



Balwyn Historical Society

Newsletter April 2021

**Next Meeting:
Thursday 8th April 2021– 8 pm
at
Balwyn Evergreen Centre,
45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn**

Guest Speaker: Dr Ros Otzen

**Topic: “The women who created Melbourne’s social supports in the 1850’s
& 1860’s”**

They were a group of women who provided help to those in desperate need with shelters and emergency services and who prodded agencies and the government to better care for these people. Do we know who these wonderful women were?

This publication’s special feature

Some Memories of a Colonial Kid in the Nineteen-Twenties - By: Bill Mackie

**May Meeting:
Thursday 13th May 2021 – 8pm**

Guest Speaker: Megan Goulding - Archaeologist

**Topic: “Archaeology and interesting discoveries below the streets of
Melbourne”**

Email: balwynhistory@gmail.com

Website: www.vicnet.net.au/~balwynhs

Vote of thanks

The members present at our February, 2021 meeting whole heartedly endorsed warm thanks to the retiring President, Dr Marilyn Poole, who over the past 12 years has been a Foundation Committee Member, Treasurer and President. Marilyn has attended many meetings of various associations on our behalf and more recently was involved in the plans for the Boroondara history hub. Marilyn has discovered some fine speakers for us to hear and has contributed many interesting articles to our newsletter involving her own research and historical interests.

We wish her well with her new commitments for 2021

-Thankyou Marilyn.

February Speakers

We enjoyed listening to 2 of our members reflecting on local history from different perspectives.

Philip Mallis has a particular interest in local history and is optimistic about its future. Philip spoke of his current Boroondara research and lauded the benefits of digital technology and the wonderful resources available such as TROVE. Here one can find old Melbourne photographs “seemingly lost” as well as Boroondara’s long gone buildings, shop fronts, traders and the early landscapes with its many creeks that flowed about the area before the housing developments of the 20th Century.

Barrie Dempster who has lived and operated a business in the area for over 50 years gave us snapshots of his memories which included the Wildlife Sanctuary in Greythorn Road, North Balwyn – the pony, donkey and camel rides, the huge bonfire night at Beckett Park for Empire Day in May each year and also the tennis courts in Yarrbat Avenue. We chuckled at his memory of the tip in Belmore Road which he described as a ‘kids paradise’ for discarded bikes. He recalled the first roundabout in Mont Albert North importantly referred to as ‘The Roundabout’. Finally, Freeman’s grocer shop which was on the corner of Balwyn and Whitehorse Road elicited many nods and memories of blocks of cheese, tins of biscuits and bulk supplies of sugar and honey for which one could bring their own container – how times have changed!

March Speaker

Matthew ETTY-Leal – Daniel Mannix and Billy Hughes

Matthew began his talk with some interesting background details of both Daniel Mannix and Billy Hughes. There were such disparities in their Irish upbringing with Hughes coming from a relatively poor background and losing his Father, the breadwinner at a very early age. Conversely Daniel Mannix family was well to do tenant farmers and he was educated and lectured at Maynooth University also studying theology and was awarded a Doctorate of divinity. Both were outspoken personalities and the Australian people got to hear them from two different platforms. Daniel Mannix had been sent to Melbourne in 1912 to minister to the Catholic population and was an eloquent speaker, fearless in his opinions. Hughes supported conscription became a popular Prime Minister in 1915 and was also in favour with defence forces. Mannix was against conscription and the differences of opinions between them were ongoing. Both men left legacies of thought each in their own way. Matthews talk certainly stirred interest in both members and visitors to know more details about them both and their place in our history.

Some Memories of a Colonial Kid in the Nineteen-Twenties

By: Bill Mackie

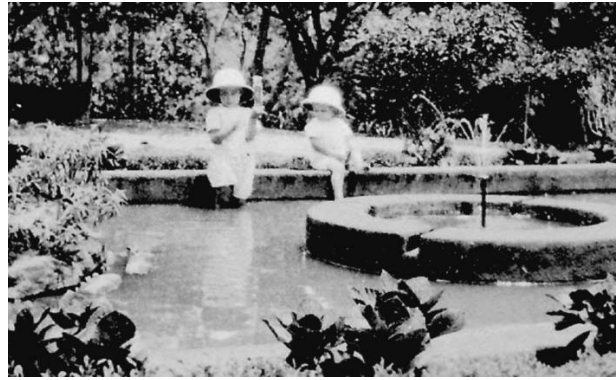
Introducing the author, a longtime member of the Balwyn Historical Society

Although born in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Bill has had a long association with Balwyn from his first visit in December 1922 to his Bates grandparents at Larino and great grandmother Mary Reid at Belmont, Balwyn. After six years in Ceylon, his home was on a small farm in northern Victoria until he went to Melbourne University, spent a few years in the RAAF, and commenced his career as an agricultural scientist. Initially in a government job and then with 32 years in three commercial companies based in Melbourne, his work took him across Australia, stretching from Cairns to Hobart, Albany, and Geraldton. A 9-week business trip in 1970 had him visit farmlands in Philippines, North America, United Kingdom, France, and South Africa. In his long period of retirement, he has focused on the family history of his English, Irish and Scottish ancestors, who started to come to Melbourne in 1840

My parents, both born in Melbourne in 1893-94, married in March 1921 in Ceylon (now known as Sri Lanka), and they lived on a tea estate when I was born in January 1922 at Bex Hill Hospital, Nuwara Eliya, in the high country. My brother Jim, later known as Jamie, was born in September 1924 in the Hotel Suisse in Kandy. My father Bill was assistant manager on the tea estates where he worked until 1927 when he was manager of Galaha Estate and Galaha Factory. In about December 1927 the whole family left Ceylon permanently, because at that time it was the belief of British colonials that, if their children remained in the tropics when aged from seven to about fifteen years, they could not as adults withstand the cold winters of the UK and of southern Australia; so, their seven-year-old children were sent to boarding schools or to live with their grandparents while at school in the home countries. My parents did not favour parting with their kids, so they made arrangements to buy a small farm from a relative in northern Victoria. In January 1928, the Mackie family began a new life on an irrigation farm near Rochester in northern Victoria, where I learnt to ride a pony 3 miles to a little primary school.

In Ceylon before Jim arrived, I had an ayah, or nursemaid, to look after me but after Jim's birth my grandmother Kate Bates (née Reid) of Larino Balwyn shipped a governess, Miss Martin, to Ceylon to help my mother care for her children. 'Mar Mar', as she was known by the kids she managed, had been governess for my mother's sister and younger brother in the previous ten or twelve years at Larino. So, with an ayah to do the dirty work and Mar Mar to watch our behaviour, Jim and I were well cared for. In retrospect, all I remember of the time spent with our parents was when we said, 'Good morning' and 'Good night' with a kiss, and we were frequently told 'Children are to be seen and not heard'!

As big brother, I was expected to look after Jim when we played together in the garden. At the Galaha manager's bungalow, we had a nice big lily pond, shallow enough for us to paddle. One day when Jim fell into the pond, I grabbed his legs and yelled for help, which came quickly. By then Jim's head was under water and he was blowing bubbles, but he was quickly rescued without mishap. However, I was scolded for not letting go of his legs to allow his head to be above water. I was later told that in defense, I replied 'But, Mummy you told me not to let him get his new shoes wet'!



Bill and Jim could play and paddle in the lily pond at Galaha.

Our domestic staff at Galaha included Sinniah, who chauffeured our car, milked the cow, and did other odd jobs. Having a Jersey cow to give us fresh milk was quite a luxury. It was Sinniah who first showed me how to milk a cow. Additionally, we had a cook, and a house boy for housekeeping chores and to wait on table at mealtimes. The latter had a name spelt something like Muniandi. He seemed to have a good sense of humour and some fun for Jim and me. One Saturday afternoon, when my parents had friends from neighboring estates for some tennis on our tennis court, Muniandi had caught and killed a rat; to demonstrate his prowess he tied the dead rat to a longish stick and told me to show it to my parents. At the tennis court I was smartly told to quickly remove the rat and myself. I never learnt what was said to Muniandi.

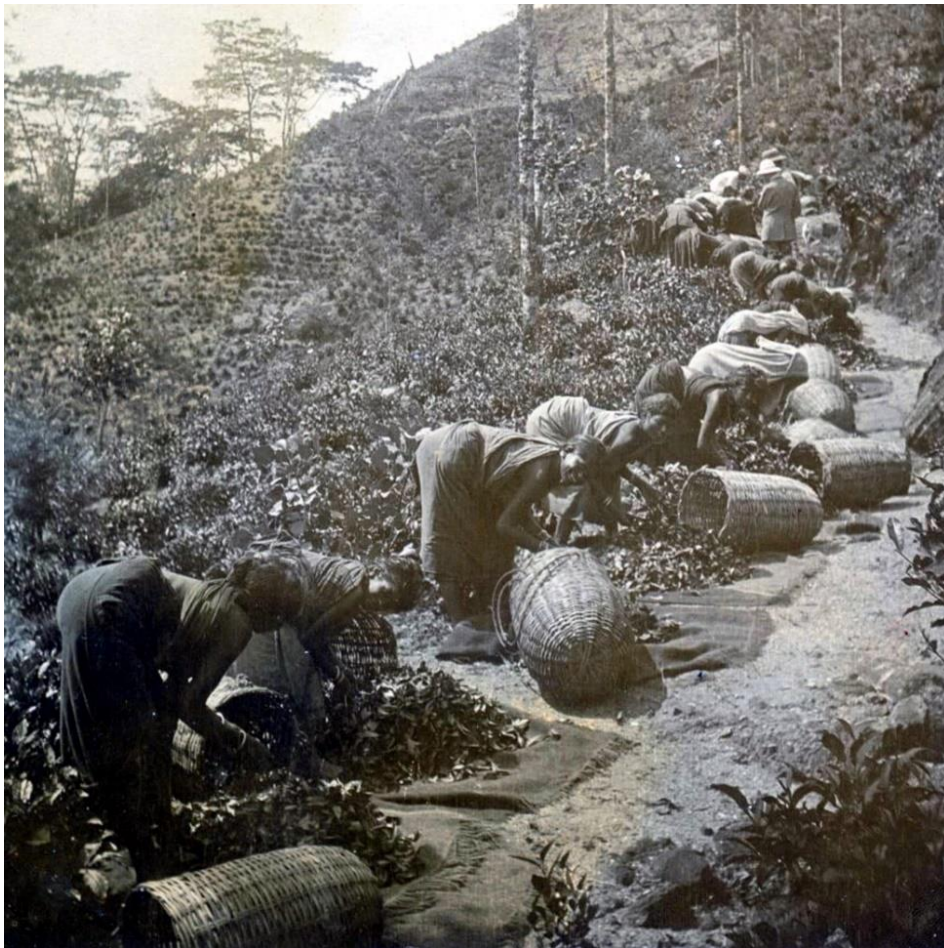
Friendly interaction between the managing staff of neighboring tea estates, was a characteristic of the Galaha district. I was later told that at one luncheon attended by my parents on a neighboring estate, the hostess proudly announced they were to have fresh roast beef for lunch, at which point my mother tactlessly asked, 'What did the cow die of?'.

During this time at Galaha, I was occasionally taken to various parts of the tea factory, and at other times I was able to see the Tamil workers, then called coolies, working in the plantations, and very occasionally I saw the 'coolie lines', as the workers' long huts of single room residences for each family were called. The accompanying photo of a hut, with a single room for each family and a tap to supply water outside the hut, indicates the primitive style of accommodation provided on the estates. This photo was taken in 1959 shows little change from the accommodation that I saw in the 1920s.

With the tea plantation reaching close to the garden at Galaha, I remember well the women tea pickers carrying their big baskets into which the hand-plucked tea was placed.



The style of accommodation for workers on tea estates in the 1920s

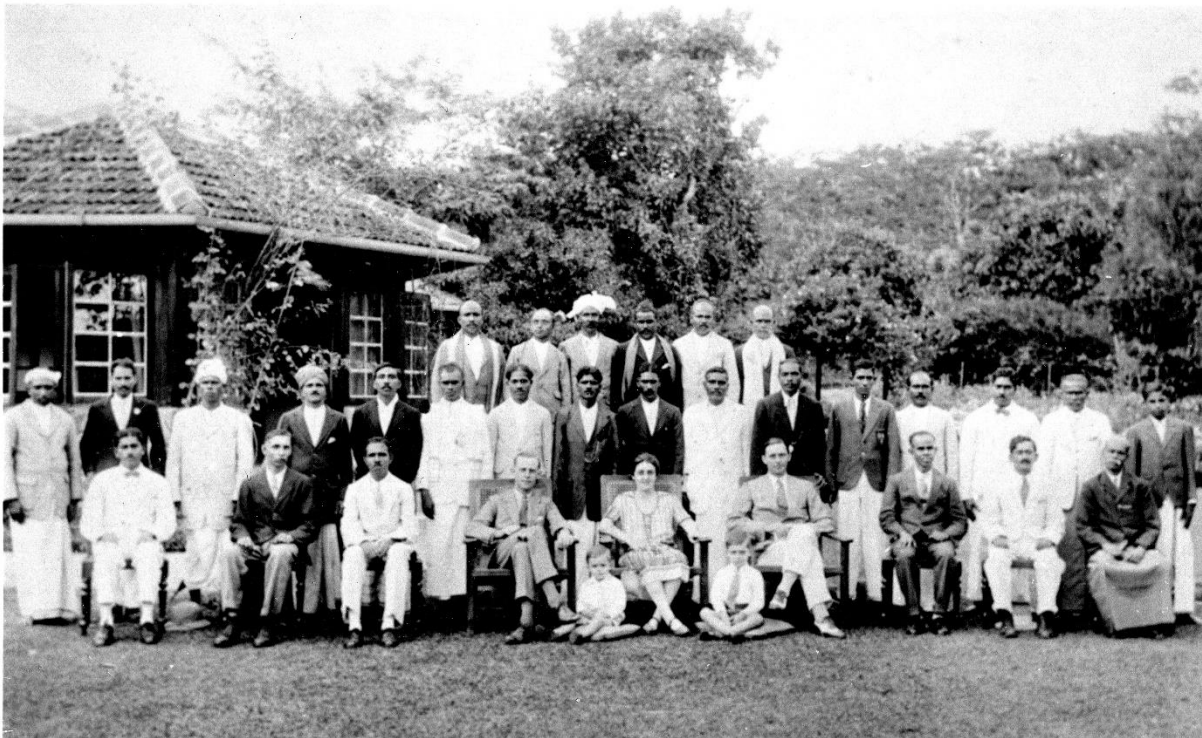


Tea pickers lined up for inspection of the tea they have plucked.

Just before the Mackie family departed Galaha in late 1927 my father arranged for the more senior staff of the Galaha Factory to be photographed beside the Mackie family on the lawn beside the Galaha manager's bungalow. Seated on the right of my mother Eileen is Alec Hudson, who was Assistant Manager, then on the left of my father Bill Mackie is seated Ayaswamy, Chief Clerk in the factory, and between him and my father stands his brother Doraiswamy, with tie and blazer, who was short-hand typist. Jim and young Bill are seated below their parents.

The brothers Ayaswamy and Doraiswamy were well educated Tamil descendants of their Swamy grandfather, who was Head Kangany of the group of indented laborers brought in the 1880s from Tamil Nadu, the state on the east part of the southern tip of India. Until he died in 1972, 45 years after leaving Ceylon, my father exchanged Christmas greetings and news with the two brothers and with Sinniah. In 1982 my wife and I were able to meet the two brothers, then in their eighties, in Kandy and with Doraiswamy we visited Galaha Estate and Factory. Both had sons who had completed university degrees at Peradeniya University, near Kandy. One son was an economist with the World Bank, the other had a diploma in agricultural science and managed a 1500-acre tea plantation, which I visited not far from Kandy.

Now, in the twenty-first century, I ponder over the history and nature of British colonialism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The contrast in lifestyle between those of the plantation workers and of their employers is impossible to forget, especially when it is compared with the social structure, if still imperfect, that we have in Australia.



The Mackie family, with Alec Hudson and senior staff of Galaha Factory, when photographed in late 1927 before the Mackie family departed from Galaha.

Invitation from

Surrey Hills ANZAC Dawn Service - 2021

After last year's cancellation, we are pleased to invite you to the 2021 Surrey Hills ANZAC Day Dawn Service. The Service is organised by the Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre in partnership with the Surrey Hills Progress Association and the Rotary Club of Mont Albert and Surrey Hills.

It will take place on Sunday 25th April, 2021:

Assemble: 5:45am for a 6am start

Location: The Shrine, Surrey Gardens, 88-90 Union Road Surrey Hills.
(see separate flyer)

Membership Renewal Information:

Reminder to renew your membership fees for this year, now.

It was decided that the annual membership fees will be due at the first meeting of each year.
Fees will remain the same as prior years.

Single: \$25

Joint: \$35 (2 members at the same address)

Payment can be made by Cash, Cheque (payable to Balwyn Historical Society)
or by EFT transfer:

Account Name: Balwyn Historical Society

BSB: 633-000

Account Number: 133477380

(please reference your surname)

It would be helpful if you could place your payment in an envelope marked with your name(s) if you are paying at the meeting.

Alternatively, please send a completed renewal form together with a cheque to **The BHS Treasurer, Balwyn Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn 3103**
Renewal forms will be emailed and available at the meeting/s.

For Membership enquiries contact email: balwynhistory@gmail.com
