

ANGLESEA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

NEWSLETTER No. 35 - JULY 1996

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AUGUST 4th - SUNDAY at 2 p.m. - BE THERE!

WHERE? The Museum - to hear Mrs. Joan Wick talk about Antarctica and show some spectacular slides. As has been the custom of recent times, we will celebrate winter with a hot toddy - so be sure to come and sip and see!

Speaker for the September meeting will be announced on that day too.

OCTOBER - SATURDAY the 5th - at 7.30p.m. A.G.M.

Notice we will revert to evening meetings and on this occasion Mr. Ken de Garis will be guest speaker.

NOVEMBER - FRIDAY the 1st - ANNUAL DINNER

Professor Weston Bate, well known historian, and currently President of the R.H.S.V. will entertain us. We are delighted that he has accepted our invitation, and look forward to a large attendance of members and friends.

Frank Flynn's vast knowledge of surfing, especially on the local scene, was much appreciated by his audience at the May meeting - did you know that Anglesea can claim the distinction of having the first person to stand up on a surfboard in this country and counter-claims can be dismissed (according to Frank!)

Ken Nall was the most interesting speaker in June and his family's long association with Geelong made for a fascinating story.

In June Margaret Howe spoke on a subject much in the news - the so-called gun lobby. The President, just back from a trip to Singapore, related a short story and the Secretary read a List of Events for 1926 (I wonder about that date!) compiled by Melva Stott, one of our popular Town Criers.

ACQUISITIONS

The Society was honoured indeed to receive a bequest from the late Norman Must who attended our annual dinners from inception and always enjoyed the company. Pat will be consulted before the money is put to some good use.

Books have been gratefully received from Elsie Samuel and Betty Lloyd.

EXCURSIONS

In May several members with friends enjoyed a day in the Royal Botanical Gardens, this year celebrating its 150th birthday! We are grateful to Betty Lloyd for making the initial arrangements. (The kiosk too is well worth a visit!)

The Anglesea Probus Club has also invited members to participate on a couple of occasions when Purrumbete Homestead near Camperdown was visited and most recently a trip to the Jewish Museum of Australia which is situated in Alma Street St. Kilda. One must envy their seemingly unending list of voluntary helpers! Our guide thru' the Museum was incredibly knowledgeable and so too the gentleman who took us through the synagogue which holds 1000 people! Morning tea and luncheon was served (again by volunteers) and the gift shop attendants were most obliging - and yes! - the two on duty are there on one day of each week! A most interesting day.

All members will be familiar with Lindsay Bradens' meticulous research into matters historical. We have to thank him for the article in this Newsletter about the Cameron Family and more particularly our beloved Joan Cameron Murch. At present he is working on a new project, EARLY ANGLESEA HOUSES. Now - tho' there is no apparent connection, I thought readers might be interested to hear about one of Geelong's landmark homes, RANNOCH HOUSE. P.F. Also has written an excellent article in the most recent 'INVESTIGATOR' A precis follows and if you would like to learn more, the June magazine published by the Geelong Historical Society can be obtained from the Museum Library.

"One of the most striking residences in Geelong is Rannoch House in Pakington Street Newtown. Now not easily seen from the street, it must have been a wonderful sight when its grounds, adorned with statuary, swept right down to Aberdeen Street. Rannoch House stands at the south-east corner of Aberdeen and Pakington Streets although this is not apparent today. The house was built well back from, and facing the former which runs east-west.

The Geelong Church of England Grammar School built its Preparatory School in front of Rannoch House in 1926 and entrance to the house is now obtained from Pakington Street so it is now effectively at the corner of Skene Street although this is the rear of the House. The Grammar School has now become St. John's Lutheran School.

In the mid-nineteenth century Aberdeen Street was part of the Great Western Road which gave access to the Western District: an access which was enhanced in 1854 with the construction of a substantial timber bridge over the Moorabool River at Fyansford. The Street became popular with retired Western District squatters and farmers who built or bought town houses along its length up to the 1940's. One such person was Captain Francis Ormond who bought the vacant Rannoch House site and adjacent land to the east, upon which latter land he built a house named St. Leonards. Captain Francis Ormond, the father of the Hon. Francis Ormond, retired from his inn at Shelford in 1851.

He came to live in Geelong and occupied a four roomed brick cottage owned by a Mr. Harding in Skene Street near La Trobe Terrace, He began building a house on the south-east corner of Aberdeen and Pakington Streets which in 1852 was unfinished and was left unvalued by the town valuer. By 1853 the building was described by the valuer as being constructed with stone and brick, having seven rooms, and with a garden, was valued at two hundred pounds. In 1854 its value was six hundred pounds (inflation??) In 1854-55 the building is described as being brick with 13 rooms and was occupied by Henry Deering tho' still owned by Francis Ormond who may have lived in it in 1853/54 but who was now living in a four roomed brick house in Aberdeen Street nearby, probably on the land that he called St. Leonards. Henry Deering was a well-known English actor and theatre manager who turned the House into the Royal Museum Hotel. There was a museum at the hotel which may have been housed in the single story west wing. Deering was there for about only a year when he left due to ill-health in March 1855. (He died in Ballarat the following April) After Deering's departure the next tenants were the Misses Greer who ran a school for young ladies which they called Lisdou House. This school had been located in Clarence Street, Ashby. However, Francis Ormond was still the owner when tenders were called for "verandas on three sides of the late Royal Museum Hotel late inn 1855. Apparently an engraved view of the house with the verandas is shown on a school prospectus which was discovered in the Mitchell Library Sydney by a Mrs Seaton who published her history of Geelong West in 1978. In 1857/58 when Miss Greer was still listed as occupant of the house the rateable value was threehundred and fifty pounds.

An Adam Swanston Robertson, a squatter from Little Corangamite (or Struan station) south-east of Terrinallum was listed as the occupant and he remained

a tenant of Ormond until 1863 when he became the owner. The rate-book of 1860-61 describes the house as having two stories, 11 rooms with a servant's room, a veranda, a kitchen with servant's room and a cellar. Robertson was related to Ormond, having married the latter's daughter Elizabeth in 1846 when he was about thirty-two and she about seventeen. The House would have received its present name when Robertson became the owner in 1863. Rannoch is a Highland district of Scotland in the county of Perth. Loch Rannoch is about 12 miles in length and more than a mile in average width. On the left bank of the River Rannoch is 'Dun Alister' or Mount Alexander' the family residence of the Robertsons of Struan. The district derived its name from the great quantity of ferns with which it was covered, the Gaelic word for fern being Rannoch. In early 1863 tenders were again called, this time for an eastern wing to the residence of A.S. Robertson Esq. of Aberdeen Street; and in May of that year yet another tender for the erection of a conservatory at Rannoch House. The Geelong Advertiser described the house in 1873 as having 15 rooms, two of which were 30ft. x 19ft. (exclusive of pantry, bathroom etc.) and water and gas were connected. On this imposing property there was also a double coach house 4 stall stable, loose box and man servant's room. The large garden contained many statues - Bacchus, Ariadne, Pandora, Cupid and Psyche. Robertson died at Rannoch House in September of that year aged 59. In December it was available for letting at two hundred and fifty pounds/annum. Mrs. Robertson sold up in January 1874 being about to leave the colony. In early 1875 a John Wallace of Ballark station was living there and in August 1876 the life interest in the house of Mrs. Robertson was for sale at six hundred pounds. It was leased to Wallace at one hundred and fifty pounds/annum and he remained until late 1879 the house was then let in 1880 to Mrs. Power of Melbourne but by May of that year it appears to have been owned by Alexander Miller, the builder of the Alexander Miller Homes. (he was a draper) A D. McKellar was in the house but he sold his furniture and effects at Rannoch House in June of 1882. It was reported in the Geelong Advertiser of October that year that Mr. Miller, a bachelor, would take up residence with this mother who advertised for a servant in January 1883. In August 1889 Miller advertised that the House would be let to John Rout Hopkins, grazier and owner of Wormbete station. Miller was back in occupation in 1890 and a photo of the front of the house taken during a fete in April of 1906 shows Miller still there at the time. A garden kiosk was erected in 1905. During this century the house was divided into a number of flats and was owned for some time by the late Mr. Emin who occupied the central rooms of the house. In December 1986 it was offered for sale at three hundred and seventy thousand pounds.

An article appeared in the Advertiser in 1932 written by a Mr. Bottrell who had interviewed a certain William Weire, the son of the first Town Clerk of Geelong. As a small boy he could remember being taken by his father to Mr. Deering's home - the hotel - where there was a menagerie, wild animals, monkeys, emus etc. The elephant's walk was alongside the Pakington Street fence. Other occupants included Church of England Girl's Grammar School from 1912-3 until 1923. The school had opened in The Hermitage in 1906 but when it ceased using Rannoch House in 1922 it bought Austin House opposite The Hermitage on the south corner of Pakington and Virginia Streets.

No doubt this graceful old house has had many tenants and one wonders how much history has been made within its walls. When next you drive by, have another look - better still - stop the car and have a quick peep over the fence!

OBITUARY- Mrs. JOAN SMITH - We were saddened to hear of Joan Smith's passing - she has been a longtime member of our Society, always interested in the Newsletter. Her late husband Ralph was a very much admired member who was always on hand to assist with any 'housekeeping jobs', big and small and at a minute's notice, He has been sorely missed.

EARLY A'SEA FAMILIES / THE CAMERONS

Cameron Road Anglesea (opposite the Bowling Club), is named after a well known Geelong family who spent their vacation here in 1920. Their cottage was transported in two parts during 1919 from Geelong and re-erected on a site next to the Presbyterian Church in the old road to the bridge (Murch Crescent). They aptly named it 'Bindaree' which means 'Hill camp by the river.'

The 1920 holiday edition of 'The Geelong Advertiser' mentioned that Mr. & Mrs. H. C. Cameron, Joan and Hugh, were residing at their recent acquisition for the Xmas recess.



Cameron's "Bindaree"

Crichton Cameron (an Accountant, Company Director and later a Grazier) first came to Anglesea River in the early 1890s on fishing expeditions, and is thought to have stayed at Mrs. Murray's boardinghouse on the then main route into town (now Camp Road). In those magic days, upstream to the north of the river fork, you could even drink clear water coming from an ever running spring.

If we look back to that period between the two wars, the small seaside township had none of the perks of 'closer settlement.' In those halcyon days dirt roads, tank water, wood stoves and kerosene lamps were the going thing - if you wished to bathe, then it was down for a splash in the river - *just as simple as that!*

Times were exciting when the Camerons first came to the area. More bathing boxes were appearing at the main beach. A new staging south of the bridge provided swimmers with a good depth of water for diving. Charles Pratt was giving joy flights from the sand in his two winged flying machine. Sometimes you could catch a glimpse of Charles J. Lane as he stopped his great car at the store, on his way through to 'Sunnymead' - *never a dull moment*



H. C. Cameron. The Governor A.T. Bingley.

Crichton was President of the Anglesea Progress Association for many years. In 1922 on behalf of the township, he welcomed the Governor as he passed through to open the first section of the Great Ocean Road.

Joan Cameron Murch always loved a good game of tennis. With some sadness we called to the corner of Parker and Tonge Streets in 1995 and inspected the heaped remains of the old club courts. Joan of course was there on the first day they were opened in 1930 - in fact she and Stan McMillan won the mixed doubles on that great occasion. The old Tennis Club complex fell into disuse during WW2. It was later sold as home sites.



Joan at the old tennis courts in 1995

The New Years Day regatta has always been part of Joans life. She loved to participate in earlier days, and now looks forward to presenting the trophies

During 1949 Joan acquired the next door cottage, and now lives there more or less on a full time basis. The original Cameron cottage 'Bindaree' is still occupied by family descendants as a holiday abode.

Change came in 1968 when the main highway outside their cottage was moved south to link with the new bridge. The old road was terminated at the river. This was later named Murch Crescent after Joan Cameron Murch □

Lindsay Braden.