

# BUNINYONG AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Reg. No. A0030085Y

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

## Newsletter



Elaine Coursing Club, meeting at Larundel, c 1923 (Museum Victoria) – see article this issue on Coursing

## December 2010

The Christmas **General Meeting** of the Buninyong and District Historical Society will take place on Thursday, 16 December, at the Town Hall, at 7.30 pm. Members are invited to bring a family photo that relates to Buninyong and district. We will also enjoy a festive supper.

## **History of *Narmbool* Published**

We congratulate Mary Akers on the publication of her book *Hold Fast the Heritage; An Account of Narmbool and its Pastoralists*, published by Sovereign Hill Museums Association on 5 December 2010. Mary was responsible for our first publication, the *Illustrated History of Buninyong*, written with Bill Thorpe in 1981. She is a meticulous researcher and fine writer, and this work grew out of Robin Ferry's wish to document the history of her property *Narmbool*, which she purchased with her husband Andrew in 1980. The book tells the history of the property, as well as placing it into the context of the district, and Victorian development, and it is beautifully illustrated. We have purchased a copy for our collection, and copies are available at a cost of \$75 from Sovereign Hill.

## **Buninyong Primary School Grade 4 Local History Program**

For the fourth year, Doug Bradby has been the impetus behind the Grade 4 Local History program at the Buninyong Primary School. Doug speaks to the pupils at the beginning of the program, and takes them on walking tours of the township and the cemetery. The teachers then take up the program with their pupils, who each chose a topic to investigate and produce a report in the form of a model, a computer program, a poster or an illustrated booklet. Parents become very involved in assisting their children and learning about their surroundings. On 9 December parents were invited to school to see the finished products and hear about the projects from the pupils, and a panel from the Historical Society and the Old Library had the difficult task of choosing prizewinners in each category. There were some wonderful projects, with some impressive ICT products, including an interview with our President Bob Skewes about 'Growing Up in Buninyong', and a lovely model and booklet on the stone walls of Buninyong. Our Society, along with the Old Library, contributed \$100 each to the prize fund. It has proved a remarkably successful trialling of the new National History Curriculum.



Grade Four pupils present their projects at Assembly, 10 December 2010

## **What's In a Name**

Arising from our AGM address by Joan Ogilvie, a question was asked about Commercial Road (the lane parallel with Warrenheip St, behind the Post Office.) Don Ogilvie, born in 1924 in Buninyong, who grew up in Buninyong, said that the lane was always known as Paddy's Lane, because Paddy Jones the baker had his premises in the corner of Forrest and Warrenheip Sts.

## **New Look to Buninyong Festival**

The former Buninyong Gold King Festival has restyled itself as the Buninyong Good Life Festival, and from 2011 will be held on the last weekend of October. It is hoped that the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Buninyong Botanical Gardens can co-ordinate with the Festival.

## **COURSING AND THE PLUMPTON**

By Anne Beggs-Sunter

It was the Scotchman Major Mercer who imported a pack of throughbred foxhounds, and introduced the sport beloved by generations of farmers. The first meet was held in 1839, when eighteen horsemen with a sprinkling of red coats, left in high spirits in the cool of a fine August morning. They hunted a kangaroo, but later meetings pursued the dingo. The wild dog did not always prove a co-operative substitute for the fox, because his staying powers were greater than those of any red dog from the old country, but he answered well enough until real foxes were introduced. (From Margaret Kiddle's *Men of Yesterday*, MUP, 1961, p. 80)

The early squatters liked to gather for recreation for a hunt, mounted on their stock horses and accompanied with their dogs. The young men liked to shoot ducks, snipe, quail and kangaroo, as a variant on the monotonous diet of mutton. Such hunting approximated the old world experience of the gentry. Their dogs were bred from greyhound stock, lean and muscular and fine for chasing kangaroos. Sometimes dingos were hunted. (Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*, p. 85.)

Between Buninyong and Geelong, Major Mercer at the Mount Mercer station introduced foxhounds, and hunts were held regularly during the winter months from the early 1840s. (*Geelong Advertiser*, 12 July 1845: Kiddle, p. 86). Compton Ferrers kept a pack of hounds at Wardy Yallock, and Alexander Fairlie Cunningham at his Mount Mercer Cattle Station, and Charles Sladen at Geelong. These formed the basis of the Corio Hunt formed in 1845, and in 1854 this pack formed the basis of the Melbourne Hunt Club pack. (T.F. Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, Curry O'Neill, 1983, p.197). The hunt developed in traditional English style, with packs of hounds at Werribee and Melbourne, and September became the finale of the season, with a Hunt Dinner at Mack's Hotel in Geelong and a subscription ball. (*Geelong Advertiser* 2,5 September 1846) The male participants wore pink jackets, and ladies rode side saddle, wearing a riding habit of black or dark blue cloth. (Marion Stell, *Half the Race: A History of Women in Sport in Australia*, Angus & Robertson, 1991, p. 9) Captain Foster Fyans, the Police Magistrate at Geelong, left an account of the hunt in the Mount Emu area, when about 30 squatters met for dinner, slept on the floor of the host's hut, then rose early to ride after a native dog, that made 'noble

sport', chased by the pack of hounds under master Compton Ferrers of Wardie Yallock. (*Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, p. 185-6)

Near Ballan, Thomas Pyke (known as 'Gentleman Pyke' who arrived in Port Phillip in 1838 from Wiltshire, took up a run near Pyke's Creek. He brought with him from England a pack of foxhounds. He presided over a local hunt meeting that assembled at the Werribee Hunt Hotel in Ballan, with local squatters and visitors such as William Stawell and Redmond Barry. (*A Pictorial History of the Shire of Ballan*, 1988, p. 14) The inn's sign showed a hunt with a pack of hounds.

It seems that the first foxes were imported to the Geelong area in 1855, possibly by Thomas Austin of *Barwon Park*, who imported rabbits in 1859 for hunting purposes. A report in *Bell's Life in Victoria* on 26 October 1867 reports on hunting in the Clarendon (then known as Corduroy) area. About 30 gentlemen gathered on horseback with their hounds, and chased kangaroo through the bush between Lal Lal and Burnt Bridge. A similar account in the *Courier* of 6 July 1868 describes the hunt setting out from Buninyong to McNaught and Boyd's at Clarendon, 'where kangaroos were known to abound.'

By the late 1870s, Coursing clubs were popular. Advertisements in the *Ballarat Star* in February 1878 advertised the program of the Ballarat Coursing Club, with events like the Ercildoune Stakes, the Dowling Forest Plate and the Carngham Plate, indicating that the sport was beginning to develop towards the organised sport of greyhound racing, first known as Plumpton meetings.

In 1877 the Elaine, Meredith and Morrisons Coursing Club was formed, under the patronage of the owners of *Narmbool*, John Boyd and David McNaught. The *Ballarat Star* of 26 June 1878 had an article on the club, which would meet on Tuesday at Elaine for the 'Puppy Stakes, with dogs to be in slips immediately after the arrival of the first train from Geelong at 9.30a.m.

Around 1884 Austin Albert Austin and Herbert Arthur bought the freehold of Narmbool and Cargarie, then consisting of about 15,000 acres. These were sons of Thomas Austin of *Barwon Park*, who first introduced rabbits into Victoria for hunting

purposes. They divided the property *Narmbool* into two parts, *Narmbool*, and the other half called *Larundel*, with a new homestead built in 1888.

The *Buninyong Telegraph* of 21 August 1907 reported a meeting of the Hardie's Hill and District Coursing Club taking place at the Narmbool Estate. Hares were reported as plentiful. Entries were to be lodged with Mr P. Hynes at the Pioneer Hotel, Durham Lead. (*Buninyong Telegraph*, 30 August 1907)

The Austins and their sons were great patrons of coursing and horse racing until they sold their properties for Closer Settlement in 1923. The *Narmbool* homestead area of about 4000 acres was considered unsuitable for arable purposes, and was sold to Alex Sutherland, who had been a surveyor with the Closer Settlement Commission.

Ian Sutherland, interviewed in 1987, recalls the Plumpton - hare coursing, which was popular on *Narmbool*. It was held behind the Elaine Railway station. As a boy he saw lots of hares about the property.

Late in the nineteenth century hare coursing became more formalised as the Plumpton. The etymology of the word 'Plumpton' is difficult to track down. It is not in the shorter Chambers, or the Oxford dictionaries. But it does appear in the *Australian National Dictionary* (1988) as originally the name of a village in Sussex, where the first enclosed greyhound racing took place in 1877. By 1884 the name was being used in Australia in the *Australian Coursing Calendar*, juxtaposing the open coursing to the enclosed Plumpton.

## **COMING EVENTS**

16 December – Christmas Meeting, 7.30 pm, Town Hall History Centre.

18 December – Buninyong Farmers' Market and History Centre open 9.00 am to 1.30 pm

14-23 January – Organs of the Ballarat Goldfields Festival