

PYRENEES PIONEERS

Newsletter of the Avoca and District Historical Society Inc.
Incorporation No. A5883

- President** : Mr. Stuart Smith, RMB 4212, Elmhurst, Vic. 3469
Correspondence Secy. : Mrs. Jill Hunter, "Stronvar", RMB 4342, St. Arnaud, Vic. 3478
Minute Secretary : Mrs. Edna Jarvis, 123 Inkerman Street, Maryborough, Vic. 3465
Treasurer : Mrs. Dorothy Robinson, 27 Orme Street, Avoca, Vic. 3467
Research Officer : Mrs. Jan Burnett, 92 Barnett Street, Avoca, Vic. 3467
Newsletter Editor : Mrs. Lorna Purser, 250 Burwood Hway., Burwood, Vic. 3125

Note: All correspondence should be addressed to the Correspondence Secretary.

Web-site – <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~adhs/ADHSMain.htm>

Newsletter No. 205

AUGUST, 2002

July Meeting and Tour of the Talbot Area, Well Off The Beaten Track! - Sunday, the 18th August, will be long remembered by those who attended this most successful event. We gathered together at the home of Len and Betty Fleming in Talbot, where we were quite overwhelmed by their wonderful hospitality and thoroughly enjoyed the barbecue lunch they provided for us. We were delighted to have with us Pearl Collins, from Moama, Peggy and Jim Sargeant, from Melbourne, and Joycelyn Milne and Elizabeth MacDonald, from Elmhurst.

A short general meeting was held after lunch before we headed, in convoy fashion, for the bush, with Len as our very knowledgeable guide. The dust began to rise as we traversed Nuggetty Gully Road for quite a distance, our destination being the grounds of the Stony Creek School, which occupied the site in the years 1865-1916.

All that remains today of Stony Creek State Elementary School No. 886 are a few bricks from the actual building and the basalt stone and quartz rocks which still outline the gardens once tended by the pupils and the large map of Australia they created for their geography lessons. It could be said that these stones stand as a monument to Miss Elizabeth James, who was the head teacher at Stony Creek from 1905 to 1912. A keen horticulturist, she guided her pupils in creating a most attractive garden setting for the school building. Features included a sundial, wire netting hung with creepers by the porch, a summer house, potted plants, the rockeries, and the big map of Australia, thus presenting "quite a pleasant spectacle", as one District Inspector reported in 1909. Miss James was also held in high esteem as a teacher.

We learned that the nearby Stony Creek runs from the Talbot Reservoir to McCallum's Creek and that the gold rushes in the area moved from Amherst to Back Creek, Stony Creek, Caralulup and the Scandinavian Lead, in Talbot, in that order.

Our convoy returned to the bitumen for a time before turning again into the bush, finally arriving at another site where small rocks had been used to outline several shapes. The centrepiece was an elongated diamond, perhaps 3 metres in length, with the points indicating north and south. Close by were two circles, one each side of the diamond. A fourth outline seemed to resemble a crown whilst a large triangle, with its apex pointing to the north, completed the group. At this point in time, Len does not know, with certainty, the origin and purpose of these shapes in such an isolated spot.

The next stop on our tour was deep in the State Forest, between Amherst and Lillicur. A steep, uphill walk brought our party to a huge quartz boulder estimated to weigh at least 40 tonnes, which balances on top of the "Big Reef". This boulder has been classified as a National Geological Monument. Surrounding it are immense masses of pure quartz outcrops which stand over six metres high, creating the biggest quartz reef left in Victoria. It is quite an amazing sight.

Returning to the Fleming home at Talbot, a welcome cuppa was enjoyed as we watched the very interesting video Len and Betty have made of the area. Our sincere thanks are extended to Len and Betty for their very generous hospitality and for sharing their knowledge of the secrets of the bush with us. A most enjoyable day was had by all!

(My thanks to Edna Jarvis and Marj. Partridge for their assistance with this report. Ed.)

Next Meeting Day - On Sunday, 15th September, local historian Mary Dridan will take us on a tour of the Amphitheatre area. We are to meet at **11.30 a.m. on the Pyrenees Highway at the Mountain Hut turn-off** which is approximately 7 kms. from Avoca. After touring Mountain Hut and the Pioneer Cemetery, we will go to Bakery Park in Amphitheatre to enjoy our BYO lunch, before continuing to other historic sites, including the Belfast diggings and the Chinese Camp. This promises to be another interest-packed day. Members who attended our August meeting should **note the change in arrangements re time and meeting place.**

Looking Ahead - On Sunday, 20th October, we will have another Photo Call day at the Court House. We are aware of three people who have photos to be scanned into our collection and we extend an invitation to others who hold photos of interest of the area to bring them along between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when Murray Little will be available with his computer. Our monthly general meeting will be held at 1.30 p.m.

Appreciation - We are deeply conscious of the very long day Murray Little had on our previous Photo Call day (21st July) and the constant concentration required by him to produce the excellent results of the finished photos which he achieves (i.e., lightening or darkening, removing background marks, etc., from the photos submitted). In appreciation, a special minute was passed at our August meeting to record the Society's thanks for the many hours he has devoted to our photo collection, and in particular his efforts on 21st July. Many thanks, Murray!

And Again, Appreciation - The Society is greatly indebted to the Pyrenees Shire for its recent letter informing us that they are prepared to assist us by waivering the annual rates on the Court House. The Society is most appreciative of this assistance, and the offer of advice re insurance matters in these difficult times.

New Members - A very warm welcome is extended to the following new members :-

Mr. Bob and Mrs. Ann MOODIE, of Calimo East, via Deniliquin, NSW, who are researching the MOODIE and RITCHIE families.

Mrs. Carol PRATT, of Noble Park, Vic., whose interests are the WILLIAMS and MORRIS families.

Mr. Steve HAMMOND, of Coogee, WA, who is interested in William HYDE and Isabella ROSS.

Mr. Phil WARING, of Canterbury, Vic., advises that he is now researching Pubs of the Pyrenees, in addition to his family names of HODGETTS, TERRELL and WARING.

Amherst Cemetery Records - Mrs. Betty Fleming advises that she is now the custodian of the Amherst Cemetery Records and will be happy to assist researchers. Betty can be contacted at 52 Scandinavian Crescent, Talbot, Vic. 3371, or phone (03) 5463 2397. We thank her for this kind offer.

CHHA Country History Expo - The theme this year is "Education and Trades" and the Expo will begin with the Inaugural CHHA Lecture to be given by Terry Laidler, former ABC presenter and lecturer in media, at 8 p.m. on Friday, 4th October, at the Mulkearn Lecture Theatre, Australian Catholic University, Aquinas Campus, 1200 Mair Street, Ballarat. Entry is by gold coin.

. On Saturday and Sunday, 5th and 6th October, the Expo will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Aquinas Campus, entry being \$5. Explore family and local history through country Victoria and Melbourne participants, workshops, displays and consultants, genealogical and local history information. There will be ample car parking and refreshments will be available. Note that this annual event is being held early in the month of October this year. For further information phone Gordon Dawe on (03) 5475 2041 or Chris Stancliffe on (03) 5467 1342; or e-mail centralhighlands@yahoo.com.au

Can You Help? The Cocking Family of Amphitheatre - Elaine Cocking is putting together a book on the COCKING family, who settled in Amphitheatre about 1870. She seeks information and contacts relating to Thomas COCKING and Mary Ann (nee WILLIAMS) and their children, as listed here :-

Thomas, d. 1899 at Clunes, m. Mary Maria HUME
William, d.1911 at Alexandra, m. Elizabeth J. T. JONES
Stephen, d. 1919 at Castlemaine, m. Emma SMITH
James, d. 1926 at Amphitheatre, m. Georgiana (Georgina) SAUNDERS
Joseph, d. 1926 at Ballarat, m. Frances CUMMING
Mary, d. ? m. John BIRD
Ann, d. 1935, m. James Edward COMBER
John, d. 1950 in Tasmania, m. Mary Ann SAUNDERS
Richard Henry, d. 1940 at Amphitheatre, m. Martha SAUNDERS

If you can help, please contact Elaine Cocking, c/o Post Office, Dennington, Vic., 3280, phone her on (03) 5561 3673, or e-mail elainecocking@iprimus.com.au

Old Postcards - Helen Harris advises that she purchased the following items at a recent card fair:-

Postcard to Miss A. Stevenson, High Street, Maryborough, from her niece, Florrie, no date, but possibly c.1910, photograph of Florrie by photographer Seaton, of Maryborough. Cost \$2.50.

Small folded card with view of Minyip, to "Edith Will and family, Homebush Lower" from "the cousins at Minyip". Cost \$2.50.

Postcard of flowers, addressed to Master Malcolm Miller, "Ardhu", Homebush Lower, from "Auntie Clarice and Uncle Heb wishing you a merry Xmas and a happy New Year 1918-1919". "Dulciemoor" at bottom. Cost \$3.00.

Postcard of Easter Greetings to Miss V. Mackereth, Avoca, from niece Ella who was "learning elocution & going to recite next Thursday". No date. Cost \$3.00.

Should any of these cards be of interest to you, they can be obtained by contacting Helen by e-mail at hdharris@ozemail.com.au or write to her at 40 William Street, Box Hill, Vic. 3128.

Indexing from the Victoria Police Gazette - We are indebted to Helen Harris who continues her indexing programme for the Society. She advises that she has now extracted all Avoca and district entries (including those for Maryborough) from the Victoria Police Gazette for 1894 and 1895. These index cards will shortly be sent to the Society to be added to our vast collection at the Court House. Thankyou, Helen!

Looking Back – Cr. F. Briody, Lexton Shire President (from "The Avoca Mail", Wednesday, 21st September, 1967) :-

"A Waubra grazier, Cr. F. J. Briody, has been elected Shire President. The name of Briody is not new in the Council, his father, the late Hugh Briody, having served for many years and held office in 1948 and 1957.

Cr. Briody, of Langi Kal Kal Estate, was elected at Council's September meeting. The retiring president, Cr. W. F. Cheesman, of Burnbank, congratulated Cr. Briody on his election.

Cr. Briody welcomed three new councillors – Crs. J. G. Kaye, J. J. Borbidge, and K. Severino – who were attending their first meetings. They were elected unopposed in the recent annual elections.

The president's allowance of £240 will remain unchanged."

STONY CREEK STATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NO. 886.

Deep in the forest, not far from Talbot, lie the remains of this school which began as Kangaroo Gully School in 1865. These remains consist of a few red bricks and the rock outlines of the gardens and large map of Australia, with the states marked, created almost a century ago by then head teacher Miss Elizabeth James and her pupils (see page 1 of this newsletter).

The original school building measured 24 ft. by 14 ft. It cost £35 to build, and had an itinerant teacher in charge. In 1866, an application was made by Mr. W. W. Walker, on behalf of the local community, for assistance with an increase in salary and a grant of £70 to extend the building. The grant was refused, as the Board of Education did not consider the building suitable. However, the salary request was approved as from 15th July, 1867. Mr. James Knight was the first head teacher.

With a net enrolment in 1867 of 37 pupils, the school had to be extended to a size of 36 ft. by 14 ft. by 11 ft. In 1869, a red brick building was built at a cost of £243 and the old building then became a three-room residence.

The gold rush at Stony Creek in 1876 saw a great increase in the number of children attending but, by 1893, when the gold had run out, there was talk of closing the school. By 1902, when the net enrolment had fallen to 10, the District Inspector considered that the school should operate on a part-time basis with the Red Lion School No. 850, situated near Majorca. The Stony Creek School finally closed in 1916.

In 1905, Miss Elizabeth James was appointed head teacher and she immediately set about redecorating the interior of the school building, earning the compliments of Mr. A. Dean, the School Inspector that year. In 1906, Mr. Dean's compliments were for the gardens and he noted that a flower house had been erected.

That Miss James was able to gain the interest and support of the local community was obvious when many parents attended on Arbor Day, 1907, to witness the planting of 15 trees in the school grounds.

To create the rock gardens, the story is told that the children were asked to bring a small piece of rock or quartz to school each day for the purpose of outlining the flower beds and the large map of Australia. The boys were responsible for clearing the grounds of old stumps and carrying in soil and gravel for the garden. A sundial was a feature of the completed garden, as well as a summer house with pot plants, a garden seat beneath a shady tree, and climbing plants covered a wire netting framework by the school porch.

There were 20 children present when the District Inspector visited the school on 8th July, 1909. The names on the school roll that day were: William Kirk, Andrew and Alexander McDermaid, William Brooks, Dulcie and Arnold Hill, Margaret McKenzie, Ruby Shaw, Stanley and Violet Baker, Frank Bower, Olive, Lily and John Salt, George and Elsie Kersting, Herbert Ead and Ellen Sainsbury. On that day, the Inspector made the report: "*Hidden away in the heart of a forest, used only for mining timber purposes, this nice bush school presents, by reason of its tastefully improved grounds, quite a pleasing spectacle . . . In this respect, it is the best school I have met.*"

In October, 1910, Inspector Saxton visited the school and made the following report: "*The teaching in this little school has been of the sound, thoughtful type it is a pleasure to find. The school is in the heart of a forest of scrub yet a garden more suitable for a city flourishes. The children and parents are extremely interested in everything that pertains to their school and its life. Nothing is too good to be done for it*

The children's intelligence has been very well trained. They are being given excellent habits and the community owes to Miss James very much indeed for the institution she has made to live in their midst. The value of the school as a lead centre of the little community is inestimable."

This report was typical of the comments made by the District Inspectors about Miss James, even after she had left! When she left in September, 1912, a farewell concert was given in the Stony Creek School, and Miss James moved to Clunes, where she lived and taught – and created another beautiful garden.

Her successor at Stony Creek was Miss Elsie Ellis, a temporary teacher until May, 1913, followed by Miss Ann Weir as head teacher. From March, 1914, until 30th June, 1916, Miss Margaret Spotswood was in charge and her last entry in the teacher's time book was "Adieu".

From then on, the school operated part-time with Red Lion, with Mr. A. Arnold working Red Lion on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and Stony Creek on Tuesdays and Fridays.

After the closure of the Stony Creek School, the records were kept in a tin trunk in the shelter shed at the Talbot School. Here they were discovered at a working bee in 1973. As the then president of the Talbot School Committee, Mr. L. Solamano, remarked at the time, it was very fortunate that they had not been thrown out as rubbish and burned!

(The above is based on an article which appeared in the "Ballarat Courier" in March, 1985. My thanks to Edna Jarvis for supplying me with a copy of it. Ed.)

FEDERATION - We continue the listing of names shown on the **Electoral Roll** in the wider Avoca area who voted at the **Victorian Federal Election in 1899 :-**

G L E N M O N A

ADAM	David R.	Farmer	MAUGER	Charles S.	Miner
(Stony Creek)			(Nuggety Gully)		
ADAM	John		MEYER	August	Miner
(Stony Creek)			(Rocky Flat)		
BAILEY	Henry	Farmer	MITCHELL	James	Farmer
(Nuggety Gully)			MOORE	James	Miner
BAKER	Albert	Miner	(Kangaroo Flat)		
(Nuggety Gully)			MOORE	John	Farmer
BAKER	William	Miner	(Kangaroo Flat)		
(Nuggety Gully)			PERRY	William	Carter
BOXSHALL	Thomas	Farmer	(Mia Mia)		
(Long Gully)			PHILLIPI	Frederick	Baker
BOXSHALL	William J.	Farmer	ROBINSON	George	Farmer
(Long Gully)			SHEPHARD	Charles	Miner
BOYLE	John	Repairer	(Nuggety Gully)		
(Emu)			SHEPHARD	George J.	Miner
BRINKER	Frederick A.	Miner	(Nuggety Gully)		
(Nuggety Gully)			SWEENEY	James	Miner
CORNISH	William	Farmer	TAYLOR	Edward	Cooper
COSSTICK	Alfred	Miner	TOMPSON	Arthur	Miner
FISKEN	Thomas	Miner	TOMPSON	Henry	Ironmonger
GRIFFITHS	Edward T.	Farmer	TOE	Elijah	Saddler
GRIFFITHS	Samuel L.	Farmer	TOE	Francis	Saddler
GRIFFITHS	Thomas	Farmer	TUCKER	William	Miner
GRIFFITHS	Watkin W.	Farmer	TULLOCH	Ahasuerus T.	Postmaster
GROSSMAN	Henry	Farmer	TYACK	Charles	Miner
HALL	Edward	Miner	TYERS	Charles H.	Miner
HALL	William S.	Farmer	TYZACK	Charles	Miner
HANSEN	John	Farmer	VENUS	George	Gardener
HARRISON	John	Miner	WADDELL	Alexander	Carpenter
HARRISON	William	Miner	WALLIS	Charles	Butcher
HEVEY	John	Farmer	WALLIS	Frederick	Butcher
KELLY	James	Miner	WARDLEY	David R.	Cordial Maker
KIRK	John	Miner	WARDLEY	Frederick	Cordial Maker
(Nuggety Gully)			WARDLEY	William B.	Cordial Maker
LE TESSER	John	Farmer	WEILANDT	Nicholas	Carter
LUMB	Thomas	Miner	WELLARD	Max	Labourer
McDERMAID	Hugh	Miner	WHITTAKER	George	Hairdresser
McDERMAID	James Jnr.	Miner	WHITTAKER	William	Miner
McDERMAID	James the younger	Miner	WIDDOP	Henry	Draper
McKENZIE	John	Miner	WILSON	Matthew	Grocer
McLEAN	Donald	Carter	WITHER	John	Miner
McLEOD	Peter	Publican	WOUDA	William	Miner
(Caralulup)			WRIGHT	Charles	Labourer
			YOUREN	Francis E.	Salesman

L I L L I C U R

TEETGIN Neville Farmer

(To be continued)

