

BUNINYONG AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Reg. No. A0030085Y

Web Site <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~buninhis>

PO Box 98, Buninyong, Vic. 3357.

Newsletter



Derick Leather as Simon De Soza leads the Gold King Festival Procession in 1994

December 2012

Our Christmas meeting takes place on Thursday 20 December, at 7.30m when we will celebrate the Christmas season. At our AGM in October, we elected a new committee – Bob Skewes as President, Beth Kicinski as Vice-President, Clive Brooks as Treasure, and Anne Beggs-Sunter as Secretary. We also joined the Buninyong CFA to recognise their 140th anniversary.

A TRIBUTE TO DERICK AND SHIRLEY LEATHER OF BUNINYONG

Frederick Bryan (Derick) and Shirley Leather arrived in Buninyong in December 1972 with their family. Derick was born in Ilkley, Yorkshire, and served as a pilot in the RAF and as an Army captain.. In 1955 he met Shirley McKenzie, who was on a working holiday from Australia. They

later emigrated to New Zealand, and eventually arrived at Buninyong. Derick rapidly became engaged in community activities, beginning with the School, which his children Harry, Janet and Richard attended.

When he was School Council President in 1977, he suggested the need for a Buninyong Newsletter to be produced. The newsletter has continued monthly ever since, a key means of developing Buninyong's strong community spirit. Derick was a major contributor of articles over many of those issues, indexing the old copies of the *Buninyong Telegraph* in the Ballarat Library and relating past and current events.

He served as a Buninyong Riding Councillor from 1977 until 1994. He was Mayor in 1981-2, and again in 1990-1. He was a dedicated and resourceful councilor representing Buninyong, busy on committees, and always promoting projects that would improve and enhance the Shire. Major projects involved the 150th anniversary of white settlement in Victoria in 1985, when funding was secured for the restoration of the Town Hall and Court House and in 1988 Derick masterminded the Shire-wide celebrations of the Bicentenary. He was always keenly aware of preserving Buninyong's history, including making sure the Shire Council looked after its records. The Gardens was a particular love, and he was a very active member of the Gardens Restoration Group, ensuring that many new trees were planted in the gardens vicinity, and in the streets of the township. It was Derick who designed the plan for the re-birth of the old swimming pool as a sunken garden that has become such a popular site for weddings.

He was intimately involved with the Buninyong Festival from its birth in 1976, including terms as President and Secretary. He was always prepared to pitch in to a variety of jobs, such as putting up tents, erecting the Poppet Head in De Soza Park, moving chairs, orchestrating the chicken and wine lunch in the Gardens and dressing up to appear in the Procession

As a foundation member of the Shire of Buninyong Historic Assets Committee in 1982, he suggested the formation of a Buninyong and District Historical Society, whose first activity was to publish the *Illustrated History of Buninyong*. Derick had been collecting photos since 1973, and he actually underwrote the production costs of the book, as the new Society had no funds of its own. The book went on to be very successful, being reprinted six times.

Another project dear to his heart was the restoration of the Old Library in Buninyong, a very unusual timber building of 1860, which is recognised by both the National Trust and Heritage Victoria. He led the committee which was formed to raise money for the restoration, and typically, spent many hours stripping back old painted timbers and being generally useful to the

builder employed on the project. The restored Old Library, completed in 1991, is now the pride of Buninyong, housing an excellent historical display.

The list of Derick's community activity could go on and on - member of the Scouts, the Lions Club, the RSL, the Cemetery Trust and the Progress Association. There was a move in the 1990s to have Derick recognized by the Australian honours system, but it was discovered that remarkably, he was not an Australian citizen. The best that could be done was to name him as Ballarat's "Citizen of the Year" for 1999.

In summary, Derick Leather has been the consummate community man, a doer, a thinker, a stirrer and a champion. Derick died on 13 October 2012, aged 89. Shirley died on 30 November 2012, aged 79. They were a marvelous couple for nearly 60 years, with Shirley always providing great support to her husband, as well as working as a nurse after she came to Buninyong. Shirley's funeral was held at St. Peter and Paul's in Buninyong, and she was buried at Buninyong. Some of Derick's ashes were scattered at the cemetery he did so much to make a place of order and serenity.

The Buninyong and District Historical Society was on the point of electing Derick an Honorary Life Member at its 30th Annual General Meeting on 18 October 2012 when we heard the sad news of his death. David Kimpton suggested a very fitting epitaph for Derick, with thanks to Christopher Wren:

'If you would seek his monument, look around you'.

ELECTION OF BETH RITCHIE AS AN HONORARY LIFE MEMBER

Frank and Beth Ritchie came to Buninyong around 1960, when Frank was a secondary school teacher in Ballarat. They purchased their property on the Mount Buninyong Road, and once their sons started attending the Buninyong State School, Beth became very involved in the local community, especially the school and the formation of a Kindergarten.

She was one of the leading proponents of the 'Back to Buninyong' celebrations in 1973, to mark the centenary of the opening of the State School, which gave impetus to the idea of the Buninyong Gold King Festival.

Beth was always interested in Buninyong's history, and preserving its heritage buildings in a period when few others cared. With Bill Thorpe, she was responsible for the National Trust recognizing the old Court House/Police Court adjacent to the Botanical Gardens in 1973.

She was a founding member of the Buninyong and District Historical Society in 1982, and has always worked quietly behind the scenes to ensure that the history is recorded accurately. She made a huge contribution to the publication of *Three Times Blest* in 1988, and to the conservation study of the Botanical gardens in the 1990s. She has also championed the conservation of the old Court House/Police Court in the Gardens.

She has been an active member and supporter of this Society since its foundation, and it is fitting that on this our 30th anniversary, we recognize the contribution of Beth Ritchie to Buninyong, and to this historical society.

News

Our interpretative signs are up at last – one at Hastie’s Spring, and one at the old Court House adjacent to the Gardens. A \$2000 grant from the Victorian Government through the Local History Grants Program allowed us to produce the signs, with the co-operation of Peter Marquand of the City of Ballarat’s Botanical Gardens staff. Four new signs have also been placed in the Gardens. It is satisfying to have the site of Rev. Thomas Hastie’s arrival in Buninyong in 1847 finally marked.

Sides Silver Service Presentation

Ian Sides, a grandson of Frederick Sides, formerly of *Castlewood*, Mount Mercer, and Shire President in the 1890s, very generously donated a silver tea service presented to Frederick and his wife in December 1902 by his friends of the Mount Mercer and Grenville District, on the occasion of them leaving the district. John and Elizabeth Sides migrated from Ireland in 1855 with their nine children, and soon settled at Mount Mercer, calling their property *Castlewood* after the property where the family had worked as tenant farmers in Ireland. The family purchased land as it became available on the old Mount Mercer Cattle Station, and son Frederick became a leading man in the district, and a trustee of the Grenville Union Church.

Wallace Family History

We are grateful to Stewart Robinson for presenting us with a copy of *The Wallace Document*, a family history that documents the life of John and Elizabeth Wallace of *Ballark*, Morrissions, one of our important pastoral properties, famous for its association with thoroughbred racing and the famous Melbourne Cup winner, Carbine.

A poignant example of a faithful convict servant comes from the Wallace family. When John Wallace took up the *Ballark* run in 1837, he brought his convict servant John Skimmings, a native of the Isle of Man, with him from Van Diemen's Land. never left the family, and when he died at the age of 70, he left his savings of £800 to Annie Ocock, the daughter of John Wallace who had fallen on hard times when she and her six children were deserted by her husband.

BIOGRAPHICAL QUERIES

August-November 2012

AITKINSON - Thomas Atkinson and his wife, Catherine were married in Ireland and arrived in Black Lead/ Buninyong area in 1863. Thomas was a miner.

BLUM – John Blum was the licensee of the NUGGET/COURT HOUSE/ /RAILWAY/ BLUM'S HOTEL, Corner Learmonth and Cornish Sts. (Brick building still existing), from about 1913 until the hotel was delicensed in about 1917

BROWN – Benjamin, at Black Lead 1850s to 1870s. Shire Councillor 1865-68. Descendant in NZ is writing a book on Griffiths and Brown families of Black Lead. Query from descendant in New Zealand.

CAMERON – Mary, wife of farmer at Yendon in late nineteenth century. Associated with McGregor and Tierney families.

HERBERT – James and wife Anne were at Black Lead in 1861 when their son Alfred was baptized by Rev. Russell. In 1865 Herbert was one of the jurors into the inquest into death of three miners at Scottish and Cornish Mine.

KIRK – Martin and his wife Mary nee Callaghan were at Scotchman's Lead in the 1860s, where their children were born between 1862 and 1875, before the family moved to Stawell.

PEAKE - Lawrence Peake, butcher from London, arrived in Victoria in 1852 and lived in Buninyong with his family between 1870 and about 1900. Three of his daughters married three McGrath boys in Buninyong. Query from Tunbridge Wells, Kent

SCANNELL – Family at Durham Lead between 1860s and 1920s

WALKER – Andre was a tanner at the Buninyong Tannery from 1863 to about 1876. He was Mayor of the Borough in 1875-6. His son, Andrew continued the tannery business, based in Ivanhoe, naming his home, *Buninyong*. Query from South Australia.

**Anyone with information about these families is invited to contact the Secretary,
Anne Beggs-Sunter, at a.beggs-sunter@ballarat.edu.au**

Lawrence Peake's Arrival at Port Phillip in 1852.

Thanks to Francis Eames of Tunbridge Wells, UK , we have a transcription of a letter written by Lawrence Peake on his arrival in Victoria. After marrying and moving around several gold fields, including Morrisons, he settled at Buninyong in 1870 as a butcher.

Port Phillip, 17 September 1852

My Dear Parents,

I take up my pen to write to you in the best of health and spirits and in the most beautiful of climates.

I passed the time away very well having plenty to do as I had agreed with the Captain for £ 2 and perquisites to act as butcher. My health was never better and in fact there was not a single instance of illness as the provisions was very good. Poor Mrs Cook was ill the whole time and was very seldom on deck we arrived at the bay on the 3rd of September being 93 days out from Plymouth which is reckoned a very fair passage thus ended one of the pleasantest voyage one could make.

I must now attempt to describe the place when we first saw land it was about 60 miles from Port Phillip it being called entering the heads it being a channel about 15 miles in width and being a very particular part particularly in rough weather which it was and requiring a pilot who takes the ship to the entrance of the bay then a second pilot takes the ship to its anchorage here. It was a most splendid sight meets your eye as we rounded a point where there is a lighthouse built it opens into one of the finest bays in the world there are as many as 70 ships of all nations the decks of some crowded with emigrants eager to learn the latest news. The view all around is most beautiful. We anchored alongside a Scotch Clipper and to our left is Williamstown composed of about 12 houses and a flagstaff and in front is Melbourne one mass of houses; to our right a lofty range of mountains and thick bush land and to our back the beautiful green sea.

We were soon boarded by the Government Doctor he soon found we was all healthy all was at liberty to go ashore but however we soon heard the true accounts being boarded by different trades people for hands offering most wonderful prices such as 4 pounds a week and board and lodging of all traders. Lodging are immensely high and hardly any to be got which shocked all those married people with families who had no place to go so on the following day Mr C.O.L. went ashore to look for lodgings. I took care of their things everything being in a great bustle on board they returned not til the following day having got a small cottage of 3 rooms for £2 a week so a was obliged to make shift.

I must now give you a description of the town as I heard it from them. It cost them 6 shillings to go ashore to Melbourne by the steamboat and when they got on shore they was up to their knees in mud and water as it is the ending of the wet season and everybody they met wore great boots up to their knees which fetch when new as much as 4 to £5. The streets was crowded with people of all sorts and all armed and in almost every shop they saw lumps of gold all the shopkeepers being buyers of gold in fact there is nothing heard of but gold. They went into a house to have some refreshments and nothing was less than 6d a glass of liquor which is called a nobler 6d an orange 6d and in fact they were completely astonished at everything they saw particular one thing while they were in there a man came in for something and it

came to 1s when he gave a 5 1s piece and they passed him the change when he threw it away saying he did not want to be bothered with it.

I must also tell you that there have been fresh diggings discovered called the Bendigo Diggings which is proving wonderfully successful. On the following day they went ashore leaving me their address . I did not intend to leave the ship yet and the Captain who is a very nice man could see I was pretty handy and knowing a Mr Boss a butcher at Williamstown spoke to him for me he said he was having his shopman leaving him on the 22nd September I agreed with him for 4 Pounds a week and board but only for a time till Mr Cook is settled about what he is going to and most likely he will go up to the diggings when the fine weather sets in. The accounts are so brilliant that every sailor is leaving their different ships and running away so that the Captain made an agreement to give me 5 shillings a day till I leave on purpose to get his cargo out as his sailors are leaving how they can.

It was the other night that 4 cut away with the boat and there are dozens of ships lying without hands so there is not the least difficulty in making a fortune in a very few years.

I must now bid farewell and I hope this will reach you all safe and in good health so give my love to all and may God bless you all not forgetting anybody.

*I remain your ever dutiful and distant loving Son
Laurance Peake.*

COMING EVENTS

12-13 January 2013 – Australian Cycling Championships, Buninyong

11-20 January 2013 Organs of the Ballarat Goldfields Festival

19 January – Market Day Buninyong, and Historical Society Open

4 February – Indexing team reconvenes for regular Monday mornings

21 February 2013 - General Meeting BDHS