to get ashore at night, we should have been in a dangerous plight indeed, and I am afraid would have had a *[unclear word]* death roll."

From the *Week*, Friday 2 March 1906, page 31

### Wreck of the Ship Speke

The Post and Telegraph Department advise: "Melbourne, 10.15 p.m.; Cowes advises vessel the Speke, bound from Sydney to Melbourne, wrecked; crew 26 all saved but one - Henderson - who was drowned. The vessel was total wreck."

The ship Speke, which is said to be the largest three-masted ship afloat, was bound from Sydney to Melbourne to load wheat for the Channel.

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Melbourne, February 23.

The ship Speke, of Liverpool, in ballast bound from Molenda, via Sydney heads, to Melbourne, ran across rocks near Nobbys, Phillip Island, at 1.30 p.m. yesterday, and became a total wreck. The crew, number 26, with one exception, all managed to reach the shore safely. A sailor named Henderson was drowned. A strong southerly wind is blowing, and the vessel is reported to be breaking up. Despite the heavy seas the second mate swam ashore, and fixed a rope, along which the men slid to safety.

Before the vessel struck, four men, including Henderson, manned the lifeboat. Henderson was struck by a wave and washed overboard. He could not swim and was drowned. The next breaker overturned the boat and one man was washed ashore inside of it. The other two, although much exhausted, managed to clamber up the rocks to dry ground.

Melbourne, February 24.

Farther particulars concerning the wreck of the ship Speke off the Victorian coast on Thursday show that the vessel was driven ashore in a gale. Two boats were lowered, but were smashed almost immediately. Alexander Cook swam with a lifeline ashore in a sea which rose to the height of the top gallant yards. By this means all but one managed to get ashore.

Melbourne, February 26.

The ship Speke now is broken in two. Yesterday, a pair of trousers belonging to Henderson were washed up on the beach. There was a gap in them in the region of the right hip, which indicates that the body had been bitten by sharks.

(continues on Page 16)

*The Wreck of the S.S. Speke (continued from Page 15)*

From *Geelong Advertiser*, Thursday 8 March 1906, page 4

### Loss of the Speke

The question whether the loss of the Speke on Phillip Island was the result of careless navigation on the part of the master, Wm. Burton Tilston, was the subject of enquiry by the Court of Marine Inquiry to-day. The evidence taken by Mr. Panton and his colleagues went to show that up to 8.30 o'clock on the morning of February 21st there was nothing to prevent the vessel being brought round or her sails set, but that afterwards it was not possible to do this owing to the hurricane. It also appeared that the master mistook the Cape Schanck light for the light on Split Point, and imagined that he was south of the Heads. Another matter which came out was that the hull of the ship was foul, not having been cleaned for 27 months. Ebenezer Richard Williams, the mate, was of the opinion that the captain did everything he could. Lewis Campbell, pilot, said he was keeping a vigilant look-out for the Speke four or five miles outside the heads, but failed to see her. The Cape Schanck light was sometimes obscured by haze and heavy clouds, but the Heads' lights were visible by him all the time. The further hearing was adjourned until to-morrow afternoon.

From the *Daily Telegraph*, Friday 9 March 1906, page 5

### Wreck of the Speke

Melbourne, Thursday.—The Court of Marine Inquiry continued its inquiries to-day into the circumstances surrounding the wreck of the ship Speke at Phillip Island. William B. Tilston said he had been master of the Speke for 11 months. At 4 o'clock on the morning of the wreck the ship was put on a north-easterly course, and at daylight he estimated that the vessel was 15 miles from land. Shortly after the steamer Flora passed him the wind, which had been westerly, hauled to the south-west, and witness had to take the upper topsail foresail and jib off her, for fear she would capsize. At 11.45 in the forenoon witness saw land and tried to "wear ship," but she would not come round. The vessel was then heading north-west, and making leeway at the rate of three knots. As she got nearer to land witness got a bearing off the Nobbies, and found she was drifting faster than ever. Witness feared that the ship was doomed, and got the anchors and boats ready. Witness then noticed a small

patch of sand and determined to try and run her ashore there to save life. Within half an hour she was in 15 fathoms of water. The port anchor was then dropped and given 48 fathoms of chain, and the starboard anchor 30 fathoms. The latter dragged, and another 15 fathoms was paid out on the port anchor, when the chain parted. The starboard anchor dragged, and the vessel struck the rocks.

At this stage the Court adjourned until tomorrow morning.

From *The Mercury*, Saturday 10 March 1906, page 3

### The Speke Inquiry

The Court of Marine Inquiry concluded the hearing to-day of a charge of careless navigation preferred against Captain Tilston of the wrecked ship Speke. It found the charge fully proved, and suspended his certificate for 12 months.

From the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 10 March 1906, page 4

### The Speke

The ship Speke is now completely broken up, the only part of the vessel remaining above the water being the stern. The crowd of sightseers who visited the wreck on Sunday received an object lesson of the power of the waves, which lifted the heavy iron side of the ship as if were a sheet of tin, making the platen groan, and bursting the rivets. About four o'clock the last mast fell, carrying away a large part of the deck, which was holding the bow of the ship in position, and before long the bow collapsed like an egg shell, leaving nothing by the stern of the ship visible. The rocky shore, for about half a mile on each side of the wreck, is strewn with timber, in some places stacked 3 feet in height. Most of the soft wood has been ground up as if by a mill into flakes and chips no bigger than matchwood. Fragments of the piano were picked up, and the wheel, with the nave broken out, was brought ashore by the tide. It is impossible to identify most of the wreckage, so completely has the sea done its work.

**EREHWON**  
 On the ESPLANADE at COWES  
**THE VICE-REGAL GUEST HOUSE**  
**W. DAWSON-DAVIE** ——— **Cowes 12**  
 CITY TELEPHONE—WINDSOR 3935.



# S.S. Speke Wreck Photos

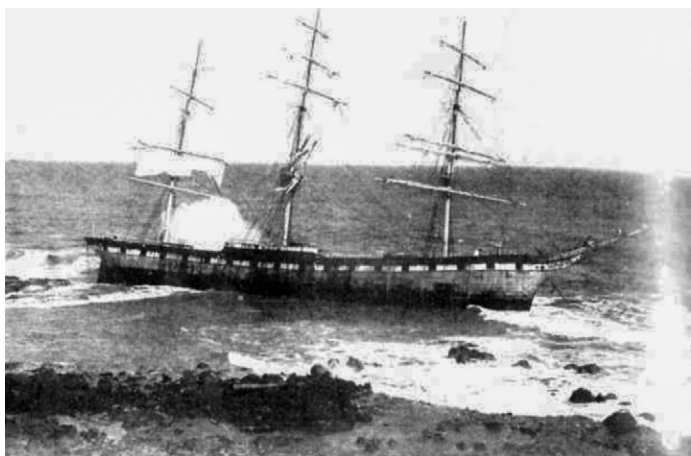
From the *Weekly Times*, Saturday 3 March 1906, page 10



Captain Tilston, master of the Speke; 2nd mate, Mr A Cooke – hero of the wreck (seated); two apprentices and the 1st mate (standing).



A wave breaking over the bow.



Photograph of broadside view of the Speke on rocks.



View of the coast where the Speke lies.



Some of the crew of the Speke on rocks near the wreck.



Some of the crew leaving for Melbourne on the Genesta [sic]

First publish in Australian Geographics' *WALKABOUT* magazine, December 1st, 1950, page 31-32.

## The Wreck of the "Speke"

by L. H. Smith M.Sc., D.Phil.(Oxon.)

(Re-paragraphed for the sake of clarity.)

Visitors to Cowes, Phillip Island, who arrive by ferry, invariably pause as they walk off the pier to look at the striking wooden carving in the form of the head of a golden-haired young woman with cherry-red lips, blue eyes and pink cheeks, which is fixed to the band rotunda. The inscription below the figurehead reads simply "S.S. Speke, Wrecked Feb., 1906." The persistent quizzing of two small boys resulted in a visit to the scene of the wreck and, later, to the Public Library in quest of fuller information.

The *Speke* was one of the finest three-mastered sailing ships of her day. Owned by Leyland Shipping Co., and built in 1891 by T. R. Oswald & Co., of Milford Haven in Pembrokeshire, Wales, she was of 2,875 tons, 310 feet long, 42 feet wide and 25 feet deep. She had just recently delivered a cargo from Mollendo in Peru to Sydney, and was *en route* in ballast for Melbourne when disaster overtook her.

Her commander, Captain Tilson, was well seasoned, having been at sea in sailing vessels for thirty years. He had served as first mate in the *Speke* for three years before being appointed in command eighteen months prior to the wreck.

This account of the wreck is based largely on contemporary press reports. On Wednesday, 21st February, 1906, the *Speke* was off Port Phillip Heads at about eight o'clock in the evening; but, owing to the fact that she was in ballast and high out of the water, she began to drift in the heavy seas.

She drifted for fifty miles to the east and next morning sent up distress signals which appear not to have been noticed by a passing steamer. By noon she was far to the east of the Heads, and at the mercy of the heavy seas which were pounding the southern side of Phillip Island.

Her plight was desperate, and the captain gave word to "Stand By." At 1 p.m. she was in 17 fathoms of water and a frantic effort was made to anchor her in Kitty Miller's Bay. A very strong wind was blowing from the sou'west, and the starboard anchor was let go, but it would not hold. Next the port anchor was tried, but it parted, and the ship drifted helplessly on to the rocks, stern first, just a little west of Helen's Head.

With wild seas crashing over her decks, there was no time to lose. Without the slightest hesitation, the second officer, Mr Crook, risked his life and swam ashore with a line.

When this was fastened the men, led by Captain Tilson, slid along it to safety. It was a perilous adventure, which owed its successful outcome to the heroism of the second officer and a young apprentice named Kingcross who had followed him.

There was only one casualty. At the time the ship struck, four sailors were endeavouring to put off in a boat, but it was immediately capsized and one of the men, named Frank Henderson, who was unable to swim, was pitched head first into the hungry surf which swallowed him up from sight for evermore.

One of the others was carried ashore under the upturned boat, where he kicked a hole through it with his feet, his calls for assistance being heard by some of his mates who had by this time gone ashore by the line. The other two men were washed ashore in an exhausted condition.

The survivors were taken to Cowes and cared for. On the Saturday evening, two days after the wreck, a concert was organised to provide relief for the men, and the sum of £5 was collected.

On the day after the wreck, some of the sailors, undaunted by the perils they had just survived, returned to Kitty Miller's Bay and endeavoured to swim out to the ship to rescue their belongings, but the sea was too rough.

During the week-end that followed the wreck, the townspeople and visitors to Cowes streamed out to the scene of the disaster, using every known form of transport – on foot, on bicycles, on horseback, in drays, gigs and buggies. The *Speke*, once a beautiful ship, must have been a spectacle as she lay upon the cruel black rocks, her masts swaying as the heavy seas broke over her. The beach was littered with deck fittings, water casks, life-belts and the wreckage of the ship's boats which had been smashed to pieces. Within a few days, the ship broke into two, and after that complete disintegration was rapid.

It must have been a terrible experience for the men, who had lost not only their

(continues on Page 19)

*The Wreck of the "Speke" (continued from Page 18)*

belongings, but also one of their companions. Yet when they arrived in Melbourne on the following Saturday afternoon, they presented (in the words of the press of the day) "an almost smart appearance." The men were subsequently cared for at the Sailors' Home for some time, presumably until they found suitable employment.

The figure-head of the *Speke* was found by Mr W. Kennon, who has become well known to many thousands of people who have visited Cowes. Happily, Mr Kennon preserved it and eventually passed it on to Mr Gerraty, Headmaster of the Cowes State School, who, with the assistance of some of the senior pupils, repaired it.

It was unveiled as a memorial to the *Speke* and her gallant men, by Professor G. S. Browne, Professor of Education at the University of Melbourne, on the 20th November, 1941. Apart from the figurehead, all that remains of the *Speke* now is [a] portion of the rusty hulk which lies on the rocks in Kitty Miller's Bay.

Those who have watched the wild seas breaking over the rocky coast near Helen's Head can imagine the plight of the unfortunate vessel and her crew. Perhaps this brief account will enable visitors to the scene of the wreck to reconstruct the stirring event of the day, and add interest to their excursion.



The rescued *Speke* figurehead in 1950.

From *WALKABOUT*, May 1st, 1951.

Sir,

*Speke*, the figurehead of which is mentioned in December, 1950, and February, 1951, "Walkabout," was the 2,875-ton sailing ship built in 1891 by T. R. Oswald & Co. for R. W. Leyland & Co., shipowners, of Liverpool. With the 2,901-ton *Ditton*, sister ship of *Speke*, the two were the biggest three-mast full-rigged ships ever built.

In the case of ships built to their order, Leylands named them after places in Lancashire which took their names in some case from Lancashire identities as in the case of *Ditton* and *Speke*. Other ship names such as *Allerton*, *Grassendale*, *Otterspool*, *Liverpool*, *Roby*, *Toxeth* and *Wavertree* followed purely Lancashire place names.

*Speke* was lost on February 22nd, 1940, [sic] in Kitty Miller Bay, Phillip Island, through Captain Tilston mistaking Cape Schank [sic] light for that on Split Point, for which error his certificate was suspended for twelve months. One man - F. Henderson - was lost in the wreck.

I served for some years in the firm's 2,291-ton full-rigged ship *Leyland Brothers*.

— F. Rhodes.

Rockhampton, Queensland



All that was left of the S.S. *Speke* as featured in the December 1950 edition of Australian Geographics' *WALKABOUT* magazine.

## The Speke Figurehead

From *WALKABOUT*, February 1st, 1951.

Regarding the figure-head of the wrecked S.S. *Speke*, depicted and described in *Walkabout* December, 1950, as "The head of a golden-haired young woman with cherry-red lips, blue eyes, and pink cheeks," which is fixed to the Band Rotunda at Cowes, Phillip Island, Victoria, it would be interesting to know if this figure has been incorrectly "made up" with this colouring and thus mistaken for the form of a woman.

When examined more carefully it will be found to represent the head of an eminent African explorer – John Canning Speke (1827-1864) who discovered the source of the River Nile and was the first European to cross Central Africa. He was born in Somersetshire, and entered the Indian army when 17 years of age and became a soldier, naturalist, and sportsman of repute. When exploring with Captain Burton they became separated by Burton's illness and Speke pressed on without him. A dispute arose later about the discovery of the real source of the Nile.

A public discussion was arranged, but upon the day it was to take place Speke accidentally shot himself when crossing a fence with his loaded gun while out shooting.

This face if examined closely will be found too masculine for a woman. The long hair – common at that time – has probably led to the mistaken colouring. If it is a carving of this great English explorer it is of greater historical value and interest, and might well be re-painted.

—Minard F. Crommelin

Pearl Beach, N.S.W.

From *WALKABOUT*, May 1st, 1951.

Sir,

In your February issue, Minard F. Crommelin discourses of the wreck of the ship *Speke*, which took place on the southern coast of Phillip Island, Vic., in 1906, and suggests that the figurehead now mounted on the Cowes bandstand is that of a man (an African explorer) rather than a woman, as described in *Walkabout* of December last. The facts prove Minard F. Crommelin entirely wrong in her surmise. A local newspaper article contributed a few years later by a man who was on the scene at the time of the wreck states: "She carried a figurehead nine feet four inches long, beautifully carved in wood, of a lady with a flowing white dress with blue

cuffs and collar, and carrying a large bunch of daffodils." Mr W. Kennon, still resident on Phillip Island, and who purchased the wreck from the underwriters and was responsible for the preservation of the figurehead until reconditioned some years ago, states that the ship sank in deep water and within about week drifted ashore into Kitty Miller Bay. It was much buffeted by rough weather and soon broke up, including the figurehead, though the portion of the bow which is still visible on the beach bears traces of the foundation of the "flowing robes." The base upon which the headpiece is now mounted is that portion of the figurehead which portrays the leaves of the daffodils, and these are plainly discernible on the photograph published in the December issue of *Walkabout*.

Another interesting relic of the *Speke* is its bell, which calls the faithful to worship at the Cowes Presbyterian Church.

—T. H. Monger

Cowes, Phillip Island.



The wreck of the S.S. *Speke*. Photograph of an original painting by W. Edgar of the wreck. Part of the Malcolm Brodie shipping collection. Source: State Library of Victoria.

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