

Avoca & District



Historical Society Inc

Est 1984

Avoca & District Historical Society Inc

Inc No. A 5883

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From the Editor:**Welcome back to the Court House for 2022.**

Our AGM was held on the 29th November 2021 with the Treasurer, Dorothy Robinson, presenting the financial report for 2020-21. The committee recommended that membership fees for 2022-2023 be increased as there has not been an increase for many years. The recommendation was approved and new fees are :

Single: \$25; Family: \$30; Corporate: \$50

(Please provide email address if you have one so newsletters can be emailed instead of posting.

For Postage please add \$5 if newsletter is to be mailed. The committee also recommended that all renewal fees be aligned to the Financial Year and will be due from the 1st July each year until 30th June the following year. YOUR RENEWAL FORM is included / attached with the newsletter.

Our Court House Appeal (right) has almost reached its target of \$5000 and these funds will support the Shire's grant to maintain the building. The Digitization Account has been closed and funds added to the General Account. **Thanks to those who have made donations to the appeal. Donations of \$2+ are tax deductible.**

We welcome new committee member Erica Lubanszky and congratulate Marg Pilgrim on being nominated as President. Jill Hunter remains as Secretary and Dorothy Robinson as Treasurer.

Court House Restoration Work: Thanks to funding from the Pyrenees Shire, the Court House windows and doors have received a makeover and the building is now looking white and fresh thanks to the painting skills of Michael Swift.

The Court House is an important historical building for the town and needs to be maintained, and now that it houses the town's and district's historical records it is essential that the society continues to receive funds to ensure it survives for years to come. The committee is now investigating funding options to paint the Helen Harris Room to prevent the woodwork from deteriorating further.

**\$5000**

\$5,000

\$4,970

\$4,000

\$3,500

\$3,000

\$2,500

\$2,000

\$1,500

\$1,000

\$500

Our New Focus for future fundraising is the

Courthouse Account

Due to the generous response from a number of members our Court-house tally is \$4969 **YOUR DONATION** will assist us with matching funding for possible grants to carry out future maintenance of the Courthouse. Donations \$2 + are tax deductible



Research Officer's Report: The last two years of Covid restrictions has limited the number of research opportunities for members and visitors, however since February our research officer, Dorothy Robinson, has been kept busy providing photographs, cemetery records and newspapers articles to assist with researching family history.

Recently Debbie Squires and her friend Teresa Collis visited the Court House to research the history of the Squires family. They were keen to discover photographs and records of Homehush families including the Squires, Burkinshaws and Rowlands.

Teresa is the President of the Bairnsdale Historical Society so it was wonderful to share a variety of common issues and possible ideas ensure the future of historical societies.



Above : Dorothy shares resources with Teresa and Debbie



Above : Dorothy shows Teresa and Debbie around the Court House

This week Michael Cross and family members visited the Court House to research the Cross family who also lived at Homebush.

It has been a busy week for our research officer and it was rewarding to be able assist families with tracing their ancestor's history and providing them with photographs.



Above : Michael shares Cross family documentation with Dorothy

The Court House is open on the 1st & 3rd Wednesday of the month from 10:30am to 4pm. Special openings of the Court House can be arranged for a fee of \$30.

Due to email issues the committee voted to change the email address : **E : adhsemail@gmail.com**

Unknown Soldiers:

Do you recognize these soldiers?

Avoca & District Men and Women Who Served in the Great War - a list prepared by Anne Young (A.C.T.) during her academic research of the subject.

Do you know the names of the soldiers in the first two photos and the man on the right in the third photo? If so, please contact the Secretary at :

adhsemail@gmail.com



“To arms to arms.” World War 1 - 1914 – 1918

Herbert Louis Sims was born on Saturday 2nd November 1889 in Percydale to William and Harriet Sims. He grew up in Percydale and attended the Percydale School No1042 walking the short distance from his family's miner's cottage on the outskirts of Percydale.

When Lou was 25 years and 10 months of age, he took up the call to arms, and enlisted in Avoca with the Australian Imperial Force on Wednesday 25th August 1915.

On the evening of 15th November 1915 *“an assemblage of residents of Percydale and district gathered at Mr W.I. Robinson's residence...to bid farewell to Private Louis Sims, who was home on leave from the Ballarat Camp prior to going to the front.”* An enjoyable evening was had by all who attended and to show their appreciation for his service and to wish him well on behalf of the people of Percydale and district, he was presented with a handsome wristlet watch.



Lou's unit the 8th Battalion, 14th Reinforcement embarked from Melbourne, Victoria, on board HMAT Themistocles on Friday 28th January 1916. On the 28th February, he reached Suez for training. The fresh recruits were to join with the remaining 6th Battalion of seasoned Gallipoli veterans from the second wave of the Landing at Anzac Cove.

After some intense training in preparation for the front line and trench warfare, Lou was taken on strength and transferred to the 58th Battalion in April 1916. The 8th Battalion had consisted mainly of country men who had been farmers, labourers, miners and as such were skilled in shooting, horse riding and hard physical work. Their commanding officer was impressed by their performance, so it was no wonder that Lou may have stood out as a good recruit for his strength.

In a letter to his dear sister, Bessie Robinson (nee Sims) on 12th May 1916, Lou writes about his time training in Egypt *“Well I have been in the trenches a good deal during the last month...We are well prepared if they do come with entanglements, machine guns etc. It is rather warm on these deserts about 120 deg in the water bottle, and at night it is pretty cold...I suppose in time we will follow the other Australian troops. It may not be long either.”*

This battalion became part of the 15th Brigade of the 5th Australian division. Having only arrived in France on 23rd June, the 58th became embroiled in its first major battle on the Western Front at Fromelles on 19th July. The battle was a disaster. The 58th had the dual role of providing carrying parties and a reserve force. The reserve force (approximately half of the battalion) was ordered to attack late in the battle and was virtually annihilated by machine-gun fire; as a whole, the 58th suffered casualties equal to almost a third of its strength. Despite the grievous losses in its battalions, the 5th Division continued to man the front in the Fromelles sector for a further two months.

Early in 1917 the 58th battalion participated in the advance that followed the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line, but it was spared from the assault. It did, however, defend gains made during the second battle of Bullecourt, between 9th and 12th May. Later in the year, the AIF's focus of operations switched to the Ypres sector in Belgium. The 58th's major battle here was at Polygon Wood on 26th September.

1 Avoca Mail (Vic. 1863-1900, 1915-1918), Tuesday 30 November 1915, page 2 PERCYDALE. (From a Correspondent.)

During August 1917, Lou was on leave in England staying with his cousins he writes with greater freedom,

"...I have had some very rough experiences since I left the dear old home...Our first time in action over 12 months ago was an awful time for us, I would not state the casualties we had, but we gained our objectives, that portion of the front became fairly quiet for a while. In Oct. we went on to the Somme where we have been up till a few weeks ago. While there, we were principally holding the line or a portion of it I should say, and eventually he had to evacuate so we were first to get into Bapaume and fight our way beyond with little difficulty. This is when we had great hard-ships, we were about 12 weeks in the trenches without a spell, the greater part of the time rain, hail, and snow, the ground and everything frozen so it was difficult to get food etc. to us, at times we made a meal of melted ice or snow and a cigarette. Later on we took a very notable position in the new Hindenburg line which was I think the hottest corner I have been in, namely Bullecourt and where we fought with bombs for a few hours. After 3 days heavy bombardment we took the trench and 186 prisoners our officer was wounded 4 times the fourth one caused him to go out, and nearly cost his life, however he got the V. C. for it and is getting on fine I hear since. I was one of the few left to state how we took the position and speak in favour of the Officer (Lieutenant Rupert Vance 'Mick' Moon), before he could be recommended for the V. C...We left the Somme about a fortnight ago and are near where we were this time last year...You can never imagine what has to be done to win this war, it is like men fighting machinery our big guns also theirs in places are wheel to wheel so just think of the shells exploding round you from these, they snipe with 18lb shells instead of rifle bullets..."

Much later in London, he fills in the gaps for the 7-month period when he was on the front line in Belgium.

25th January 1919 Lou writes, *"I will let you know of some of our doings in France the last 7 months. Shortly after my last leave we went into a big battle in Belgium, some little distance from Ypres, where we made a big advance, finishing upon the Passchendaele Ridge. This was one of the greatest battles of the war, and where poor Geo Tem, lost his life. The shelling was something terrific I never expected to come out of it, and at one time it looked as though a number of us would be taken prisoner but thanks to our good shooting, we saved a grave situation, never before or since did I make the machine-gun speak as it did that early morning at daybreak. We had a number of casualties you may be sure. Perhaps Mrs Templeton would like to know that George would be buried I think at a place called Poperinge somewhere in the vicinity of Ypres (Belgium) where he died at the hospital or dressing station... We haven't had any severe fighting since but of course the best times in France is no home...To think they are back in places we have held for 12 months, and more...I only hope we can push them back as fast as they took it off us, but time will tell...I would give the whole show to be back on the creek in peace and quietness again."*

20th March 1918 Lou was granted the 10 days furlough he was so looking forward to enjoying. He had only been out of the trenches a few days after *"doing a tour of 22 days during which time we never took our clothes off and though it was fairly quiet we had 30 casualties, so I was not sorry to leave it."*

3rd July 1918 Lou states that, *"We came out of the front line of trenches yesterday...we had a good deal from Australia Comforts Fund lately including fruit, biscuits, cigarettes, cocoa etc and also got our 1917 Christmas boxes, which were very nice indeed...We have been over some of the ground we were on some months ago..."*

25th August 1918 Lou writes, *"...I am glad to hear Charlie Doodt arrived home safely, and that you have seen him. I had a letter from Bert Bradley saying he was about to leave England, so suppose he is nearly home by this time lucky begger...We are some little distance behind the line at present but may be in again very shortly. I had letters from the cousins...it seems a great complaint with some, however there was a kind of new disease floating about (Spanish flu) and they managed to get that, and it was not too pleasant while it lasted..."*

With the collapse of Russia in October 1917, a major German offensive on the Western Front was expected in early 1918. This came in late March and the 5th Division moved to defend the sector around Corbie; the 58th Battalion was the 15th Brigade's reserve during its now legendary counterattack at Villers-Bretonneux on 25th April. When the Allies launched their own offensive around Amiens on 8th August, the 58th Battalion was amongst the units in action, although its role in the subsequent advance was limited. The battalion was involved in the fighting to secure Peronne at the beginning of September and entered its last major battle of the war on 29 September 1918. This operation was mounted by the 5th and 3rd Australian Divisions, in co-operation with American forces, to break through the formidable German defences along the St Quentin Canal.

The battalion withdrew to rest on 2nd October 1918 and was still doing so when the war ended. Weakened by the progressive return of troops to Australia, the battalion ceased to exist as such when it merged with the 59th Battalion on 24th March 1919.

27th October 1918, Lou reports, *"We are out for a spell, and are in fairly cosy billets still, so will miss some of the winter mud this year, so far the weather is not too bad, but must expect the cold any time now...I will look forward to the parcel you sent some time ago also some August mail, some of the boys have already received some mail up to August the 28th. I was sorry to hear about J Beavis, I meet some of the boys occasionally but as a rule we are pretty well scattered."*

The Armistice was signed on the 11th November 1918.

14th November 1918 Lou writes, *"Well dear sister, you will all be rejoicing over the Armistice being signed, it is the best news we have had for a long time...you will all be looking forward to our home coming as we..."*

29th December 1918 Herbert Louis Sims was promoted to Lance Corporal, an intermediate appointment that recognises a soldier's potential before promotion to Corporal.

6th April 1919 Lou writes, *"Well, at last I am able to say I am finished with France...We are the 20th quota, about 1,000 of us, and we have a very decent band so should have a good time coming home. We got leave to London yesterday 14 days, but may be recalled before that time, however they say we are certain to leave here this month without something comes in the way. So, I should be home sometime in June."*

Herbert Louis Sims arrived in Melbourne aboard the Orontes on the 15th May 1919.

Lou lived to the grand age of 89.

Compiled by Suzanne Robinson, Herbert Louis Sims is my Great Uncle. My father Herbert Louis Robinson was named after his uncle.

Australian War Memorial – 58th Battalion Australian Infantry Battalion



4 WD Club visit Daly's Cottage



A very pleasant, guided tour took place on the morning of Sunday 13 March 2022 of the Labour Day Long Weekend. An Avoca local, Suzanne Robinson ran the tour on behalf of the Avoca and District Historical Society Inc. Members of the Ballarat 4WD Club camping at Glen Patrick gathered at Daly's Cottage at 11am to hear about James Daly builder of the cottage c1865, its construction and a brief history of the Percydale area during the gold rush era of the 1850s and 1860s. Daly's Cottage has great historical and architectural significance as an example of a farming residence and stable constructed as part of the selection era.



Suzanne's great grandparents William and Harriett Sims built their own miner's cottage less than two kilometres away from Daly's Cottage where William was involved in the mining industry. They lived, worked and raised their three children in the same era. Her Uncle and Auntie Rupert and Annie Bennett lived in Daly's Cottage for over ten years. With an interest in family history and the area, the talk provided a personal connection to a once thriving mining and farming community.

The group enjoyed exploring the site, locating some of the key construction details. Many marveling at the resilience of the settlers and the lack of many creature comforts we take for granted in our homes today. The group then continued into Percydale to explore The Dairy and the surrounding area.

Guided Tours can be arranged by appointment.

Please contact the Avoca and District Historical Society Inc.

Phone: 03 5465 3118

Report by Suzanne Robinson.



TANWOOD: This month our focus hamlet is Tanwood. Tanwood is a small Victorian Rural Location within the local government area of Pyrenees. It is located approximately 166kms from the capital Melbourne covering an area of 18.667 square kilometres. Tanwood has a recorded population of 26 residents and is within the Australian Eastern Daylight Time zone Australia/Melbourne.



The Tanwood Post Office was opened as Wattle Grove in 1901 as a Receiving Office. It was re-named Tanwood on 22nd January 1919; it was upgraded to Post Office on 1st July 1927; it was closed on 31st May 1959. It was located within the small mining and agricultural district at the intersection of the Sunraysia Highway and the Stawell-Avoca Rd, about 10km north west of Avoca.



A Circular Date Stamp was used at Tanwood.

Post Officers at Wattle Grove/Tanwood were:

Charles Murdoch	1901 to 1907	Arthur W. Williams	1924 to 1933
Sarah Harding	1907 to 1909	G. G. Williams	1933 to 1938
S. Andrews	1909 to 1914	Not known	1938 to 1944
Not known	1914 to 1916	Mrs. Moira Victoria Jardine	1944 to 1952
E. M. Sheridan	1916 to 1917	David William Anderson	1952
Miss Annie Larkin	1917 to 1920	Miss Olwyne A. Williams	1952
Mrs. M. D. Burnside	1920 to 1923	Mrs. Kathleen Wood	1952 to 1953
A. Daly	1923 to 1924	David William Anderson	1953 to 1955

Left: Tanwood Post Office, April 1924—Williams (?) Family



Tanwood Church: The Church was at one time in use at the gold diggings at Percydale, but when the population dwindled it was moved to its present site. This was done in the time when Canon Reynolds was vicar.

Messers A. and D. Williams have proved themselves earnest workers in the cause there, along with Mrs Anderson and Messers Miles, Hardy, Streeter, Argall, Morris and Barnes. Mr Argall, assisted by Miss Williams, had done much good work in the Sunday School. Miss Williams has furnished the altar with altar linen of her own work.

Like many small hamlets the church, school and tennis courts were a feature of the community.



Tanwood School:

The Tanwood School building had an interesting and moved about history. It was first erected as a church on diggings known as Raggerty, situated approximately between Percydale and Warrenmang.

It was built of hardwood with a pine ceiling and lining and consisted of one room and a porch. After it was built it was used also as a common school.

In 1872 a State School, Kimberley, was established in place of the Common School but in the same building. Enrolment in 1872 was 29 and 50 in 1873. As the gold in this area petered out the population dwindled and in 1876 the building was shifted by bullock team about 4 miles to the settlement of Kimberley. The contractor, J.J. Brown, transported each of the 4 walls in one piece and re-erected the building.

The school remained at Kimberley for 39 years and in 1915 the building was shifted once more about 2 miles to Tanwood, this time by traction engine and jinker that was owned and operated by Mr George Walkley. With the help of contractors Charles Astbury and W Argall, the school was re-erected.

The school operated until 1957 and was then sold and dismantled.





<http://avocahistory.net.au>

President : Marg Pilgrim
 Vice President : Cheryl Mallison
 Secretary: Mrs. Jill Hunter
 Treasurer: Mrs. Dorothy Robinson
 Committee: All of the above, plus
 Mrs. Elizabeth Williams, Ms. Gayle Amore,
 Mrs Glenda Williams, Ms Erica Lubanszky
 Research Officer: Mrs. Dorothy Robinson.
 Editor: Mrs. Margaret Pilgrim.

Meetings of the **Avoca and District Historical Society Inc.** are held occasionally and vary between excursions to places of interest and Guest Speaker occasions.

Members receive three Newsletters each year and have free access to the Court house when open for normal hours. Non-member visits to the Court House are \$5 per hour, whether to carry out research with our assistance, or to view the current exhibition.

Special Openings of the Court House can be arranged on other days by appointment, for a fee of \$30.00, plus cost of any copying required. If you are travelling some distance, this is possibly more satisfactory, as you get our undivided attention to assist with your research. On open days you may be sharing our attention with a number of others.

Enquiries re guided tours of places of Historic Interest in the District, including the Avoca Cemetery & Daly's Cottage, may be directed to **adhsemail@gmail.com**

The Society charges a moderate fee for these services. Ask us for a quote!

Next Meeting : July 4th 2022

Our Newsletters are **Printed by Louise Staley, MP and funded by the parliamentary budget.**

***The Courthouse is now open on the
 first & third Wednesdays of the month***

Membership Fees:

~ **Joining Fee \$5.00**

~ **\$25 single**

~ **\$30 family at same address.**

~ **\$50 corporate**

These prices apply if you are willing to receive the newsletter via email; or plus additional \$5 if you want it sent via AustPost.

Membership remains current for 12 months from 1st July to 30th June.

Donations of \$2 and over to the Court House Restoration Fund, the Avoca Cemetery Fund, the Daly's Cottage Restoration Fund (pictured above), are tax deductible.

New membership or renewal of membership forms can be downloaded from our website, the address of which is at the top of page 1 of each edition .

If undelivered, return to
 PO Box 24, Avoca VIC 3467

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**SURFACE
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**POSTAGE
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