

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.

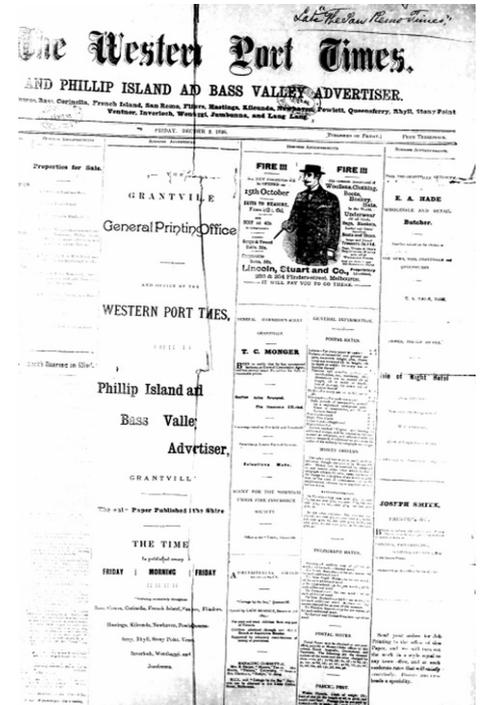
The modern Western Port Times is produced in association with The Waterline News, for the U3A Local History Group, based in Grantville.

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 by Frank Whitcombe, originally a two-parter, has been broken into four. This is the second 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

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@aonet.com.au

Historical Group Links

Bass Valley Historical Society:

<http://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@aonet.com.au

THE WESTERN PORT TIMES

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Geoff_Guilfoyle@aonet.com.au

Long Live The King!

Coronation Festivities.

Grantville Celebrations.

From *The Western Port Times*, 13 June 1902

On Monday evening a public meeting was held in the Grantville Hall for the purpose of making arrangements for celebrating King Edward's Coronation on June 26th.

Mr J. T. Paul was voted to the chair, Mr D. Bonney was appointed secretary and Mr A. Paul Treasurer.

On motion of Messrs J. March and D. George, that the Coronation Festivities take the form of Sports, Tea and Fireworks for the children, and a social in the evening for the adults in the Grantville Hall, all welcome.—Carried.

On motion of Messrs J. March and G. Hutchinson, a committee of those present be elected as follows:—Messrs J. T. Paul, F. Storey, J. March, H. Rowland, D. George, J. Hade, J. Paul, G. Hutchinson, W. Paul, Stephenson and, C. Hunt.—Carried.

On motion of Messrs Rowland and A. Paul, that the fireworks &c, be held in Mr George's paddock and the Sports in Mr Paul's paddock at the side of the Hall.—Carried.

On motion of Messrs Paul and J. Hade, that subscription lists be drawn up and left with the following gentlemen to collect:—Messrs J. T. Paul, J. Smith, J. Hade, J. Gray, J. March, J. Paul and C. Hunt.—Carried.

The secretary was instructed to write to the Captain of Grantville Rifle Club, asking the members to be present to fire a volley, also write to the Head Teachers of the Corinella, Bass and St Helier State Schools, to inquire if there are any enjoyments for the children on Coronation Day.

The meeting then adjourned until Monday next.

Coronation Day

From *The Western Port Times*, 8 August 1902

Coronation festivities will be held at Grantville and San Remo on Monday next 11th inst.

Grantville will hold a picnic and sports, for the children, in the afternoon; a minstrel circle and concert in the evening and an all night dance to wind up, all are invited free.

At San Remo a programme is being formed for the day and evening also amusements and treats for the children.

The Melbourne celebrations will not be as elaborate as usual.

Coronation Festivities

From *The Western Port Times*, 15 August 1902

King Edward's Coronation was kept up on Monday at Grantville, in form of, tea in the afternoon and a Concert and Ball at night. About half past four, tea was laid in the Hall and was done justice to by all in attendance, after this Coronation medals were presented to children and others.

At 8 o'clock, the concert was operated by a Fairy Cantata, entitled "Fairy Voices," twelve girls, viz:—Misses G. and I. Oelrich, M. and N. Beck, E. and B. Gray, E. and S. White, L. Hardingham, R. Smith, J. Williams and D. Stevenson, all of whom were dressed in White, and divided into three sections, one with red wreaths and wands, another with white, and the third with blue. Miss Hunt, who got them together, deserves great praise [sic] for the way everything was carried out.

During the process of the cantata, several limelights were thrown on it. Duets and songs were sung, and three dialogues given by Corinella children, coached by Miss Price, schoolmistress. The second part consisted of a circle of 9 minstrels, namely, Messrs C. Hunt, Martin (bones), C. Hardingham, B. March (tamborines), T. White (centremen), and Storey, T. Dealing, J. Smith and L. March, each contributed a song, all of which were very good, and with their questions, answers, etc. kept the audience in a roar of laughter throughout...

Mr G. March played all the accompaniments for the minstrels. The Hall was crowded and the concert terminated with the audience and performers singing "God Save the King".

The Concert was worthy of mention, it being one of the best held in Grantville for some time, and those who took part in the performance [sic] deserve credit.

After the Concert the Hall was cleared for dancing, to which a great number stayed, and kept it up until an early hour. At half past one refreshments were handed round. Music was supplied by the company.



Edward VII in coronation robes, 9 August 1902

Battling the Elements

As farmers everywhere and at all times are aware, impersonal nature is often the biggest threat to, not only prosperity, but sometimes life as well as these five reports from the 1870s to the 1920s show; and remember, back then, there was little in the way of emergency services, especially in the bush.

From *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, 12 February 1879

Bass

The most disastrous bush-fires ever known in this district have been raging fiercely for the last week, and much valuable property has been destroyed. Mr E. Beck's house at the Bass was reduced to a heap of ashes in half-an-hour, the fire coming from Settlement Point through Mr. Murphy's Blackwood Park at a great rate, and firing the house before help could be obtained. Blackwood Park is also a black plain, instead of the best grassed paddock in the district, and Mr. Murphy estimates his loss at fully £200, as he has over 100 fat bullocks on the ground. Mr. J. Wilkie's house at Grantville is, I am given to understand, burnt to the ground, and Mr. Abbott at Bridge Creek has lost everything – house, barn, crop (already threshed), and fencing – literally leaving him with what he stood in to start with. Nearly all the selectors at the Powlett and Bridge Creeks have fared very badly, their fences being nearly all consumed. Mr. Turnbull and Mr. Anderson are the principal losers in grass and fences as I am told that Mr. Turnbull has had over four miles of fencing, and about 2000 acres of grass destroyed. Mr. Anderson had his splendid fences burnt through in many places, and has lost about 3000 acres of grass. On the whole, nearly every one has lost more or less, and it is to be hoped that rain will soon come as the cattle are very badly off for water. Mr R. Muldoon, of Bass, lost his thoroughbred equine "Dangerous" last week, through being overheated. The horse will be a loss to the district, as his progeny were very fast.

From the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, 16 February 1887, page 3

From our own Correspondent.

...The caterpillar plague has been severely felt in this district. It is fully eight years since they did such general and extensive damage. On all hands complaints reach me of the mischief they have done on pasture lands and gardens. The Jeetho and Jumbunna hills have, I am informed, a very yellowy brown appearance, rather unusual in this land of verdure. Gardens have been almost stripped of anything green...

From *The Age*, 28 January 1905, page 11

The Scarcity of Water.

Archies Creek. Friday.

The scarcity of water is assuming a serious aspect. Most of the residents are carting water for household purposes. Farmers dependent on Archie's Creek for their stock water are getting very uneasy, as there are only a few holes left. Nothing less than 24 hours' solid rain would start the creeks running. The Wonthaggi butter factor has only two days' supply left, and unless heavy rain comes it will have to close. The Almurta factory has already stopped, and cream is being carted to Bena. It looked very much like rain yesterday, but the change passed over.

From *The Age*, 14 July 1905, page 16

Floods at Lang Lang.

Lang Lang. Thursday.

Owing to the very heavy rain, the Lang Lang River has overflowed its banks. The main Lang Lang to Melbourne road is under water, and the flood is up to the door of the Lang Lang hotel. A farmer residing close to the township had a narrow escape from drowning. While driving a horse and dray over a crossing, the dray sank almost out of sight, and to save himself and the horse he had to jump on to the animal's back, from where he managed to undo the harness and swim the horse to the bank. All the flat country is under water, and one man has as much as 90 acres flooded. It is feared that great damage will be done, as the river is rapidly rising.

From the *Frankston and Somerville Standard*, 15 Nov. 1922

Gale Damage at San Remo.

The gales of last week was responsible for considerable damage in the Bay and elsewhere. The Sandy Point "Trig," the destruction of which had been threatened by the washing away of the foreshore by the gales of a few weeks since became an accomplished fact, and the large wooden structure, which was some 40ft. high, has collapsed. At San Remo, one of the beacons was also destroyed, and the red buoy marking the end of the reef opposite the mouth of salt creek, has washed about 8 miles up the bay and is now adjacent to where the local boats are moored; someone has remarked that the "buoy" was on its way to see the "flappers" on the Cowes pier.

No-No and Oh, No! Ads

Two advertisements, one showing the famous Michelin Man spruicking tyres and the other for the long defunct Healings cycles featuring Dr Smart on his Healings bicycle outracing the stork to a delivery. Pretty harmless, you may think. Now look more closely...

The Michelin man is – gasp! – smoking. And the doctor? What’s that at the end of the holder in his mouth. It’s – a cigarette!

In an age when anti-smoking advocates are busy airbrushing the cigar from photos of Winston Churchill and Groucho Marx, loudly complaining about the heroes in movies shown smoking [bad role models], and calling for a ban on smoking not only in all public places but semi-private ones as well, advertisements like this would receive a massive backlash.

Speaking of movies, anti-smoking advocates have no problem with the villains smoking, particularly if they are Nazis, which is ironic, as Hitler was a ardent *anti-smoker*.



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The Alleged Slaughter

The Weekly Times, Thursday 6 January 1906: Black Swan

According to a report received by the Public Works department, from Mr Maclean, chief inspector of fisheries, black swan are not being extensively slaughtered, as recent correspondence in a morning contemporary would seem to suggest. The bird is protected from the 1st August to 31st January, and the proposal was made that the protection should be extended throughout the year. Mr Maclean secured a report on the matter from Constable J. Stephenson, of Grantville, and in this it is stated that no wholesale destruction of black swan is going on in that portion of the Westernport district. Constable Stephenson has been stationed there for four years, and says that he only remembers half-a-dozen swans being shot.

* * *

In fairness to yourself

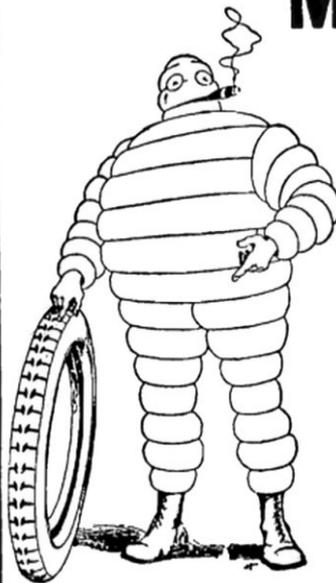
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(Above) From the *KooWeeRup Sun and Lang Lang Guardian*, 3 June 1920

(left) From the *KooWeeRup Sun and Lang Lang Guardian*, 30 January 1946

Beware of the Dog Horse

From the *Great Southern Advocate*, 9 Jan. 1893: Local Topics

Accident:—A young man named Wm. Jago met with a serious accident on the Lang Lang racecourse immediately after the last race. In company with another young man, he was racing round the track, and when opposite the paddock his horse ran off and threw Jago heavily against the fence. Assistance was quickly at hand, and it was found that his right leg was broken. All the available attention was given to the unfortunate lad and he was conveyed to Loch in the evening train. He now lies at the Royal Hotel, and, under the care of Dr. Davis, is making satisfactory progress towards recovery.

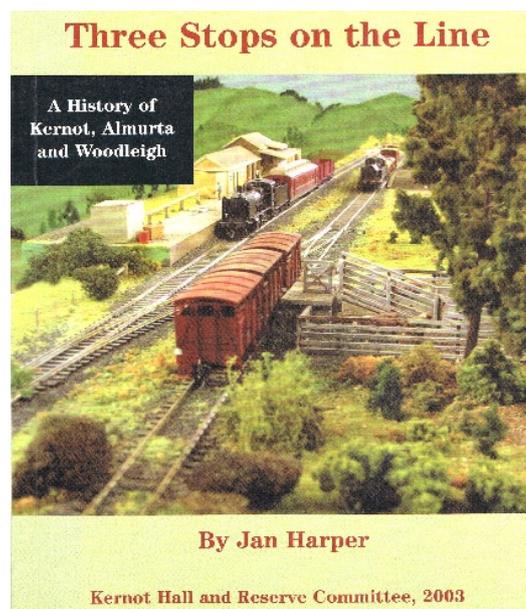
Accidents:—Accidents have been numerous during the holidays. Mr. A. Biggar, on returning from the Grantville races, had the misfortune to have his leg broken by a kick from a horse. Under the care and attention of Dr. Davis he is progressing satisfactorily. Mr. Rawle, of Outtrim, sustained serious injury through his horse rearing up and falling on him as he was returning home from the races. Two ladies were knocked down by a bolting horse at Outtrim, near the racecourse. Beyond a few bruises and a terrible fright nothing serious resulted. Mr Breton, the manager of the National Bank, Korumburra, got a severe fall from his horse the other day, and has been confined to his bed for some time. Other accidents have been reported, but the patients are progressing well towards recovery.

From the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, 4 April 1900

Miss Lily Cadee, daughter of a well-known resident, met with a serious accident last week, sustaining a broken bone in an ankle. The young lady had tied her horse to a fence, and, as she was about to turn away, the animal pulled back, dragging down a post and two panels of fencing, which, passing over Miss Cadee's foot and leg, inflicted the injuries above mentioned. She is under the care of Dr. Healey.

From the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, 10 Jan. 1877

An accident which might have been attended with fatal consequences, occurred to Master William Stewart, son of Mr. A. Stewart, of Queensferry, while going to the Bass river saw mills. The horse got frightened, and dragged him over a log embankment. The fright and bruises the poor boy sustained are very serious in his present state of health.



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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Strzelecki Celebrations

[Note: the usual modern spelling of Massey and Strzelecki/Strzeleckie is Massie and Strzelecki. Secondly, the 1826 settlement was the second attempt, the first being 1803 at Sorrento – editor].

From *KooWeeRup Sun And Lang Lang Guardian*, 9 Dec. 1926.

Historical Society

During the week-end Sir James Barrett and Messrs A. S. Kenyon, Jones, Allan, Hansford, and C. Daley paid a visit to Lang Lang in connection with celebrations at Corinella on Saturday next, December 11. These active members of the society have been afield since Thursday and, such is the advance in the times, by the aid of a couple of motor cars were able to follow practically the same route which took Strzelecki months to accomplish. Over twenty cairns will be erected along the track this early explorer followed, and it only remains now for arrangements to be made for the erection of one at Corinella, where Strzelecki's explorations ceased. Those attending the centenary celebration at Corinella this week-end will be educated and interested in details that will be placed before them. Very possibly some of our readers have old-time letters or journals bearing on the early days. These could safely be entrusted to Mr A. W. Madge, of Lang Lang, for perusal with a view of public information.

Corinella Day

Given fine weather, this picturesque little fishing village should be overrun with visitors and souvenir hunters on Saturday afternoon next, for are not the members of the Historical Society of Victoria gathering there in force and inviting you and all residents to join with them in celebrating the centenary of the landing effected there just 100 years ago, and only a few hours ahead of the French expedition, which had already annexed the neighboring island. Settlement Point, as it was then called, has not expanded at all, but it certainly is worthy of some recognised landmark and official local record, and what it adds very considerably to its claim is the fact that Count Von Strzelecki, after wandering and exploring through the bush as far as Omeo, turned back and reached the coast at Corinella also. This makes a two-fold claim, and it is hoped that at least a simple cairn with both these records officially inscribed thereon will be erected somewhere near the spot from which the last historic gun was removed and sent to Melbourne as a curiosity.

From *KooWeeRup Sun And Lang Lang Guardian*, 16 Dec. 1926

Corinella was not overcrowded on Saturday last when members of the Historical Society of Victoria assembled there to celebrate the centenary of the first attempt at settlement of Victoria. Unfortunately for Gippsland, Captain Wright, who was in charge of the expedition, was recalled to Sydney after 15 months of occupation and it was left for Batman and Fawkner to cross over from Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) and settle upon the bank of the Yarra.

However, the occasion of Saturday last was worthy of a more representative gathering, and a little information or a more formal function was surely warranted, for such names as Bass, Flinders, Hume, Hovell and Wright should not be allowed to sink into oblivion. Strzelecki, also in 1840, reached the coast after two years' wanderings in the then wilds of Gippsland at practically this spot, afterwards taking boat and landing at Tooradin.

In commemoration of both these events the historic committee is desirous of obtaining sufficient funds to erect a suitable cairn on the headland, which is a Government reserve adjacent to what was really the first house erected in Victoria; such a cairn to serve a two-fold purpose and carry both the inscription of the first settlement and of Count Von Strzelecki's explorations.

Saturday's gathering, at which was noticed a preponderance of Lang Lang residents, including Cr. F. Wildes, Messrs Cogle, L. Wildes, A. Orgill, Dalton, J. McMillan, A. W. Madge, and numerous lady friends, should prove but a forerunner of the celebrations in March next, when it is expected the Governor will be present and unveil the various cairns to be erected throughout the shires affected.

McMillan Memorial Cairns

Governor's Tour Of Gippsland

From the *Gippsland Times*, Monday 14 March 1927

On April 4 the Governor (Lord Somers), with the Director of Education (Mr. Frank Tate), chairman of the National Parks section of the Town Planning Committee (Sir James Barrett), the secretary (Mr. W. F. Gates), and Mr. C. Daley, F.L.S., will begin a tour of Gippsland to unveil war *[sic]* memorials. The party will follow the route of the explorers

(continues on Page 8)

Strzelecki Celebrations 1926-1927 (continued from Page 7)

McMillan, who discovered Gippsland, and of Count Strzelecki. The memorials are in the form of stone cairns, and in all 24 will be unveiled. The towns to be visited are:—

Monday, April 4.—Benambra, Omeo, Swift's Creek, Ensay.

Tuesday.—Bruthen, Mossiface, Sarsfield, Lucknow, Calalu, Sale.

Wednesday.—Sale, Bundalaguah, Stratford, Maffra, Bushy Park, Heyfield, Rosedale.

Thursday.—Rosedale, Tom's Gap, Yarram, Port Albert, Traralgon.

Friday.—Traralgon, Koornalla, Mirboo North, Leongatha, Korumburra.

Saturday.—Corinella.

Gippsland Exploration

Unveiling of Cairns

The Argus, Saturday 2 April 1927

A party, including Sir James Barrett, the under-secretary for Lands (Mr. H. O. Allan), and members of the Historical Society committee left Melbourne yesterday for Gippsland, where they will unveil a series of cairns which have been erected to perpetuate the memory of the explorers Strzelecki and Angus McMillan, and to mark the routes of their chief explorations. The party will unveil several cairns each day...

Gippsland Explorers

Ceremony at Corinella

From KooWeeRup Sun and Lang Lang Guardian, 14 April 1927

His excellency the Governor (Lord Somers) completed on Saturday his tour of Gippsland, on which he followed the traces of the explorers Angus McMillan and Count Paul Strzelecki and unveiled cairns erected to their memory. Lord Somers began the tour on Monday at Benambra from which he followed McMillan's route to the sea at Port Albert. He then returned to Bushy Park, near Maffra, and followed Strzelecki's route to Westernport. The tour was a success in every way. Large crowds gathered at each of the cairns and Lord Somers said he was delighted by his first visit to Gippsland.

The tour on Saturday was begun at Korumburra, where a simple but impressive cairn has been built outside the town on a hill that commands a fine view. The shire president (Cr. F. Umbers) introduced Lord Somers, who addressed a large crowd that included pupils from all the district schools.

One party of children travelled 15 miles to the ceremony, and children from the township of Strzelecki were present in large numbers.

Lord Somers was the first vice-regal representative to visit Corinella. He was welcomed by the shire president (Cr. G. Hollins) and entertained at luncheon by the residents. Corinella is one of the most historic places in Victoria, for there, in 1826, the first settlement in Victoria was attempted. Strzelecki and his companions arrived at Massey and Anderson's station at Westernport in an exhausted condition, without boots and their clothes in tatters. After recovering at the station they travelled to Melbourne.

Lord Somers was interested to meet Mrs Potts, a daughter of Mr Anderson, partner of Mr Massey.

After unveiling the cairn, which is inscribed with the names of count Strzelecki, John Riley, and James McArthur who reached Corinella on May 12, 1840, Lord Somers returned to the city.

The secretary of the historical memorials committee (Mr C. Daley) announced that he had received letters of thanks from the Polish consul-general in Australia and Count Strzelecki's grand-niece, Mrs Wanda Szalla. Mrs Szalla had asked for an account of the memorials tour for publication in Polish newspaper.



The Strzelecki monument at Settlement Point, Corinella, overlooking Western Port Bay and the Corinella piers.

The Enigmatic George McGowan

Part Three

by Geoff Guilfoyle

Part Two saw George McGowan and family in Queensferry, the (likely) destruction of their house in a fire, and ended with George beginning his involvement in two coal mining concerns.

The Bass Valley/Powlett region sits upon a number of coal basins, the most famous of which is, of course, at Wonthaggi (the Dudley and Kirrak basins) on the Powlett Plains. However in the 1880s and 1890s, it was other areas which drew attention. First was the Cape Paterson Basin, then that at Kilcunda, and then came Woolamai, on the west side of the hills in the area where today's township of the same name is.

By the early 20th century it was increasingly understood that the Woolamai Basin was never going to be a viable concern – the cost of extraction never matching the financial return, which explains why when the railway was put through the area in 1909 no real attempt was made to mine coal in the vicinity. However, in the 1890s this wasn't appreciated, and if your name was George McGowan, mining at Woolamai and shipping the coal to Queensferry for transport made financial sense. He wasn't alone in seeing matters this way.

In late 1895, seven men with coal claims at various places on the Woolamai Coal Basin (including George McGowan and Edward Cracknell) covering 5,000 acres came together to form the Glen Alvie Coal Mining Company. Shares at £5 each were offered to the public and 552 were quickly snapped up by 51 investors, including Lawrence Henderson, Samuel Wilson M.D., J. T. Paul, William Lang, Mathew Bowman, G. A. McGowan and H. H. Bergmeier.

According to the *Great Southern Advocate*, 12 March 1896 edition, a meeting of members of the mining syndicate was held at Queensferry, with George McGowan presiding. Details of future operations, plans and proposals were discussed, resolutions proposed and passed, with G. A. McGowan, A. Goding, R. F. Kurrle, E. Bowman, and H. H. Bergmeier elected directors.

It isn't clear where in Queensferry this meeting was held. By 1896 the Victoria Hotel was likely shut down, never to open again, which leaves either the Queensferry hall or George McGowan's residence, doubtless

with a nice lunch provided – provided his house hadn't burnt down or was rebuilt. Registration of the company was made on the 21st May 1896 with Edward Cracknell of Queensferry as manager, and the company office on the Esplanade, Queensferry – the same Esplanade where George McGowan now possibly lived, which makes it likely that the registered office and his residence were one and the same – provided his original house burnt down and he rebuilt on this street.

According to Joseph White, the company, after extensive prospecting found that the seams of coal were faulty and the company, presumably, never operated. The 23 September 1908 edition of *The Argus*, however, gives the cost of carting to coal to the railway proving prohibitive as the reason. Regardless, little was heard of the company after 1896.

A more serious attempt to develop the Woolamai coal field started earlier and lasted longer, and featured none of the players in the Glen Alvie Coal Mining Company – except George Alexander McGowan.

The first public notice of the new mining venture came in *The Age*, 6 May 1895: the formation of the Great Victoria Colliery Co. NL with 300 shares valued at £25 each. Two days later the same paper provided more details, giving a Melbourne address as the registered office, the value of the property (£7,500) and a list of the shareholders (names, addresses and number of shares). They were:

- Equity Life Assurance Co. Adelaide S.A. (10).
- George Craib, Financier, Lt. Collins St., Melbourne (1).
- A. Corinaldi, Accountant, Collins St., Melbourne (1).
- G. F. Smith, Gentleman, Williamstown (1).
- T. Griffiths, Railways, Korumburra (2).
- Geo. Elms Smith in trust for shareholders (179).
- Geo. Elms Smith in trust for Company (106).

Joseph White, who otherwise gives a good summary of the company in *100 Years of History*, was never able, or never thought to, explore just whom George Elms Smith was holding shares in trust for. Fortunately, a

(continues on Page 10)

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

It isn't clear whether this is the residue of the previous sale with some extra land thrown in or previously unoffered land. Joseph White in *100 Years of History* appears to take the latter view and if White is right, and he most likely is in this instance, then McGowan sold 80 of his approximately 320 acres of land, presumably keeping the most productive for himself.

Interestingly, the advertisement lists "three substantial houses, almost new and now let to permanent tenants." These are surely three of the five cottages mentioned in the previously cited 1892 piece by the *Australasian's* agricultural reporter, maybe somewhat improved since then.

The *Great Southern Advocate* of Thursday 17 September 1896 reported that the sale was successful, in other words, profitable.

What are we to make of this? Is this George McGowan cynically selling land in order to cash in on a potential land boom and doesn't care if it eventuates as long as he makes money? Or does he genuinely believe that Queensferry will become the coal port for the mining operation? Perhaps a bit of both, though his later actions tend to lend credence to his being less a "true believer" in the company and more pragmatic.

The same edition of the paper also reports that:

Last week, according to the San Remo paper, a number of shareholders of the Great Victoria Company, numbering about thirty, visited the mine. They arrived by coach, waggonettes, &c., at Queensferry, where a sumptuous luncheon was in waiting for them in the Athenaeum Hall, supplied by Mr. and Mrs. M'Gowan. About fifty sat down to lunch...

The account goes on to describe the journey to the mine and what they saw on arrival. Afterwards:

...they at once wended their way back to the traps, which they reached just at dark. It was then decided to go home by way of Bass, which was reached at about nine o'clock, the company drawing up at the Bass Hotel, when Mr. Smith wished them all to drink the health of the representatives of the district who had so kindly accompanied them that day. Mr. Grout, who represented the Council, Mr. Bonwick, secretary and engineer, and the local Press, were heartily responded to. The health of Mr. Brown, mining manager, was drunk and responded to. The party then drove off to Grantville. Great praise is due to

Mrs. M'Gowan for the able manner in which the lunch was prepared and laid out. It could not have been carried out better in the city.

This is a very interesting account, and plays directly into the legends of George McGowan.

This being the 1890s and with night having fallen, those of the fifty guests who didn't live in the area, had limited options for where they spent the night. They couldn't catch a taxi to the nearest station or simply drive home. Some would have spent the night at the Bass or Grantville hotels. Where would the most important of them have gone?

If you are George McGowan and these are investors, potential investors, or persons of interest who can further the company of which you are a director, and if you have one of the nicest houses in the district with some spare bedrooms, would you not insist that the more important of these individual stay with you. Further, you doubtless wouldn't feed them bread and dripping; you'd provide a sumptuous meal.

From *The Age*, Monday 1 February 1897:

The Minister of Railways, with Mr. Downward, M.L.A., reached San Remo on Thursday, and on Friday, accompanied by a large number of residents, including Crs. Anderson, Bates, Daly, Gunn and Grout, proceeded to inspect the route of the proposed Bass Valley railway. A slight detour was made to view the splendid lands round the old township of Bass, over which Mr. Williams was rapidly driven by Cr. Bates. A move was then made to the Great Victoria Colliery Company, where the Minister was received and shown over the workings by Mr. G. A. M'Gowan, a director, and Mr. W. Robertson, secretary of the company.

The article goes on to outline the route of the party and who they saw and what they did, finishing with: *The party reached Nyora at 6.30 p.m. after a very pleasant trip.*

The Minister, however, apparently lingered, leaving from San Remo for Melbourne on the Monday. It isn't impossible that he spent a night at the McGowan residence.

The directors of the Great Victoria Colliery Company very much wanted the Victorian government to step in and finish building the railway, then under construction, from Woolamai to Queensferry, and Mr Williams being the Minister for Railways, he and George McGowan would have had much to talk about over a no doubt very grand meal.

But, though not unreasonable speculation,

(continues on Page 12)

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

it is still guesswork. And it assumes that, if his house did burn down, it was rebuilt and that he wasn't living in one of the cottages mentioned previously.

The Great Victorian Colliery Company hit financial trouble in 1898 and it grew steadily worse into 1899.

From *The Argus*, Tuesday 11 April 1899:

An extraordinary meeting of the Great Victoria Colliery, Westernport, was held yesterday at the board-room, Prell's Building, to accept the resignation of certain of the directors and to consider the financial position of the company. The directors whose resignations were to be accepted were Messrs R. H. Cole, W. B. Gray, Archibald Aitken, and George H. Hope, and the reason for the resignations was that the gentlemen felt that as mortgagees of the company they could not continue to act as directors.

The financial position of the company was also laid out:

The secretary (Mr. W. Robertson) said that the total debts of the company were £5,200. The mortgage was £2,332, and the debt due to the railways was £1,375. The company was in default for two yearly payments to the department, and was in default on the interest, and therefore the mortgagees could foreclose. But in addition, £3,000 was required to finish the work, and £5,000 for working capital, making the total over £13,000.

The changes and decisions made came too late. The creditors moved in on the company. From *100 years of History*:

The Victorian Railways obtained judgment for the payment of the tram rails and took action to secure payment by a process issued out of the Supreme Court of Victoria which directed the Sheriff to sell up the assets of the company comprising all the coal leases, all the rolling stock, rails, tramway rights, jetties and other permits. All were sold by the 21st June 1899. As the directors were creditors without security they went to the sale and bought the whole, lock stock and barrel at the price of the Government's debt – £1,371-2-10.

This is the remaining directors using their own money to clear the debt and keep the colliery going, a sign of their faith in the long term viability of the company. The company struggled into late 1900. It was all for nought. Hammered by lawsuits and unable to refinance the debt, on 28 May 1901 this advertisement appeared in the *The Argus*:

ON A DATE TO BE FIXED.
At Our Rooms,
28 ELIZABETH-STREET, MELBOURNE.

MOST IMPORTANT AUCTION SALE
Of
VALUABLE COLLIERY PROPERTY,
 Embracing
EXTENSIVE LEASES, MACHINERY,
ROLLING-STOCK, RAILWAY LINE and RAILS,
POWERFUL LOCOMOTIVE,
33 RAILWAY WAGGONS,
 (10 at the Mine and 23 at Spencer-street),
TROLLEYS, MINING and BLACKSMITHS' GEAR
 and **TOOLS,**
GALVANISED IRON SHED,
SURVEYOR'S THEODOLITE, and SUNDRIES
 Of
The GREAT VICTORIA COLLIERY,
 Near Queensferry, Victoria.

Fuller Particulars Future Announcements, or from
PLEASANCE, GRAHAM, and STYLES, general
 auctioneers, 28 Elizabeth-street, Melbourne.

And that was the end of the company.

Contrary to the legend, it wasn't extravagance that ruined George McGowan, it was the Great Victorian Colliery Company. Or it would have if he remained a director to the end.

Fortunately for him, he abandoned the company sometime in 1897 or 1898. The money he made on the sale of portions of his land at highly inflated prices easily would have covered any cost of entertaining. However, this must be offset against his personal liability for the debts the company was incurring. How exposed was he?

Probably the most accurate summary is that in 1898 he was poorer than he had been when he arrived at Queensferry ten years earlier, but he was still better off than most people in the district.

Not that anyone at Queensferry got to make the comparison, for the entire McGowan family vanishes at this point. The last clear reference is November 1897 when he was appointed to a committee put together to arrange the collection of funds for a memorial to the late Dr. Wilson [*Mornington Standard*, 25 Nov. 1897]. There is no further record after that of him entertaining, royally or otherwise, participating in the yearly agricultural shows, the annual racing meeting or any social event, nor is his name mentioned in relation to the colliery as it staggered along to its final demise.

This is where "Old Fred" places George McGowan (minus any family who, of course, don't exist in the legend) either living in very humble circumstances at Grantville as a pensioner or in a cabin on his last sliver of land for the remaining, presumably few,

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

years of his life. Old, tired and reclusive.

Or he quietly sold his holdings and moved to Hay N.S.W. This advertisement in *The Riverine Grazier* of 23 May 1899 hints at the move to Hay being the correct answer:



NOTICE.

WE beg to thank the travelling public for the patronage received by the undersigned coach proprietors for many years, and now wish to announce that **We have Sold (as from 1st April, 1899) all our interest**

IN THE
HAY AND DENILIKUIN
Line of Coaches
—TO—
Mr. George A. McGowan,

And we solicit for him a continuance of the support so liberally extended to us in the past.

ROBERTSON, WAGNER & CO.

With reference to the above, I beg to assure the travelling community that no effort on my part shall be wanting to merit a continuance of the support so liberally granted to my predecessors, Cobb and Co.

G. A. MCGOWAN,
Proprietor.

The same month, presumably to furnish his new residence, he purchases at auction... *the whole of household furniture, etc., at highly satisfactory prices on account of owners; furniture, piano, etc., of ten rooms to Mr G. A. McGowan.* [*The Riverine Grazier*, 28 April 1899]. The fact that a piano is included will become significant later in the story.

Confirmation comes with a single line in the 28 April 1899 edition of *The Western Port Times*: *The friends of Mr. G. A. McGowan, late of Queensferry, will be pleased to hear that he is once more settled in business, having purchased Cobb & Co.'s coach route from Deniliquin to Hay.*

The most puzzling aspect in all this is how he vanished from Queensferry without the *Western Port Times*, *South Bourke and Mornington Journal* or *Great Southern Advocate*, or even *The Age* and *The Argus*, noticing.

Here are some excerpts from reports of functions to farewell prominent and not so prominent people leaving the area so you can better appreciate the problem.

From *Mornington Standard*, 5 March 1896:

Mr. F. S. Marsh, of Grantville, who is leaving that district for Western Australia, was presented with a purse of sovereigns on Tuesday, the 18th inst., in the Mechanics' Hall, as a mark of the esteem in which he is held... (continues for another 250+ words)

From *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, 9 November 1898:

A social was held in the Grantville Mechanics' Institute on Friday week, for the purpose of bidding Mr. Heaton goodbye on the occasion

of his leaving the district. A good programme of song, recitations, &c., was arranged, and successfully gone through. Tea and coffee and refreshments were handed round by the committee, and the object for which the social was held eventuated successfully.

From *Great Southern Advocate*, 3 Sept. 1903:

Perhaps one of the largest and most enthusiastic gatherings that has ever been witnessed in Grantville, assembled in the Mechanics' Hall on Wednesday evening, the object being to present Miss A Hunt with a token of esteem for her past services in the district. No pains had been spared in decorating the building... (The piece continues for another 354 words).

From *Great Southern Advocate*, 31 March 1904:

A very representative gathering took place at the Bass Valley hall on Tuesday night. The occasion was the presentation of a testimonial to Mr. and Mrs. A. Ward, who are leaving the district. From all the countryside around, friends and well-wishes of Mr. and Mrs. Ward and family attended to show the high esteem in which they held them. Mr. Downward, M.L.A. for Mornington, presided... (The story continues for another 84 words).

From *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, 15 December 1909:

A representative gathering of residents of Bass and surrounding district was held in the Bass Hall on Friday, to bid farewell to Mr. J. Tulloch, who has sold his property and will leave shortly for Queensland. The function took the form of a social evening, dancing, singing, etc. forming the greater portion of the entertainment. Cr. J. Campbell, President of the Phillip Island Council occupied the chair... (Story continues for another 90 words).

Maybe the regional papers did cover the McGowan's departure and the editions carrying the story no longer exist. And yet...

Had the left before 1895 this all would have been understandable; the McGowans had no local profile and had been in the area for only a few years. After 1895, this profile was much higher. Is it possible for the family to have sold up and left with nothing, not even a line or two, appearing in the local papers or even *The Age* or *The Argus*?

Is there something going on here which 125 years on just can't be fathomed?

Regardless, sometime between December 1898 and March 1899, the McGowans left the district for Hay.

Part Four next month

History of Korumburra

No.36 OF WEEKLY TIMES SERIES

by Frank Whitcombe

Part 1b

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

Dairying

In 1880 blocks of land for settlement were taken up easterly towards Arawatta and Kardella, and southerly in the direction of Korumburra, Bena and Jumbunna. Korumburra owes its rapid growth to the coal-mining industry and its permanent prosperity to dairying. The pioneers, after the heroic era of clearing and burning off, sowed down with grass, and entered upon a new phase of warfare against caterpillars, dingoes, and wallabies. The dairies were quagmires in winter, churning was equivalent to penal servitude, and marketing a pilgrimage by packhorse through slush and mud from the farms.

The first factory was established at Poowong in 1892, but the transport thereto was slow and arduous. Milk was taken in bulk, and the skim milk brought back, both journeys being equally heavy on the unfortunate horses, who suffered patiently until the system of establishing separators on the holdings and the collection of only the cream by the factories lightened the labor.

In 1900 a wooden factory was built at Korumburra, with Messrs W. J. Wilson and G. W. Mitchell as manager and secretary, and eventually motor lorries supplanted horse haulage across the dreadful hills.

Forty years ago the 232 square miles of Korumburra was practically all dense virgin forest; the same tract of country is one of the richest dairying and mixed farming districts in the whole of Victoria.

The railway was extended to Korumburra, after much agitation, in 1891, and opened the second chapter in the history of the settlement of South Gippsland. It made pioneering easier, but by no means ended the difficulties confronting men and women on the land.

A new province had been added to Victoria, but it still had to experience its baptism of fire in 1897 and 1898, when the whole of South Gippsland was swept by flame, destroying human life, homesteads, and stock, reducing many struggling settlers to the brink of despair and supposed ruin.

Those who survived the disaster had hope restored by the gradual realisation that with the disappearance of their homesteads and fences had also gone the menace of the standing timber, which in those days had no value in their eyes, and that their properties had been cleared in a manner that could not otherwise have been effected in the course of their natural lives.

Early photographs show settlers' houses surrounded by dry timber, inviting disaster. There were three *[word or words obscured]* rising 150 and 200 feet, in some instances higher, carrying more or less leafy branches and combustible tinder-dry bark. Underneath blackwoods, hazels, and wattles aspired from 20 to 80 feet in height, and lower grew musks, tree ferns, hazel, sword grass, and a tangle of small stuff, with fallen timber lying through it in all directions.

The Fire Danger

As successive summers dried these mazes, converting them into pyres ready for the firestick, the settlers whom they surrounded were subject to continual dread of impending holocausts, which they themselves had prepared, trusting in their ability to burn off a little at a time and thus clear the country by degrees.

Settlers were always on the lookout for a good "burn-off," but once started there was no control over the fire, which, after the first onslaught, might last for weeks, smouldering in hollow logs and ready to spread afresh with wind and hot weather.

Making its own draught, the flames would rush through the trees, hurling sparks and lighted matter hundreds of yards ahead, starting fresh fires in unexpected places, creating a chaos of conflagration from which the terrified people would have no means of escape other than in a cultivated paddock or a waterhole, and the live stock would be trapped and incinerated. Around Korumburra there were families which sought refuge in wells, and saved their lives by standing up to their necks in the water.

The men and women of the beginning

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History of Korumburra (continued from Page 14)

endured much and braved danger with more than the lion heart. How they pulled through is the admiration of all with even a partial knowledge of their difficulties but why, unless gifted with second sight and a prophetic knowledge of the future, remains one of the unsolved problems of colonising pluck.

The primeval forest of 40 years ago has been transformed into a land of prosperity; the blackened devastated areas have given place to luxurious growth on which sleek cattle and heavily fleeced sheep depasture; and the emerald hills serve as a picturesque framing to the Korumburra township.

Spirit of Adventure

Tradition haunts Korumburra, like an unbelievable ghost story of the past when the spirit of impossibility was exorcised and nature defied by men with small means, no experience and the indomitable valor of their ignorance. After enduring hardships and ploughing through quagmires stranded they found themselves in the forest solitudes with a box of matches and an axe in their lightened swag among timber too sodden to burn, and with no idea of the locality of their own allotments.

On either side of the sludge channel through which they had waded giant gums and blackwood rose through the green obscurity of the tremendous 50ft. jungle, struggling for the light which failed to reach them on a lower level. As between two living walls of solid vegetation, with no escape to right or to left the newcomer in search of his direction peg had no alternative but to trudge on until he reached it or some rare position where he might manage to camp until the next day.

Following blazed trees to the corner of his selection of 320 acres his first job was to clear the undergrowth from a spot large enough to pitch his tent, if he had brought one thus far, and unload his pack horse and contemplate his future home and the immensity and solidity of the trees before he could make a living off it.

Weariness would absolve him of the necessity of further toil until the morning when consulting his plan, so neatly ruled and lettered at the Crown Lands Office, he would endeavor to trace the road of access to his block to discover that it led across deep gullies that neither he nor his pack horse would ever surmount.

Later as the years rolled on shire councillors

would listen to his petition to give him reasonable access to his block and promise consideration in the event of their ever having sufficient funds to carry out the work. During the first few weeks he would fell some trees and clear a space large enough for a 10 x 6 hut to be erected, which many years afterwards would give place to a modern homestead.

Such was the South Gippsland pioneers' initiation into his new phase of existence. So far he would be sustained by the spirit of adventure and the novelty of his unparalleled environment and the dogged determination to see it through. Even the discomfort of the dripping foliage, for it rained heavily with an annual rainfall of over 50 inches before the bush was felled, would not dispel the glorified glamor of the first days; and it required time to dull the romance of youth in the heat of conflict while materialising his dream fondly hoping to hew out a home for his future.

He was aware of the fertility of the soil and would exploit its wealth and establish his family on the land. But time had to be admitted into this visionary contract and what was to sustain him until the fulfilment of the dream, against physical failure of effort and loss, and the hope deferred that with daily increasing weight would drag him down to despair?

This is the great mystery of the mastery of the South Gippsland bush, which even the selectors themselves still ponder over with wonderment.

The Shire

Korumburra Shire was created by part of Buln Buln Shire, being constituted the Poowong and Jeetho Shire on May 29, 1891; and after numerous annexations and severances continuing until 1913, the name was changed to that of the Shire of Korumburra on October 25, 1922. The present office bearers of the Korumburra Shire are Crs. W. J. Inches (Strzelecki), Peter Hudson, Talbot Adkins, J.P. (Korumburra); F. Umbers (Poowong); G. Henry (Nyora); Wm. J. Salmon (Poowong); E. P. Hayes (Loch); H. Hennessy (Bena); H. G. Fuller (Bena); E. M. Witherden (Strzelecki); T. E. C. Tack (Korumburra); Alex. J. Ritchie, of Arawata (president); R. N. Scott (Kongwak); Wm. Herbertson, J.P. (Outtrim); F. E. Kurrle (Korumburra); and Messrs Frank Pomeroy Hungerford (secretary); and Francis A. Horsfall, C.E., engineer.

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History of Korumburra (continued from Page 15)

The town of Korumburra is located in one of the most financially solid districts of the country. Its population is 3000, and of the whole shire 8200. Houses, although 100 new buildings have been erected during the past five years, of a value of £35,000, are difficult to procure. Building operations are steadily replacing the old shops and modernising the town. Land in Commercial street recently changed hands at £140 the foot of frontage in the central business part.

The town area is 2215 acres, lighted by Yallourn electricity, and supplied with a copious water allowance of 65,000,000 gallons from Coalition Creek, the main reservoir being supplied by electric power and thence to the town by gravitation. The revenue is £25,000 on a valuation of town and shire of £164,561.

On August 13, 1891, an election for the Shire of Poowong and Jeetho was held under Returning Officer J. M. Gannon's supervision on a roll compiled by Charles Cook, when the following candidates were declared the first duly elected councillors: — Charles Robert Mair, 306 votes; Wm. Langham, 296; Robert Oliphant Timms, 264; Robert Gillespie, 261; Robert Johnstone Murdoch, jun., 260; Peter Whittet, 259; Henry Littlelike, 257; Charles Snow Bigelow, 257; Richard Nutter Scott, 249. The unsuccessful candidates were: R. C. Scott (210), John Brind (170), Walter Foreman (166), E. S. Watts (132), W. J. Hosking (132), Wm. Hayes (128), and Geo. McCord (102).

At the first meeting of the council in the Athenaeum, Poowong, on September 2, 1891, Cr. Charles Robert Mair was appointed president of the shire, and Mr F. J. Coverdale, secretary, pro tem.

Forty Years Ago

At the next meeting on September 16, Messrs F. H. R. Cook was appointed secretary at a salary of £125 per annum; Benjamin Chaffey, valuator, at a remuneration of £26; and J. F. Wright, treasurer, £5 per annum.

Other officials were: E. F. C. Staveley, of Warragul, Government auditor for the shire; Dr. Edon, health officer, at a salary of £10 per annum. Constable Maher declined the position of inspector of nuisances, collector of dog tax and dairy fees, and Walter Grieve was appointed in his place, at a salary of £10 per annum and 25 per cent, commission on dairy fees, 50 per cent, on dog tax and

10 percent, on slaughter yards licences collected. George B. Blake was appointed engineer, at £200 a year; Maddock and Johnson, solicitors to the shire, at a retainer of £5 per annum, and the shire advertising was allocated to the Great Southern Mail and Southern Advocate, at 1/6 an inch.

Work at this stage consisted chiefly of deviating roads, clearing and making cuttings and reducing hill gradients and street levels, stump grubbing, draining, excavating and road forming to enable the councillors to attend the municipal meetings.

In 1891 the first sawmill plants were put down at Kardella by W. Egan and G. Parr, followed by McColl Bros., H. Herman, W. Richards and A. Arbuthnot. Two years later the school was opened by Mr Flude, succeeded by Robert Patterson, with 100 scholars. George Roughead started a store in 1892, and sold out to Alfred Gawler in 1893, who transferred to G. H. Murray in 1884.

(Part II next issue)

O'Meara Bros. & Co.,

Auctioneers, Stock & Station Agents,

...BASS...

DESIRE to notify the public of South Gippsland that they have removed their Head Office to Bass and trust by strict attention and fair dealing to merit support.

BRANCHES:

DALYSTON, GRANTVILLE,

ARCHIE'S CREEK.

Clearing Sales conducted in any part of the district.

Loans Negotiated.

Agents for J. M. Peck and Sons,

Melbourne,, and the Insurance

Office of Australia, Ltd.

(Fire and Accident).

DALYSTON SALE:

Third Thursday in Each Month.

BASS SALE:

Second Monday in each Month