

# BUNINYONG AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Reg. No. A0030085Y

Web Site <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~buninhis>  
PO Box 98, Buninyong, Vic. 3357.

## Newsletter December 2020



William Strutt, 1852, *Waran-drenin of the Warrenheip Tribe*, watercolour, British Museum (Cover of Fred Cahir's *My Country All Gone*, 2019).

**Following our AGM held in the Queen Victoria Rotunda on 19 November 2020, Peter Hiscock was re-elected as President, with Ron Gilchrist as Vice-President, Chris Hindhaugh as Treasurer, and Anne Beggs-Sunter as Secretary.**

## **Vale Don Ogilvie**

### **Proud Buninyong Son 1924-2020**

Don was the youngest son of John Ogilvie, former Mayor of Buninyong and curator of the Buninyong Botanical Gardens in the early years of the twentieth century. His grandfather was Robert Ogilvy (1821-1897), a Scottish highlander who arrived in Buninyong in the early 1850s. He was a ship's carpenter by trade, and once married, built a cottage that still stands on the Midland Highway at the foot of Mount Buninyong. Don was born in the caretaker's cottage in the Gardens, and had many treasured memories of growing up in that beautiful environment. Don was born with twisted feet, which required many trips to the Children's Hospital in Melbourne, and having to wear splints. He did not walk until he was four years old.

Life was tough for the Ogilvie family in the 1930s, after his father died and his mother became caretaker of the Gardens and taught children how to swim in the swimming pool, which was only emptied and cleaned once a year. When it was empty, he and his brother used the pool to house their live rabbits, which were their key means of making money using their dogs and ferrets. The live rabbits would be sold to the Ballarat Coursing Club for their events.

But as he approached adolescence, he became a typical country boy, playing football, cricket and tennis. Most of all he loved rabbiting. The boys would set off with their pack of dogs, and their ferrets in boxes, to the outskirts of the town. The rabbits were important food for the family table, their skins were sold in Ballarat to Dobberlies, and the rabbits also fed the big pack of dogs the Ogilvie family maintained – up to 13 dogs. When the Council dog inspector came round, most of the dogs would be let loose until after his visit.

Later Don got into fox shooting, around Mount Buninyong. His brother Jack had a .22 rifle, and he taught Don to shoot. The fox skins would be strung up on fences, and then sold in Ballarat to Rehfisch and Sons for good money.

Don met his wife Joan Adams (connected to Burns family from Yendon) at a dance at the Buninyong Town Hall. They settled in Ballarat and Don worked on the maintenance team at the School of Mines in Ballarat for many years.

Don recalled his service in the volunteer plane spotters' brigade during World War Two. The spotters' hut was near Brim Brim, and was equipped with a telephone. A round the clock roster of boys, young men and some women were rostered in four hour shifts of two people, to watch out for enemy aircraft. Don recalls his shift starting at 3.00am, but he never spotted an aircraft, and was terrified if the telephone rang. The only plane he saw was a trainer from Point Cook that crashed on Mount Buninyong in 1939, and he took away a piece of red painted timber as a souvenir.

Don played tennis for the Presbyterian, Methodist and Church of England tennis teams in Buninyong. He loved watching and supporting the Buninyong Cricket and Football teams, and watching his children, then grandchildren going on to become very good cricketers in the Ballarat district.

In later years, almost every Saturday morning Don came to Buninyong to visit the Old Library and the Historical Society, to share his razor-sharp memories of Buninyong in

the 1930s and 1940s, before going to the oval to watch a game of football or cricket in the afternoon.

With his wife Joan, he contributed so much to our knowledge of the social history of the Buninyong district. He was responsible for the naming of Ogilvie Lane, which runs from the old family cottage at Mount Buninyong down into the village near Hastie's original property

Don died peacefully at Geoffrey Cutter Centre, Ballarat on 25 August 2020, just short of his 96<sup>th</sup> birthday. He left two sons John and Peter, and five grandchildren. He was interred privately at Buninyong on 28 August 2020.



Don Ogilvie in 2012, proudly posing with his sign.

## **Mount Buninyong Tower**

The first rather flimsy observation tower was placed on the top of the Mount by the Borough of Buninyong in 1916.

In the 1920s, the Buninyong Progress Association began lobbying to improve the visitor experience of coming to the Mount, lobbying for a new road, a better observation tower, and even a chalet (which never came to fruition).

Buninyong Shire Council Minutes, 1 December 1927. Letter from Public Works Department announcing a £100 grant for a 'Look out' on Mount Buninyong. Council had requested the grant in July 1927. The tower was called the Alexander Bell Memorial Tower, after the Member for Wellington Province in the Legislative Council, Alexander Bell, who lived in Ballarat and had a family connection to Durham Lead in the Buninyong Shire.

Tenders were accepted in February 1928, for a cost of £375, with the Buninyong Progress Association contributing £25.

The Buninyong Progress Association strongly supported the new tower, and contributed funds. The poppet head came from Bendigo, and was transported by horse power. Residents recalled watching a team of horses with a wagon dragging the tower legs to the top of the summit.

On 26 January 1977, an announcement was made that a new tower would be built, with a \$10,000 government grant from the Tourist Fund, in co-operation with the CFA, the Forests Commission and BTV-6, the Ballarat television station. The new tower was completed in 1979, and the old poppet head was returned to Bendigo, to the Deborah Mine. The new tower functioned as a viewing platform, a fire watching tower, and a point for reception of television by Channel 6 Ballarat.

### **William Buckley and his Mount Buninyong wife**

A recent email sent me off on an intriguing research journey. The writer was asking for any information we might have about Indigenous history, because she was trying to find out about William Buckley's progeny. According to her own family history, she was descended from a union between William Buckley and an Indigenous woman. I had heard a story that Buckley had a wife from the Mount Buninyong tribe, but I had to find the details.

One of the most fascinating stories in early Port Phillip was the life of William Buckley, the convict who escaped from Sorrento in 1803 and lived with the Wadawurrung people of the Geelong district for 32 years, before re-joining his former society after meeting John Batman in 1835.

The white settlers who came to the new settlements of Melbourne and Geelong in 1835 were fascinated by Buckley, who gradually recovered his lost English language, and told snippets of his story to John Batman, and especially to the missionary George Langhorne, who was appointed by the Church Missionary Society in Sydney to come to the new settlement in January 1837 and establish a mission station and school for Aboriginal children very close to the site that later became the Shrine of Remembrance. Langhorne held conversations with Buckley, whose English was still very halting, and wrote down an account of these discussions. (*Reminiscences of James Buckley who lived for thirty years among the Wallawarro or Watourong tribes at Geelong Port Phillip, communicated by him to George Langhorne*, [manuscript, SLV])

Buckley admitted that he had a wife. 'They gave me a wife, but suspecting the circumstance occasioned jealousy in the tribe, I resigned her, and ever after lived single. This seemed to please them much, and I was no longer apprehensive of danger from them'. This statement intrigued Langhorne, who commented:—'Buckley says he did not live with any black woman; but I have doubted from circumstances which came under my notice the truth of this assertion, and also I think it probable that he had children.'

In 1852, when Buckley had moved to Van Diemen's Land, his so-called autobiography was published in Launceston by the journalist John Morgan. In this account Buckley was coy about his marital arrangements. He said that 'I was most unexpectedly joined by a young native woman, who had run away from her tribe at some distance. She remained with me for a long time'. That is all he said at that time.

In 1856 James Bonwick published *William Buckley, the wild white man and his Port Phillip black friends*. (Melbourne : Geo. Nichols, Digitised by SLV). Bonwick never got to talk to Buckley in Hobart, but did collect accounts from eye-witnesses, including an Aboriginal man called Simon, son of Jagga Jagga, who said he knew a son of Buckley's. 'Several living parties attest to the knowledge of his children'. (p. 12)

The Western District squatter James Dawson in 1881 published an important contribution in *Australian Aborigines, The Language and Customs of Several tribes of Aborigines in the Western District of Victoria, Australia* (Melbourne:George Robinson).His co-author was his daughter Isabella, who had learned the local Indigenous language and interviewed a number of the residents at Framlingham (near Warrnambool). This account is unique for its time, giving the personal name and voice of an Indigenous woman, **Purranmurnin Tallarwurnin**, who said she was Buckley's wife. Dawson wrote that 'her account has been kindly submitted by Mr. Goodall, the Superintendent of the Aboriginal Station at Framlingham. There is at the Aboriginal Station at Framlingham, a native woman named Purranmurnin Tallarwurnin, who was the first wife of the white man Buckley at the time he was found by the first settlers in Victoria. She belonged originally to the Buninyong tribe, and was about fifteen years old when she became acquainted with Buckley.'

In 1948, Charles Barrett published a book called *White Blackfellows*, in Melbourne, that included Buckley's story. In it he states



Buckley had more than one wife whilst he was living among the blacks, but he would never acknowledge that he had any progeny, excepting on one occasion, when he pointed out to a friend, a woman who he said was his daughter. If we are to believe tales told among the early colonists, Buckley was the father of many children. Bonwick mentions a 'tall, handsome woman' universally regarded as a daughter of Buckley's and two fine looking young women, also entitled to call him father. Sons he had too, according to some people. It is possible that descendants of the Wild White Man may be living today. (p. 20). *Unfortunately, Barrett gives no footnotes or references!*

Another intriguing source to consider is the photographer Fred Kruger, who in 1878 was engaged by the Aborigines Welfare Board to photograph Aborigines at the Coranderrk Aboriginal station, near Healsville. Included in his portraits, held by the State Library, are several of Queen Mary of Buninyong. Most of the Buninyong tribe were persuaded to leave their country and go to Coranderrk in about 1866.

In these Covid times, the Internet has proved a great boon, and I was able to find digital copies of some of the most important eye-witness accounts of William Buckley and the Wadawurrung. In 2019 Fred Cahir published his very useful *My Country All Gone; the White Men have stolen it, the Invasion of Wadawurrung Country*. (We have a copy of this very important source in our collection.) On the cover of the book is reproduced a beautiful portrait of a young Indigenous woman from the Warrenheip tribe, drawn by the artist William Strutt in 1852. (The sketch is in the British Museum)

Since 2019 two historical novels about Buckley have appeared: *Buckley's Chance* by Garry Linnell (Penguin, 2019) and *The Ghost and The Bounty Hunter: William Buckley, John Batman And The Theft Of Kulin Country* by Adam Courtenay (2020, ABC Books) The latter is an excellent account, where the author pays tribute to the work of Fred Cahir. Courtney has read all the primary sources, and adds a little more to our knowledge. He writes that in April 1841 George Augustus Robinson, the Aboriginal Protector, noted that he met near Lake Colac a woman who claimed she was Buckley's daughter. (p. 167) In the journal of William Thomas, written in the late 1850s, he says that he met two of Buckley's sons, the result of Buckley's relations with a woman of his tribe named Pikururuck. Thomas said the sons, Mumba and Mewarreun, were aged 33 and 34. Another note in Thomas's journal for 31 October 1855 states that he met 'a fine Lubra who is the Grand daughter of the celebrated Buckley.' (p. 168)

William Buckley continues to fascinate!

## **Exceptional Tree Register, City of Ballarat, 2020**

The City has finally published its *Exceptional Tree Register*, in November 2020, and we are pleased to see that our very special old Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus Viminalis*) in Nolan Street is recognised. I wrote to the City on our behalf in 2005 about the importance of this tree, but no action was every forthcoming. It has great social significance, as it marks the site of a meeting between Governor Bowen and the local Aboriginal people at the end of May 1873. Local legend has it that some kind of a treaty was signed. The late Ray Willis said that an illustration drawn at the time of the signing shows the tree, though this has not been located. It is a tree of mystery and imagination, along with a number of other trees in Buninyong, which are also recognised in the Register.

## **Barrels proposal for Mount Buninyong**

We were alarmed to hear in August of a planning application to build four 'barrel style' residences on a block on Yendon No. 2 Road, at the foot of Mount Buninyong. This is in a precious area of landscape and heritage significance, bordering the Mount Buninyong Reserve which was set aside in 1866 by our far-sighted forebears as a natural reserve. Now a developer seeks to build residences that are totally out of keeping with the landscape. Our Society objected to the application, along with the Buninyong and District Community Association and nearly 50 individuals. We also obtained a letter of support for our objection from the Royal Victorian Historical Society Heritage Committee. The developer is taking the issue to VCAT early next year.

### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

17 December – General Meeting. 7.30pm

19 December – Third Saturday morning openings resume, 9.30am to 1.00pm

18 February General Meeting 7.30pm