

The Western Port Times

GRANTVILLE & DISTRICTS

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FREE

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This magazine has been introduced as a rebirth of the original Western Port Times, published in Grantville from 1898 until 1908, by T. C. Monger, and from 1908 to August 1910 by the Sullivan Brothers, at which date the premise was destroyed in a fire and everything lost.

Publication never resumed and the land eventually became the site of the Grantville Primary School and today is the local council's Transaction Centre.

In its prime, 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.

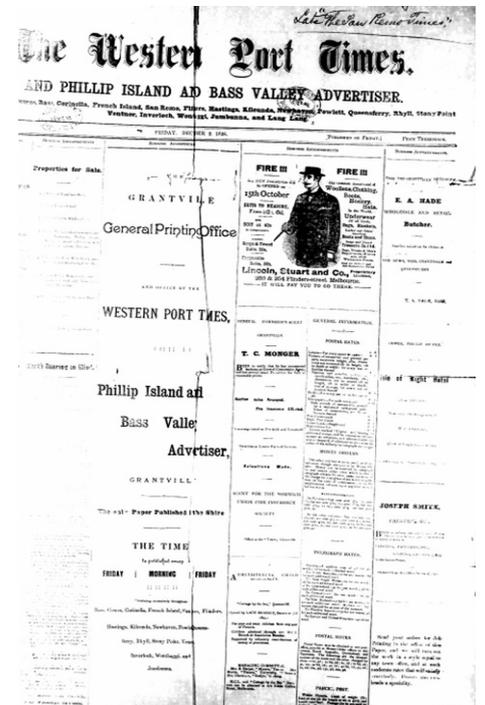
The modern Western Port Times is produced in association with The Waterline News, for the U3A Local History Group, based in Grantville.

The Western Port Times is a creative exercise to show-case the history of Grantville, in particular, and the surrounding area, in general, complementing the group's website.

History of Korumburra

In 1929, the *Weekly Times* ran a series of long articles on the history of various towns around Victoria. This piece was originally a two-parter. This is the first half of the original part one.

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www.grantvillehistory.com.au

U3A BASS VALLEY
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Local History Group



Email: leader@grantvillehistory.com.au

Check out the website and subscribe FREE – www.grantvillehistory.com.au

Links to other sites

Group member and Grantville local, Clive Budd, who is also the webmaster for the Bass Valley Historical Society website (www.bassvalleyhistoricalsociety.com.au) has started a list of links to other historical Associations which might interest you.

If you know of any we should add to the list, please do not hesitate to let us know:

Email: Geoff_Guilfoyle@aanet.com.au

Historical Group Links

Bass Valley Historical Society:

<https://bassvalleyhistoricalsociety.com.au>

Grantville History:

grantvillehistory.com.au

Inverloch Historical Society:

cv.vic.gov.au/organisations/inverloch-historical-society/

Also: <http://inverlochhistory.com/>

Koo-Wee-Rup Swamp Historical Society:

kooweerupswamphistory.blogspot.com.au/

Korumburra & District Historical Society:

Janet Wilson 5657 2267 or PO Bo 293

Korumburra 3950

Lang Lang and District Historical Society:

langlang.net/historical.html

Leongatha and district Historical society:

leongathahistory.org.au

National Library of Australia Trove:

trove.nla.gov.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

State Library of Victoria:

slv.vic.gov.au/

Western Port Historical Society Inc.:

hwphs.org.au/

Wonthagi Historical Society:

wonthagihistoricalociety.org.au/



Grantville General Store, 1932.

Grantville 3984 & District History

Produced by the
U3A Local
History Group



WANTED

ANY INFORMATION, MEMORIES AND PHOTOS

Grantville (Points of historical interest)

Hotels - (Grantville Hotel & Prince Of Wales), Cemetery Pier (Old & New), Saw mills & tramways - (Brazier Mill etc.), Primary Schools (various iterations) Western Port Times (1896-1910) Mechanics Institute (local hall), Drive-in theatre General stores (esp. Wheatley's store) Anti-erosion barrier (1970's? rebuilt 1980s?) Cobb & Co coach service (terminated Grantville extended to Bass for a time), Grantville Racing Club Grantville Rifle Club, Racecourse (1896? To 1920s?) Site, date and type of 1880s to 1900s businesses Agricultural shows (various)

Queensferry (Points of historical interest)

The Victoria Hotel (where and when was it?), Piers Beach 'coolstore/wine cellar' Post Office and general store location Race track & agricultural shows The Great Victoria Colliery & tram line to Queensferry

The Gurdies (Points of historical interest)

Primary school (at St. Helliers). DonMix Quarry (Donohue Brothers, 1958).- Now 'puddling' station, Blackney's garage (1950s - 1960s?) Caravan Park (closed 1980s)

Kernot (Points of historical interest)

Kernot Railway Station & Shier Road trestle bridge General Store

Almurta (Points of historical interest)

Primary schools (3?), Candowie Reservoir John Paul's general store Butter Factory (1896-1910), Railway Station, Post Office (closed 1960s)

Glen Forbes (Points of historical interest)

General Store School Railway Station, Cheese Factory, Saw Mills, Church Hall

The Bass Valley U3A Local History Group are still 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.

If you have something you would like to share:
Email: Geoff_Guilfoyle@aanet.com.au

THE WESTERN PORT TIMES

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Geoff_Guilfoyle@aanet.com.au

I'd Love To Know!

Every now and then when perusing the newspapers of a century ago you come across a snippet, paragraph or short piece which pulls you up short and has you saying to yourself, "I'd love to know the story behind this!" The trouble is, you most likely never will, the facts being buried with the passing of the participants and of the decades.

The titular 'ghost' in the first piece is possibly a Councillor or ex-Councillor for the Corinella riding who has in some way earned the ire of *The Western Port Times*. A hint as to what this might be is found in item ten in the *From the Original* column (right).

From *The Western Port Times*, 24 June 1904

The Corinella Ghost

(contributed)

On Friday the 1st July at 2 p.m. the well known and better hated Corinella ghost will make his last public appearance. He has been cited to appear before the highly incensed ratepayers of Corinella, to state why he has for many years proved an unmitigated nuisance to them, and why he should not be for ever extinguished. Representatives of the Riding who are acquainted with his whole history will be there to prosecute, and a high and joyous time is anticipated. All ratepayers of Corinella are cordially invited to see the last act of this comedy, and are promised a few interesting side shows as well.

From *KooWeeRup Sun and Lang Lang Guardian*, 10 April 1924

Public Notice

I give an unqualified denial to statements being made that I was arrested on March 18 last. Any persons repeating same will render themselves liable to legal action.

T. F. Nestor, KooWeeRup.

From *Lang Lang Guardian*, 18 November 1914

A Letter Of Thanks

To Mr L. G. Withers, who is share dairying with Mr P. Kennedy at the Gurdies, who did succeed in plugging up my artesian bore on Friday last, thereby stopping the flow of water to my waterholes, where he has been watering 30 or 40 cows lately, and I have now drawn the pipes, and let the well fall in. This work has taken Mr Withers two months to complete, and I thank him.

Geo. Bonney

November 16th.

Grantville.

From the Original

First published in *The Western Port Times* on 24 June 1904

LOCAL AND GENERAL NEWS

The Rev. Father Parker will hold Mass at Powlett next Sunday morning at 11 a.m.

Church of England services will be held on Sunday next as follows:—San Remo 11 p.m.; and Bass 3 p.m.

The Methodist service for Sunday next are as follows:—Bridge Creek 11 a.m., Mr Walker; Kilcunda 3 p.m., Mr Peters; St. Helier 11.30 a.m., Almurta 2.30 p.m., Lang Lang 7.30 p.m. Rev. B.E. Williams.

The Bass Hall Committee will hold a Progressive Euchre Party on July 8th.

The Grantville monthly market will be held in the Corporation yards tomorrow.

On Wednesday of last week a son of Mr W. Smith, aged 11 years, died at his parents residence, Rhyll, Phillip Island.

The Archies Creek Building and Investment Co. Ltd. intend holding a Ball on Friday night next, in aid of the piano fund.

A Concert and Ball will be held to-night in the Queen Victoria Hall, Bass, and should the night be fine a good attendance is expected.

We direct attention to the notice in our columns from The Sun Acetylene Gas Company calling for applications for local agents for their generators.

The President of the Shire has convened a meeting to be held in the Grantville Hall on Friday July 1st, to consider the financial position of the Corinella Riding.

J. M. Peck and Sons, in conjunction with Alex Scott and Co., will sell 140 head of cattle for Mr Joseph Hoddinott, at the Grantville Municipal Market to-morrow.

The Shire of Phillip Island and Woolamai advertise that the council is compelled to enforce payment of interest on rates not paid within six months after they became due.

The Rev. J.G. Swan, of Hastings, whilst proceeding to Flinders on Saturday fell from his bicycle. The machine skidded after striking a stone, the rider was thrown and dislocated his shoulder.

SHIPPING

The s.s. Ellen arrived at Grantville and Queensferry on Friday afternoon last, and left again for Melbourne by the same tide.

The Little Angelina arrived from Melbourne, at Grantville, on Monday evening, and on Wednesday morning left for Bass Landing.

The Bass River Saw-Mills

From the *Illustrated Adelaide News*, Thursday 1 March 1877

(Re-paragraphed for the sake of clarity)

Our illustration of the Bass River Steam Saw-mills, near the Bass River, Queensferry, Western Port, belonging to Messrs. Crump & Grant, is from a photograph by F. Kruger, of Preston. For romantic scenery the site is unsurpassed.

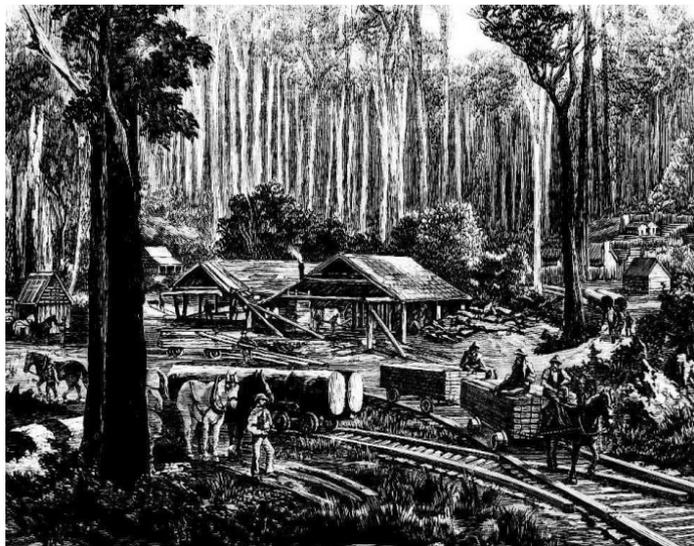
It lies in a basin at the foot of the ranges, which are thickly timbered with blue-gums, many of them being over 200 feet high. In the gullies are numbers of magnificent ferns, several of which are over 30 feet high.

The timber is of excellent quality, and has been used in New Zealand and this colony, and some is now being sent to Melbourne for repairs to the Queen's Wharf. The amount of timber produced per week at the mills averages about 30,000 superficial feet.

It is conveyed to the Queensferry Jetty, whence it is shipped to its destination by a tramway some four and a half miles in length. The number of men employed at the mills in various capacities is about 30.

Most of them are married, and of course mess at home. The single men are provided for by a resident caterer, who, for 14s. a week, supplies them with three daily meals, of which tea, bread, and salt meat are the staple. They have thus a good margin out of their wages (£2 to £3 a week) for clothing, sundries, and, if desired, saving.

Kangaroos, opossums, wallabies, and hares – to say nothing of pigeons and snipe – are very plentiful in the Bass district, and as most of the men are owners of horses, dogs, or guns (all three of which are easily borrowed), they have every facility for the enjoyment in their leisure time of the pleasures of the chase.



The bay also affords capital swan and duck shooting. The Bass River – distant about half a mile from the mill, and easily approachable by the tramway leading from thence to Queensferry – is full of fish, the best of which is the blackfish, weighing from four to six pounds, and in appearance something between a cod and a trout. There is thus plenty of employment for the angler, as well as the sportsman.

On the whole, if to live in a sylvan paradise, to be well housed, well paid, well found, and not overworked, and in addition, to have no lack of healthy sports and pastimes, may claim to be ranked amongst the good things of life, the men employed on the mills referred to can hardly be considered badly off.

His First Married Couple

From the *West Gippsland Gazette*, Tuesday 5 July 1927

An interesting letter, which gave the Rev. Henry Howard much pleasure, was received by him last week. It came from Mr. C. T. White, of Grantville, and read thus:

“Dear Mr. Howard.— Seeing your name in Saturday’s paper as being on a visit to Gippsland, I thought I would drop you a few lines reminding you of the first couple you married. It was at a small place called Fern Hill, and you rode from Warragul to perform it, on the 14th July, 1881. My wife and I are still living here, enjoying fairly good health. We have a family of eight – 5 girls and 3 boys. All are alive and married, and all doing fairly well. Most of them are on the land, and four of them are in the district. One boy, the youngest, served his country throughout the war, and although three times wounded, came back to us, and is now on the farm. We are happy, and although rather lonely at times after such a houseful, we thought it would be nice for you to hear your first marriage was a success. We are very pleased to see you have been such a success in your ministry, and have risen to such a high position, and trust you will still have many years to enjoy it. My wife and I trust you will enjoy your holiday, and go back to your labours a new man. We should be very pleased to have a few lines from you, and we would treasure it greatly.”

[Editor’s note: C. T. White is almost certainly Culmer Thomas White, who died in May 1938 at Wonthaggi at the age of 79].

No Coal Here

Excerpt from the *Illustrated Adelaide Post's* 14 July 1868 report on the annual Geological Survey of Victoria for 1867.

(Re-paragraphed for the sake of clarity).

After having carefully, and with more or less minuteness, examined every district in which the coal rocks occur, I have most unwillingly been forced to the conclusion that no extensive permanent and profitable workable coal seams exist in Victoria; and the numerous shafts and bores that have now been sunk in the several districts without cutting workable seams tend most strongly to confirm the correctness of this view.

There are, however, many thin seams of fair quality, that will doubtless some day be profitably extracted for local use. The most promising are those on the coast at Cape Patterson. Having recently (9th October) reported on this field, I have nothing to add to what was then stated respecting it.

The bore in progress at Anderson's Inlet, when the last account was received – 14th January, 1868 – had reached a depth of 408ft.; the indications were unchanged, and no coal had been cut.

At Griffith's Point, the rods are fixed in the bore at a depth of 857 ft., and the contractor had not succeeded in lifting them.

The Corinella Company are now having a bore put down to test their ground; when the last accounts were received, it had reached a depth of 130ft., and no coal had been cut.

The Queensferry Company have, I understand, temporarily suspended their operations, and there is, in my opinion, very little probability of success attending them if resumed.

In August last it was reported that a new seam, 3ft. thick, had been discovered near Kilcunda and the Sandy Waterhole. It has long been known, and is indicated on the geological map of the district. I examined it in 1853, and then considered it of no economic value, both on account of its apparently small and variable thickness, and its inaccessible position. In November last I wrote to Mr. Anderson, who lives in the neighbourhood, requesting some information respecting it. The following are extracts from his letter, dated 13th November, received in reply:—

The seam, where exposed, is some 20ft. from the top of the cliff. The discoverer, James Carew, went down to it in my presence and brought up a specimen; it is of good quality, free from shale, and burns well. He says the thickness of the seam there is 2ft. 2in.; he

also stated to me he knows of another outcrop of the same or some other seam, half a mile inland, where it is 2ft. 6in. thick. I again visited the coal seam yesterday, along with my brother; he went down to the outcrop; he was not provided with the means of measuring the seam, but he says the statements as to thickness are correct. The discoverer also states he has traced the seam considerable distance along the cliff; it is covered with a foot of earth, and does not show, except where exposed for a few feet by working.

On the 21st November, Mr. Brandrick, late manager of the Queensferry Coal Company, examined the seam, and sent me the following information respecting it:—

I visited the coal seam on Thursday, and measured it at five different places, 3ft. apart. The seam is 24ft. from the surface, and about 40ft. from the bottom of the cliff, and dips inland. It is bare for about 12ft. At the east end it measures 2ft. 2in.; at 3ft. west from that, 2ft. 2in.; at 6ft., 2ft.; at 9ft, 1ft. 8in.; and at 12ft, 1ft. 8in. It is of good quality, hard and close, and burns well. I think it will get a little thinner as it runs deeper, though I may be mistaken. The seam crops out about a mile along the coast east.

On the 20th December, Mr. Brandrick wrote, stating he was about to sink a shaft on the ground, and that he was prepared to spend L50 to L100 to prove it, and that he would commence operations on the 6th January. He further says:—

But I fear that will be insufficient to do it effectually – that is, to sink a shaft and drive to test it, if it runs uniform or not, for any distance. Perhaps you will be good enough to recommend me to the hon. the Minister of Mines for Government aid on the same conditions as others, should I make application for the same.

From the foregoing information, I see no reason at present to change the opinion I formed of this seam in 1853.

[Editor's note: The geologist, Mr Selwyn, wasn't far from the truth in his pessimistic conclusions, at least in regard to south-west Gippsland given the number of coal-mining ventures that ended in bankruptcy or disappointment, and even the State Coal Mine at Wonthaggi spent much of its existence not paying its way, with the mines at Kilcunda providing a living rather than a fortune].

The Corinella Coal-Field

A Visit To Western Port Bay

From Our Special Correspondent

First published in *The Argus*, 24 April 1867

(Re-paragraphed for the sake of clarity)

[Note: the 'Deep Creek' mentioned is part of the modern-day Grantville].

Western Port Bay, although the scene of the earliest attempt at colonisation in Victoria, is less known and less visited than more remote and inaccessible parts of the colony. Some of the kangarooing parties from Schnapper Point occasionally touch on the western side of the bay, and now and then a zealous sportsman visits Phillip Island in pursuit of his favourite amusement.

But, except to the few parties whom the scanty population attracts to the district on matters of business, the eastern shores of the bay are comparatively speaking a *terra incognita*. Circumstances, however, now promise to bring that district more into notice.

Some years ago seams of coal were discovered cropping out on the Bass River; but it is only within the last month or two that practical efforts have been made to test their value. A company, called the Corinella Coal-mining Company, has been formed, and they are now actively engaged in sinking shafts, with the view of ascertaining the nature and extent of the coal-field.

We formed one of a party who at the end of last week visited the scene of these operations. Although Corinella is situated within sixty or sixty-five miles of Melbourne, the access to it is by no means easy, and involves a moderate share of the difficulties and hardships which usually attend travelling in the bush.

The journey may be made by Cranbourne, but the road, or rather track, is, we believe, far from good, although it obviates the necessity of performing any part of the journey by water.

The more common route is by Mordialloc, Frankston, and Hastings, and it was the one which our party followed. Starting from Melbourne in the afternoon of Thursday, after a somewhat tedious drive, we reached the village of Hastings about three o'clock on the following morning.

With considerable difficulty, and chiefly by the assistance of a strong volume of concerted music, we roused the landlord of the "Bayview Hotel," and were provided with such comfort and accommodation as a bush inn usually affords.

The village of Hastings, situated on the north-western point of Western Port Bay,

consists simply of a few straggling huts. It contains a population of about fifty souls, who derive their maintenance almost entirely from fishing. The houses are of the poorest description, and when we first saw the village in the early morning, surrounded by the dingy foliage of the Australian woods, and with a long marshy reach of the bay in front, it presented far from a pretty or cheerful appearance.

After a brief sleep and a hurried breakfast, we set sail early on Friday morning in an open boat for the east side of the bay, where the Corinella Coal-field is situated.

We proceeded by the northern side of the large island in Western Port Bay called French Island. Our voyage was somewhat slow and wearisome. The wind was light, and for a considerable part of the way failed us entirely; and the two boatmen who accompanied us took diligent care not to strain their muscles by too much exertion in rowing. The scenery which met our view was not very interesting or enlivening.

On the north side of the bay the coast was only indistinctly visible; and although the green fringe of mangroves which surrounds French Island gave it a somewhat brighter appearance, the background revealed the ordinary monotonous aspect of the Australian bush.

Between four and five o'clock we arrived opposite a small inlet called Deep Creek, where it was our intention to land. The name of Deep Creek is, we presume, meant to be ironical, for at high tide it has only sufficient depth to admit a boat drawing two feet of water. Unfortunately for us, the tide began to recede before we reached the creek, and our boat was left stranded on the mud about 200 yards from the shore.

The mudbanks of Western Port Bay are, we venture to say, extremely peculiar in their character. We have had a tolerable experience of mud – from the genuine London article, compounded of many elements, to the cleanest and most harmless mixture to which the name can be applied; but Western Port mud is entirely different from them all. It is at once the most oozy, the most slimy,

(continues on Page 7)

The Corinella Coal-Field (continued from Page 6)

and the most pestilential compound that we have ever seen. Composed of the weed and all the rubbish which the sea has been for ages washing on the shore, it now consists of a vast mass of soft, decomposing, slimy matter, ugly to look at, horrible to smell, and odious to feel.

In the midst of this pestilential mud bank, cramped up in a small boat, and inhaling an aroma compared with which the odour in Elizabeth-street at ten o'clock at night is delicate, we had to remain for nearly ten hours waiting the return of the tide. It was impossible to wade ashore, because the soft mud would not bear us, and we would at once have sunk for about three feet.

One of the boatmen, tempted by the offer of half-a-crown, succeeded with the assistance of an oar, in getting ashore; but the spectacle which he presented in the yielding mud, was not such as to tempt anyone to follow him.

The night was fortunately clear, but excessively cold, and between a heavy dew falling and stench and cold, we formed one of the most forlorn parties overseen. It may give some idea of the straits to which we were reduced to pass away the time, when it is stated that some of us played whist by the moonlight, till our fingers were no longer able to hold the cards.

The boatman who went ashore kindled a large fire, and the ruddy gleams which shot out from it only stimulated our desire to be within reach of its inspiring warmth. With merciless slowness the tide advanced to relieve us from our position.

A grateful feeling thrilled through us when the water touched the boat, and when at last it floated our craft into the creek, we jumped from it with a sense of gladness, compared to which the sensations on reaching land after the longest sea voyage must be mild indeed. Around the blitzing fire we solaced ourselves with a decoction of tea and brandy, and then, wrapped in our rugs, slept for a few hours.

After an early breakfast we proceeded to walk to the Corinella Coal-field, which was some four or five miles distant. Ascending the high land we obtained an extensive and commanding view of Western Port. The bay may be seen under two aspects, and the one is so different from the other that the spectator can scarcely imagine that he is looking at the same scene. At full tide, it forms a magnificent expanse of water, with two large and a number of smaller islands on its bosom, and although the scene wants

the elements of grandeur, it has a certain picturesque beauty.

At low water "the scenario is changed." Instead of a large sheet of water, long reaches of dark marshy-looking mud banks, with irregular channels of water running through them, meet the view; and the islands, instead of receiving from and giving beauty to a circling expanse of sea, appear like unshapely masses stranded in a sea of mud. The spectacle was altogether a novel and striking one.

After walking through a thick scrub we came on a densely-timbered plain, through which the Bass flows. The stream which is dignified with the name of the Bass River is simply a muddy creek carrying a considerable body of water in the winter, but in summer consisting of little else than a collection of waterholes. The basin of this stream there is every reason to believe contains rich and valuable deposits of coal.

It is now a good many years since the mineral was first discovered, but it is only recently that a determined effort has been made to test the real value of the coal. The coal is seen distinctly cropping on the banks of the river.

It was first observed in the early part of 1859 by Mr. Richard Daintree, of the Geological Survey department; and the fact was communicated to the public by Mr. Selwyn in a letter to this journal. Mr. Selwyn stated:—

"I have much pleasure in informing you that Mr. Richard Daintree, assistant geological surveyor, has discovered what there is every reason to hope is an extensive and valuable coal-field, on the east shore of the Western Port Bay. The coal crops out on the right bank of the River Bass in two seams; the first is three feet thick, and the second four feet four inches, with three feet soft blue shale between them. Seams dip west 25deg., at a point about six to seven miles to the north of Corinella. The country is flat, and there is no impediment to a road or tramway to a shipping-place."

Immediately after this announcement steps were taken by the Government to prove the value of this discovery. A shaft was sunk, but before any result was obtained the party was flooded out. On a second application being made to the Government for assistance to continue operations, a reply was received that there were no more funds available for the purpose. From that time nothing was done until a few months ago, when the Corinella Coal-mining Company was formed, with the object of further prospecting

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The Corinella Coal-Field (continued from Page 7)

the field. A lease of 640 acres was obtained – the land lying partly on both sides of the river, but mostly on the west side; and an application was made to the Government for assistance. The application was supported by the following recommendation from Mr. Selwyn:—

“This company is testing a portion of the Western Port coal formation hitherto untried. The locality presents indications far more favourable than any other, at Griffith’s Point or other places where Government funds have been freely expended. The company is, in fact, opening up the seams discovered by the Geological Survey, 1859; and I should therefore recommend that J. H. Wood (the manager of the company) should be informed that the Government are prepared to supplement the further efforts of the company to the extent of £300, to be paid in the same proportion and on the same conditions as other companies.”

The important element in these conditions is, that for every £2 given by the Government the company are bound to spend £1; so that thus at least £450 will be devoted to the purpose of prospecting the ground. It is only about a month since active operations were commenced on the ground, and already results of a very encouraging nature have been met with.

When we visited the mine on Saturday, five shafts had been sunk, and three were in active operation. Shafts Nos. 1, 2, and 5 are on the north side of the river, and shafts 4 and 3 on the south side. Shaft No. 1 has been sunk from eighteen to twenty feet. It first went through seven feet of sandstone, and then a layer of shale.

The first seam of coal struck was four feet thick, and the second seam two feet ten inches, which, it will be seen, approximate very closely to the measurements given by Mr. Selwyn in the letter announcing the original discovery by Mr. Daintree. There is a parting of shale, of from two to four feet in thickness, between the two seams, which appear not to be even, but somewhat wavy in their course. The bottom of this shaft is ten feet below the bed of the river. The second shaft is situated 120ft. from the No.1 shaft, and has been sunk to a depth of seventy feet.

The large seams of coal have not yet been struck, but small measures have been passed through. The indications in this shaft are considered excellent.

The other shaft on the north side of the river – No.5 – has been driven to a depth of

thirty feet, and has been carried ten feet under the bed of the river. It is about seventy feet distant from No.1 shaft, and the coal formations have just been reached. The third and fourth shafts are in the south side of the river. No.4 is immediately opposite No.1, and is about sixteen feet deep.

Three coal seams have been passed through. The first seam is three feet in thickness, the second four feet eight inches, and the third nine inches.

The coal taken from this shaft is decidedly the best that has yet been found in the mine. The fifth shaft, about 200 feet in distance from No.1, has been sunk to the depth of fifty feet, but the seams have not yet been cut. The seams generally dip in a north-westerly direction, and so far as yet tested as the dip has been followed the quality of the coal has improved.

It is to be borne in mind that all these shafts are sunk for prospecting purposes, and are not to be used for working the mine should it be deemed in the end advisable to open up the coal-field. The main shaft will be sunk at the south-west extremity of the ground; and the promoters have the opinion of Mr. Selwyn that as soon as the seams are struck in Nos.4 and 5 shafts the operations may be commenced. No analysis has yet been made of the coal taken from any of the shafts.

The specimens which have been brought up have been taken from the shafts driven under the bed of the river, where the coal has for countless ages been subject to the action of water, and through which some of its most essential qualities may have been destroyed. The promoters do not think it fair to test the quality of the mine by coal of this character, and have resolved that no analysis shall be made until specimens are brought up from the shafts driven at some distance from the river bed.

At the mine on Saturday we saw some of the pieces of coal burning at a wood fire. The coal caught the flame easily, and appeared to burn well, but of course it would be impossible for us to offer any opinion as to its value as a fuel, or as to the amount of gas it contains.

One thing is certain, that extensive seams of coal run through this district. A block of land to the south-west of the Corinella ground is marked on the geological survey map as containing “rolled fragments of good coal” in the bend of the creek. At one or two other points stretching in a south-

(continues on Page 9)

The Corinella Coal-Field (continued from Page 8)

easterly direction, coal seams of six and eight inches thick are also indicated on the map; but these seams have never been properly examined and the thickness given is more a matter of guess than of accurate measurement. That a large and extensive coal bed runs throughout this district of country, is beyond a doubt and the problem to be solved is, whether it is of a quality that will repay working.

The Corinella Company are now engaged in solving this question; and we trust that they may achieve a result which will not only give a merited reward for their enterprise, but confer a vast boon on the public by increasing the quantity, and thus cheapening the price, of one of the greatest of modern necessities. It deserves to be mentioned, that should the mine prove to be really worth working, it will not be very difficult to find an outlet for the coal.

The ground is situated about three miles and a half from Western Port Bay, of which with little difficulty a tramway could be constructed. The most expensive element in providing a means for removing the coal would be the erection of a pier at the bay. The water is extremely shallow for some distance, and to admit of vessels even of moderate tonnage coming alongside the pier, it would require to be carried out a considerable length. This, however, is a part of the undertaking which would prove but a small drain on the resources of a really valuable coal mine.

Having completed our inspection of the mine, and thus accomplished the main object of our journey, we returned to "Deep Creek," and in the afternoon proceeded down the bay, by the southern end of French Island.

It was our intention to have camped on Philip Island, but a heavy sea rising, partly in consequence of the wind, and partly of the action of the tide, we thought it advisable to run for the nearest point where we could get shelter. We accordingly turned up by the western side of French Island, and landed on a spur of the island, known as Tortoise Head.

Here there was standing what had once been a comfortable little cottage, the residence of the Customs officer. It is now nearly dismantled, but still it afforded us a grateful shelter for the night. On Sunday morning we returned to Hastings; and there, so far as this communication is concerned, our journey must end.

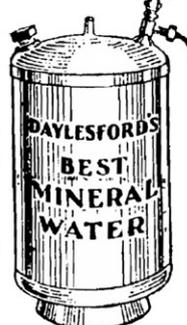
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From *KooWeeRup Sun* and *Lang Lang Guardian*, 8 Dec. 1927

News From Overseas.

RADIUM: HOSPITALS' SOS

Thousands of cancer patients die every year because British hospitals are radium-starved. The problem is one of finance, for radium costs £6,000 to £7,000 a gramme, or £180,000 an ounce. "It is so costly that hospitals cannot afford to buy the amounts they need," the secretary of the Radium Commission says. "If the treatment of cancer is to be continued on its present scale, we need a further twenty grammes of radium, at a cost of £130,000. Only about 8,000 out of approximately 40,000 cancer sufferers are able to have radium treatment because of the limited supplies." In view of the high cost of radium, medical research is investigating the efficiency of high-voltage X-rays as a substitute.

From *KooWeeRup Sun* and *Lang Lang Guardian*, 1 April 1937

The Enigmatic George McGowan

Part Two

by Geoff Guilfoyle

Part One dealt with the legend of George McGowan, how it likely arose, and the early life of the protagonist. We left him in Melbourne in 1887, with a new born son, and about to move to Queensferry. We begin Part Two with the first mention of him in the public record at Queensferry.

In June 1888, the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal* has a G. S. McGowan appointed to the 28-man-strong committee of the Grantville & Jeetho Agricultural Society. As G. S. McGowan is never heard of again but G. A. is, this is clearly the journalist from the paper getting the middle initial wrong. The grave of Samuel Walker McGowan in the Grantville Cemetery (died March 3 1889) is indirect evidence in favour of this.

This raises an important question: why settle at Queensferry? Why not Bendigo or Melbourne?

The Church of the Latter Day Saints, also known as the Mormons, had a number of members who lived in and around Queensferry. If either George or Susan McGowan had Mormon leanings or other ties, that could explain the move.

Or George McGowan made his fortune backing the 1875 Melbourne Cup winner, Wollomai, took it as an omen, and moved to Queensferry on the edge of the Woolamai coal basin. It would explain both his wealth and why he settled at Queensferry.

On the other hand, maybe he just liked the place and saw great potential there.

Back to the legend of George McGowan as recounted by Joseph White:

At one time a large residence was built at Queensferry for a Mr. McGowan, who had a large interest in Broken Hill mines; he was known locally as "the Silver King".

It is a nice little anecdote, but how much truth is in it?

This brings us back to the *Riverine Grazier's* "the Broken Hill district" versus Colin Skidmore's more specific "Broken Hill Silver Mine shares."

Broken Hill Propriety wasn't floated as a company until 1885 and the McGowans were at Queensferry in their posh house by June 1888 – at the latest, and probably earlier.

This seems to discount any BHP shares as the basis for McGowan's wealth. However, not so fast... This scenario is more plausible than it first appears, and its very specificity makes it preferable to the vague accounts

offered by the two newspapers.

It is just possible that George McGowan, being on the spot, so to speak, saw the company's potential and was a very early investor, selling his by now more valuable holdings 12 to 18 months later for a profit. But would this have been enough to constitute a 'competency' given that the spike in the price of shares was not phenomenal? A date later than 1887 would not have done so, for the share price dipped and, in any case, by this time he was Queensferry bound.

Instead of BHP, the shares may have been in a company working the mines at nearby Silverton, and this sale later being confused with shares in the more famous BHP. Similarly, given his long association with Bendigo, he could have disposed of his shares in some obscure but lucrative mining venture there whilst prospecting around Broken Hill, this share sale being later confused with the more famous BHP.

Or maybe McGowan was lucky and in 1883 or 1884 made just enough money prospecting at Silverton or some other place near Broken Hill for it to be later exaggerated. It went from a "competency" to a "silver king" level.

Or some or all of the above could be in some way partly correct.

We'll likely never know the truth of the matter. Though it is almost certain he made money in mining somewhere along the timeline, there is simply currently no decisive evidence as to when, where, in what way and how much.

As for "The Silver King" tag... If there is any truth to it, the reference is likely a sarcastic one, probably coined by someone like George Bonney, and although probably not often used, being memorable, it was remembered and passed into folklore. Or "Old Fred" simply made it up and it was accepted because it fitted the scenario.

Again, who knows? Maybe it was even self-bestowed, though whether it was done so ironically or as a brag we'll never know.

The McGowan family's recorded activities at Queensferry from 1888 to 1895 can be summed up thusly:

On 30th December 1889, Doris Annie McGowan is born at Queensferry.

At the 1891 Grantville and Jeetho Agricultural

(continues on Page 11)

The Enigmatic George... (continued from Page 10)

Society show, G. A. McGowan is recorded as donating £2 2s to J. Canobie (no relation to Obi-Wan), the winner in the *Best Pair Plough Horses* category, with £1 1s going to W. J. Garry for 2nd place.

At the 1892 Grantville show, G. McGowan won second place in the *Polled Angus Cattle – Bull* section and triumphed in the *Best Spring Cart Horse* category.

The following year, 1893, at a meeting in May to discuss getting a railway to the region, G. McGowan signs a petition to the Minister.

A month later, on June 23, Ruby Eugenie McGowan is born at Queensferry.

Later that year, on September 7, a piece in the *Great Southern Advocate* on drains and roads around Queensferry mentions a culvert put in by Mr. McGowan.

1894 has no mention of George McGowan. He does not seem to have participated in that year's Grantville and Jeetho Agricultural Society show, or if he did he won no prize and was not an official.

By the end of 1894 the McGowans have been at Queensferry for around six years. Two conclusions can be tentatively reached about this time period.

Firstly, despite the legend, George McGowan doesn't seem to be royally entertaining either the locals or prominent Melbournians.

More importantly, his interaction with the local community is passive. He is not a reclusive; he is participating, only not in a leadership role, unlike Paul, Lang, Tulloch, Belfrage, Bonney and others. In short, he doesn't have any real local profile.

So if he's not partying and not participating, what is he doing? Fortunately, the answer is provided by the 7 May 1892 edition of *The Australasian*. Their anonymous agricultural reporter paid a visit to the area, accessing the agricultural and farming possibilities. And one of the locals he dropped in on was George McGowan of Queensferry. Here is part of his report under the heading *Mr M'Gowan's Improvements*:

The 40 acres which Mr. M'Gowan has now ready for cropping is magnificent land, and can hardly fail to produce splendid crops of hay, roots, and grass. He has also planted seven acres of orchard, in which all the trees are very promising. Mr. M'Gowan owns about 320 acres of land at Queensferry, and he rents another block of similar size on the Blue Ranges. He grazes 100 head of cattle,

and intends to establish a stud flock of South Down sheep, which seem to be well adapted to this part of the country.

This sounds impressive; however...

Mr. M'Gowan had noticed, wherever the scrub was cleared and the water taken off, that the growth of clover was enormous, proving that the land was fertile and only wanted reclaiming to make it equal to the richest soils in the colony. He was so satisfied on this point that he has recently improved 70 acres, by clearing the scrub, draining, and fencing. The cost has doubtless been heavy, but the colour and quality of the soil after it has been turned up is sufficient guarantee that the reward is certain.

The key word here is 'cost' and you have to wonder if the return ever exceeded the outlay.

The Queensferry property is divided into sections, and five cottages have been erected thereon – one on each section. These houses are all let, and a portion of land along with them.

The anonymous reporter finishes with: *As may be imagined, all these improvements have made a wonderful difference to Queensferry.*

So, McGowan is a farmer, experimenting with crop combinations and fruit trees, and a married man with a large family. Other than being much richer than most, admittedly a big advantage, he is no different from other farmers in the area.

The part about the property divided into five each with a cabin on it is confusing, but clearly does not include the main house and land, but is rather subsidiary to it, as will be seen shortly.

Which brings us to his house. According to some variations of the legend, but interestingly, not Joseph White, he possessed a two-story one.

Here is a question for you: how many two-storey dwellings were there in the area in the 1890s. If the McGowan house was double-storey, that would likely make it unique to the Grantville/Queensferry area; it would stand out as worthy of comment.

Here is what the anonymous *Australasian* reporter has to say about it: *His own residence and farm buildings are very superior and extensive.*

That's it. Sprawling and excellently built and no doubt finely furnished, but no hint of a second level. If it was two-storey, why doesn't the correspondent mention it?

Secondly, the house is clearly on his farm

(continues on Page 12)

The Enigmatic George ... (continued from Page 11)

and not on the main 'seaside' road of Queensferry called the Esplanade, as some variations of the legend have it. At least, it's not yet there.

There is another report about the house that also fails to mention any second level.

And here's where the legend of George McGowan and fact seem to meet for the first time. Maybe. Again, it is a report from the *Australasian*, this time of 26 January 1895:

On the afternoon of the 13th inst. a fire occurred at Mr. G. A. M'Gowan's residence at Queensferry, Grantville, which resulted in the total destruction of the house and furniture, entailing a loss on the proprietor estimated at about £2,000. At the time of the fire there was no one on the premises, consequently there was nothing saved.

And according to the legend, that's the end of George McGowan, though more implied in White's account than stated. He had nothing left, bankrupted by his extravagance, and he either moved to Grantville and lived on a pension (the Joseph White version) or builds a small cottage and lives out the remainder of his days there (the Lyons view).

The report of the fire says the house was unoccupied at the time. So, contrary to the legend... No party in progress; no wild bacchanal.

The second problem is determining whether the house actually burnt down.

The account in the *Australasian* seems thorough enough. It is the lack of any mention of the fire in other papers that makes it problematic. That nothing appeared in the *Gippsland Times* or *Mornington Standard* is to be expected; their view rarely strayed to the Grantville side of Western Port. While papers such as *The Herald*, *Leader* and *Weekly Times* sometimes carried stories from south Gippsland, that they missed the McGowan fire is excusable.

That *The Age* and *The Argus* also didn't notice it is less easy to explain, especially given that *The Age* recorded the 7-room McNabb's house at Temby Point burning down in 1904, John Tulloch's 7-room residence likewise going up in flame in 1907, and the 13-room Biggar house doing the same in 1909. Yet the McGowan 'mansion'...nothing.

And what of the *Great Southern Advocate* and, especially, the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, a main source for the period? Nothing.

The McGowan's didn't seem to notice the

loss of their grand house either. The 8 February 1895 edition of *The Age*, a month after his mansion supposedly burnt down, reports that McGowan won an award at the Grantville and Jeetho Agricultural Society show in the 'horse stock category.' Mid-year saw him busy with two coal mining companies.

However, there is indirect evidence that it did burn down, but rather than rebuild on the same site, George McGowan had a new house constructed on the Esplanade, presumably putting a manager on the farm while he devoted himself to other matters. This possibility will be briefly looked at later when dealing with his mining activities.

So did the house burn down or not?

Ultimately, it doesn't matter. It was almost certainly insured, so if the McGowans lost money, it wasn't much, though doubtless the loss of all their personal possessions would have hurt. Above all, it was an inconvenience.

But what if it wasn't insured, would losing £2,000 have ruined him? Given his activities over the next five years, he was still wealthier than most around him, so, no.

Is there record of any new house being built? No, which again raises questions as to the fate of the original.

Some versions of the legend have him living the rest of his life in a cabin on his property. He did have five on his sub-properties, and if one of them were not currently let, he could have moved into one of those. Or he could have rented at Grantville, fulfilling the Joseph White version of the legend.

If he did so – either cabin or Grantville, given that he was far from finished financially, it was almost certainly only until a new house was built; again, one unlikely to have been double-storey, but a quality house regardless. Assuming the original did burn down.

Much of George McGowan's activities in 1895 can be categorised as business as usual. He sells 20 cows at the monthly stock auction on 18 September; his daughter, Anise Henrietta, is born at Queensferry on 12 October, and he acts as a steward at the Grantville Races on 30 December. More interesting is the prominent position he takes (and financial exposure he assumes) with two coal mining ventures. Hardly the actions of a financially ruined man – oh, and according to Joseph White citing *The San Remo Times*, George McGowan also owned a yacht called *Daisy*.

(continues on Page 13)

The Enigmatic George ... (continued from Page 12)

In 1896, there is a change in behaviour, and for the first and last time, though in exaggerated form due to numerous retellings, the legend of George McGowan and what actually happened come together in something approaching harmony.

Joseph White again: *He certainly entertained royally, many well-known Melburnians attending his parties and staying for various periods.*

And Colin Skidmore: *...he gained quite a reputation by entertaining royally. Many well-known Melbourne personalities attended his extravagant parties and stayed in Queensferry.*

Finally, Noeline Lyons: *Large extravagant parties were held at his residence and were very well attended.*

George McGowan *did* start to entertain and it is likely that important people not only attended them but may have even stayed with him. However, there was a reason for it; it wasn't just mindless hedonism. It was strategic, calculating and with a goal in mind.

This, at last, brings us to The Glen Alvie Coal Mining Company and the far more consequential Great Victorian Colliery Company, a venture that was to lead to George Alexander McGowan's ruin.

Or did it?

Part Three next month

* * *

**AN INTERESTING ADVICE FOR THE
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Siamo lieti di comunicare Che il 30 Gennaio p.v., in occasione della Fiera di Lang Lang, un nostro funzionario Italiano, Sig. Pietro Baccanello, sarà a Vostra disposizione presso la Mostra David Brown per qualsiasi informazione di carattere tecnico ed agricolo riguardante i macchinari ivi esposti. Interpellateci in Italiano anche presso l'indirizzo sottoindicato.

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History of Korumburra

No.36 OF WEEKLY TIMES SERIES

by Frank Whitcombe

Part 1a

First published in the *Weekly Times*, Saturday 14 September 1929
(Re-paragraphed for the sake of clarity and split into two parts)

Count Strzelecki struggled through the South Gippsland bush in 1840, passing some 14 miles to the northward of Korumburra and Leongatha. In 1860 McDonald's Track was blazed from Tobinyallock to Morwell, a distance of 70 miles, and in the subsequent years of land settlement was availed of as a base line for surveying the 320-acre blocks granted under the 1869 Land Act.

In the great migration to South Gippsland, Poowong on McDonald's Track was the starting point; and the first of the pioneers was James Scott in 1874, who came from Westaway Station at Western Port. The nearest railway station was then at Dandenong, whither all farm produce had to be laboriously carted via Lang Lang and Cranbourne.

The difficulties of road transport were so great that farming pursuits were restricted to the raising of stock – which was able to carry itself to market. Later, when the main Gippsland line was constructed, Drouin was the point to which produce was carried through the forest on dray, sledge, or pack-horse.

Some of the best land in the shire lay around Poowong, where there is a monthly stock market, and connection with the railway at Nyora is now maintained by a regular motor service twice daily. The history of the southern dairy lands, embraced by Alberton and Korumburra shires, is one of heroic struggle and endurance unsurpassed in any portion of the Commonwealth.

The greatest difficulty confronting the pioneers of Poowong and Jeetho, and the whole of the country known as the Strzelecki Ranges, was transport through the almost impenetrable undergrowth in the great timber. There are boles in evidence today, 310ft. in length and 9ft. in diameter, at a distance of 30ft. from their base. The density of the bush was such that during the 50's a party, of which the late George Black, of Tarwin Meadows, was one, was lost at Yannathan for 21 days, and had to kill and eat one of the horses.

Battle With the Bush

A few straggling prospectors occasionally made their way into the wilderness and formed opinions of its value, but it was not until 1877 and 1878 that its possibilities were noticed abroad and talk of its wonderful soil induced selection.

Then there followed a rush of the land-hungry, struggling day after day through mud and swamp and tall trees, impeded by the hazel musk and blanket-wood scrub, head-high bracken, and tangled wiregrass and prickly mimosa, their clothes torn by the wait-a-bit thorns and their hands and faces cut by the sword grass. Although the country for the most part was rangy and broken, little progress could be made except along the gullies.

In places the hills rose abruptly above the creek levels; the growth was prolific saplings numbering 400 and over to the acre, with interlacing supplejacks and scrub barring the way and having to be slashed through.

McDonald's Track above alluded to, and, at this epoch, much overgrown, and in places indistinguishable from the rest of the forest, served the selectors as far as Drouin, whence a track winding its way among interminable obstacles afforded passage for packhorses, and those who followed them wading knee-deep through the mire to Poowong.

Here and there along the route would be a peg driven in by surveyors at the corner of some selection, and one by one the party to whom its number had been allotted would halt and let his fellow travellers pass on while he sought to find some means of getting on to his land, and clear sufficient space for the first camp, sufficient unto the day was the solitude thereof, and the battle with the bush lay all before him, with its years of struggle and failure or fortune awaiting him in the future.

In the Seventies

Amongst the early settlers around Korumburra we find the names of Christopher Mackey, Andrew Mackay, Christopher and James Yorath, and John and

(continues on Page 15)

History of Korumburra (continued from Page 14)

Wyndham Thomas. J. A. Wallace-Dunlop, from Brighton, selected near James Scott in 1874, and married Miss Fanny Mawbey, who had pegged out adjoining land. Mr Dunlop was a skilled veterinary surgeon, greatly availed of by his neighbors.

Another early pioneer was H. Littledike, who became a member of the Buln Buln Shire Council, and established a bacon-curing factory on his land. He was killed in his paddock by a falling branch.

David Ferrier selected alongside Littledike and Dunlop, and developed a packhorse-carrying business.

Cr. Caleb Burchett, representative of the Poowong district in the Buln Buln Shire Council, then held at Drouin, took an active part in the erection of a church for the use of all denominations, as well as interesting himself in the Athenaeum erected in Poowong.

Mr and Mrs Horsley, from Maldon, selected close to the Poowong township, the former being the first blacksmith and the latter first postmistress, from 1877 to 1886.

Miss M. Gardner, Robert J. Murdoch, and Cr. Walter Foreman are remembered for their efforts to secure railway communication.

J. Salmon (Poowong) and Thomas Adkins (Strzelecki) and James Scott were early storekeepers.

Other settlers in 1876 were J. McCord and George Henry, who opened up a track from Poowong across the Bass and contracted for the council; also Cook brothers and Duncan McTavish. Mr C. Cook was for 25 years in charge of the State school.

T. G. Scott acquired J. Beckett's block. Walter Grieve selected adjoining land. Robert, Alice, and Louisa Motton in 1876 selected along McDonald's Track. Cr. C. R. Mair, J.P., first president of in the shire council elected in 1877.

[obscured line but likely concerns Robert Oliphant Timms, born around 1847, Heidelberg, who purchased allotment CA16, Parish of Poowong] purchase in 1882, married Miss Margaret Mickle Lyall, the first white child born in the Westernport district, at Tooradin in 1853.

Other selectors were Cr. William Treadwell (1880), R. Gregg (1879), A. Gillan (1885), Thomas Houlghan (1876, a successful grazier), David Sullivan, and Batty Stewart.

A Gallant Band

Amongst other early members of the gallant band of South Gippsland's Forlorn

Hope of Foresters were:— T. J. Coverdale, Albert Nicholas, T. W. Horsley, H. Dowell (Woodleigh), J. Eccles, A. C. Groom, W. M. Elliott, W. C. Thomas, W. Johnstone, M. Halford, the Elms family (Jumbunna East), J. and E. C. N. Halford (Kongwak), W. J. Williams (Kongwak), R. S. B. Young, Biggars (Woodleigh), Miss E. Elms (Moyarra), William Watson (Mirboo North), Benjamin Brett (Red Bluff), James Baker (Lang Lang), L. C. Holmes, H. Staben, W. Langham, P. F. Murphy, F. Olsen, Hugh Campbell, Ure and Son, Misses B. and M. McLean, Miss Leys, the Wilson family (Jeetho), the Bee and Gillan families, W. Moore, J. Langham, J. Rainbow, Miss F. Finn, A. McLean, C. L. Hansen, Rev. James Smith, E. F. Williamson, Mrs M. G. Johnson, P. H. Walkinson, H. Hewitt, C. Blew and Kewish (Whitelaw), the Patterson Brothers, W. Blake, Peter Shingler and Ernest Smith (Coal Creek), Frank Dodd (Tarwin River), A. Gillan, Captain Fuller and family (Bena), W. H. C. Holmes. A. R. Smith (Loch), John Glew, of Cora Lynn (Jumbunna East), W. T. Horner (Loch), M. Hansen (Poowong East), R. J. Fuller (Grantville), J. A. Black (Boolarra), D. McLeod (Poowong), A. W. Elms (Jumbunna), W. J. Western (Korumburra), G. Matheson (Jumbunna East), Archie Kennedy (Poowong), R. N. Scott (Grantville), W. J. Williams (Kongwak), W. Rainbow (Jumbunna East), W. McKenzie McHarg (Jumbunna East).

In 1882 and 1883 the original settlers around Kardella were Duncan Clerk, A. M. K. Salmon, George McKay, John and Stephen Ritchie, Robert Cornall, Miss J. Mackay, Thomas Nicholson, George and John Western, M. Holland, James and John Brydon, A. Gardner, John and William Twyford, Hugh Ross, Percy Williams, Thomas Rowe, E. Sheepway (Grantville), R. J. Fuller family.

Mr J. Lardner, now over 90 years of age, and living in retirement at Leongatha, surveyed many of the early settlers' blocks, and cut Lardner's Track, which has been named after him.

Those were the days of high freight, £60 a ton being charged to the nearest branching-off track to a man's selection. To avoid these prohibitive prices from Melbourne, an outlet was sought at Anderson's Inlet, but necessitating the traverse of swamps and erection of camping platforms by decking parallel logs with saplings cut off above mud and water level.

(continues on Page 16)

History of Korumburra (continued from Page 15)

The Explorers

The explorers (for such were all the earliest settlers), carrying their swags, were unable to provide themselves with more than scanty rations, frequently running short, and thankful when, having established direction, they were able to develop a bridle track and make progress across the spurs of the hills.

These bridle tracks were utilised at first by packhorses, and then as sledge tracks, which at a later date the shire council widened into dray roads, along which it became possible to travel a mile a day. Such were the avenues through the great forest of South Gippsland along which the selectors groped their way, with salt beef and flour and implements, in the days of clearing and developing the present properties of our southern dairy land.

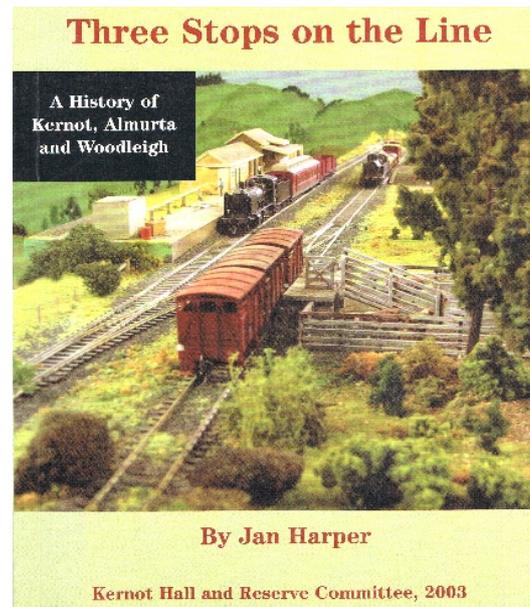
The advance guard of invading settlers were harassed by dingoes upon the appearance of their first sheep, plagued with caterpillars in [obscured word] and pleuro amongst their stock; but that was later, and they dared and lived through the devastating fires, which took heavy toll on all sides, but which in after years looked back upon, contributed to their advancement.

Packhorses prevailed until 1879 along the track from Lang Lang to Poowong, when a coach road was constructed from Drouin to Poowong. Whitelaw had cut a pack track in 1873-74 from Foster to Mt. Lyell, which passed through Korumburra, but the gold mines at Foster had been deserted, and it was not used except by Lardner as a base for his surveys.

The district grew in spite of bad communication between 1874 and 1890, and when the railway line from Dandenong to Korumburra was opened in 1891 many of the transport difficulties disappeared, and the development of the coal-mining and dairying industries became possible.

The South Gippsland coal measures cover 2100 square miles, but payable seams appear to be confined within a belt of 50 miles by 10 miles, between Kilcunda and Morwell. The Korumburra district, as a result of systematic boring, is estimated to have 10,000,000 tons of available coal for domestic use and power provision.

(Part 1b next issue)



Written by Jan Harper for the Kernot Hall and Reserve Committee in 2003 the book is still relevant, perhaps even more so given the recent surge in interest in local history.

Kernot, Woodleigh and Almurta came into their own during the railway era, from 1910 to 1978. Settled from 1886 onwards, life changed as milk from the dairy farms and stock raised on properties were linked with markets through the silver thread of the new railway line. Communities expanded as railway personnel, and the infrastructure they attracted, boosted the settlements.

While this history reflects that of Gippsland as a whole, it is unique to the area in drawing our personal lives and juxtaposing them with larger social and economic trends.

Copies are available from The Western Port Times. \$30.00 plus postage, or free local delivery.

Email: Geoff_Guilfoyle@aanet.com.au

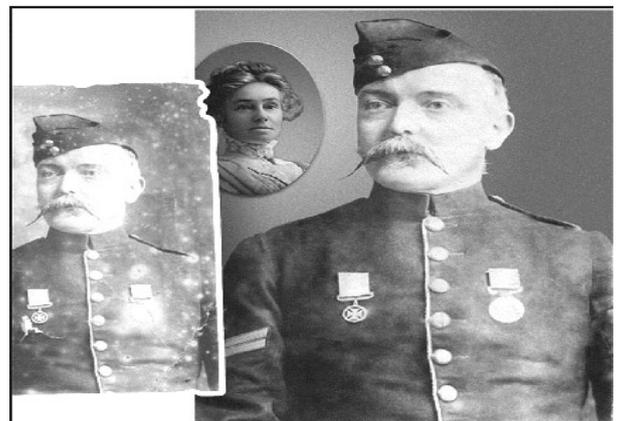


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