

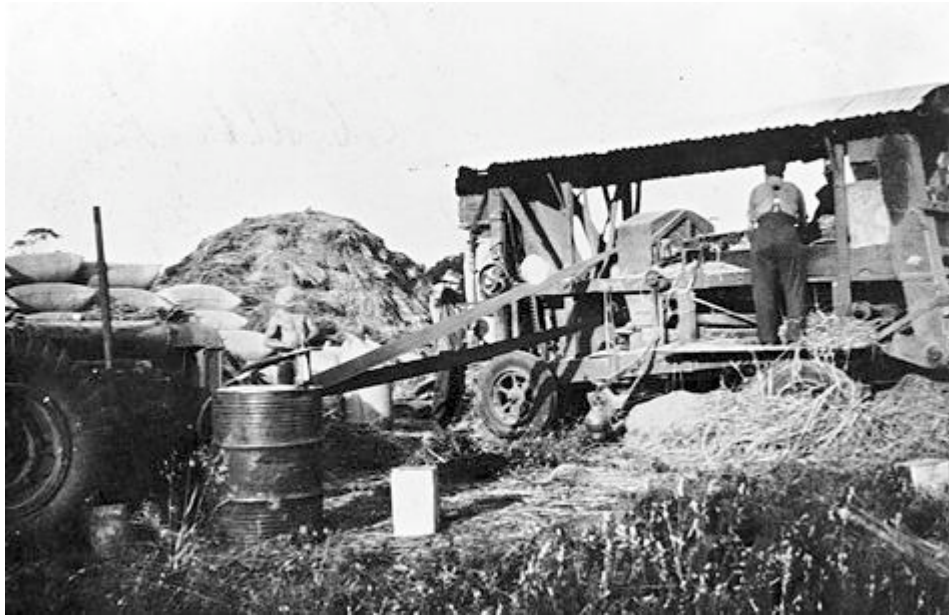
BUNINYONG AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Reg. No. A0030085Y

Web Site <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~buninhis>

PO Box 98, Buninyong, Vic. 3357.

Newsletter



Chaff cutting at Millbrook in 1939. See the story about Millbrook in this issue

October 2010

The **Annual General Meeting** of the Buninyong and District Historical Society will take place on Thursday, 21 October, at the Town Hall, at 7.30 pm. The guest speaker will be Joan Ogilvie, who will speak about her research into the Ogilvie family, one of the pioneering families of Buninyong, who had a long association with the Buninyong Botanic Gardens. It is pleasing to note that the Ballarat City Council will shortly name an unnamed road between Mount Buninyong and Mount Innes 'Ogilvie Lane' in recognition of the family, whose old cottage stands on the Midland Highway, marking the beginning of Ogilvie Lane.

FAMILY HISTORY ENQUIRIES

August-October 2010

FANCHI – We were delighted to receive a Fanchi Family History (from Scotsburn) presented by Liz Pink from Wonthaggi.

GARDNER – Benjamin married Sarah Bann Burdett at Holy Trinity in 1883. Query from Cowes, Victoria. (Note – there seems to be some confusion in spellings of the name in various records)

HANKIN – Henry married Sarah Fisher, who was buried at Buninyong in 1861. Henry appeared in the Court records in April 1854, as a contractor involved in building the Nugget Hotel in Learmonth St. Query from descendant in Hopetoun, Vic.

MALLET - Alice Timbrell from NSW visited us earlier in the year, and very kindly gave us a folder of information on her ancestor who was manager of the Trial Saw Mills.

MATHESON – Donald and his family emigrated from the Osle of Skye in 1852 as part of the Highland Emigration Society ships to help those dispossessed by the Highland clearances. He settled at Elaine. Where he raised his four daughters after his wife died soon after their arrival. From Avril Dalby, Mt Barker SA, bodal@aapt.net.au

Readers who know anything about any of these names, and can help, please contact the secretary a.beggs-sunter@ballarat.edu.au

New Businesses in Buninyong

The *Expresso Depot* opened in July after the former Whykes butcher shop changed hands again. Gerard Ballantine has opened his café for coffee and snacks throughout the day, and he is also stocking delicious sour dough bread from Torquay.

The **Buninyong Community Bank (Bendigo Bank)** opened in its new premises in Warrenheip St. on 6 August. (See article in this issue)

It is sad to note the closing of the hardware shop, and news that the delightful Cupcake Café and gift shop will be leaving us soon, because the property will be sold and the owner would not renew the lease.

Vale to two respected residents

Elinor Elizabeth Watson (1914-2010), daughter of William and Annie Watson, married Herman George (1909-1990), market gardener of Black Lead, at the Lydiard St. Methodist Church in 1947, and lived for the rest of her life at Cambrian Hill. She

had two children, Les and Ruth. She inherited her uncle's property, which was first occupied by their family around 1860.

The Black Lead Methodist Church was a focal point of her life. She was one of the first to be baptized in the new church in 1914, and was a member of the Sunday School and the Guild. In 1955 she became the organist, and when the church closed in 1998, she was instrumental in the Napoleons and District Historical Society purchasing the church and retaining it as an historical church.

Elinor was a keen local historian, with an incredible fund of knowledge about the local area. She was a dedicated member of the Napoleons and District Historical Society. She also provided much information to the Buninyong and District Historical Society, and always paid us a visit on Gold King Festival day, when her son Les brought her into the Court House, where she took her seat and held court to admiring members and visitors. She died on 20 September 2010, in the presence of her family, and her funeral was held in the former Black Lead Methodist Church, with the large crowd invited to the Napoleons Hall after the funeral to share memories of a lovely lady.

The Society has an oral history interview with Elinor, made in 1993 by Noel Watkins, where she talks about her life and especially her connection with the Methodist Church.

Ron Nicholls was a legend in Buninyong. He was the son of Frank Thomas Nicholls (1895-1962), born in England, who served in the Royal Navy during World War One. His wife was Spanish. After being in the Navy for 12 years and seeing the world, he settled at Buninyong, and was known for his left-wing political views in the 1920s and 1930s. He built a wattle and daub house for his family at Union Jack, and there is a plaque in the Union Jack Reserve, marked by some pine trees, where he lived. At another time he lived near Elaine. During the Depression of the 1930s, he opened up a mine on the Mount Buninyong Road, opposite the Ritchie's property. It was an old mine that had been filled in, and he cleared the rubble out of the 250 foot shaft, and found a drive going towards Buninyong, under Ritchie's house. He timbered the shaft, and had a ladder to climb up and down. During these hard years, he received a sustenance payment from the government for gold exploration. His sons Jack and Frank (twins born 1925), Bill, Jim, Ron and Max helped him at the mine, which they called the Buninyong Alluvial. In World War Two, Frank enlisted in the Australian Army, and was deputed to guard Italian internees at Myrtleford. Frank died in 1952, aged 27.

Ron married Bev, and settled at the family home in Eyre St. Ron was a refrigeration mechanic, who worked for Christies of Ballarat for 40 years. He passed on his mechanical skills to his sons Chris and Frank, who developed a passion for restoring military vehicles.

In 1973 Ron took over responsibility for maintaining the Town Hall clock, which he expertly repaired, and wound regularly. When Ron retired after having surgery, his sons Chris and Frank took over this public duty. The Nicholls boys were always available to help out in improving Buninyong – putting up the poppet head in De Soza Park, and welding the gates to the Cemetery are just two examples.

On 24 May 2009, members of the Buninyong and District Historical Society visited the Nicholls family at their Eyre St. property. Chris and Frank showed us over their huge shed, with its amazing collection of former military vehicles and other industrial heritage.

On this day Bev offered us a cup of tea, and we had the opportunity to sit down for a chat about old times with Ron. Ron was buried on 21 September 2010. Buninyong salutes a generous and community-minded citizen, and we extend our sympathy to Bev, Chris and Frank.



Ron Nicholls restoring the mechanism of the Buninyong Town Hall clock in 1973, for the 'Back to Buninyong' celebrations.

MILLBROOK (Spreadeagle, or Moorabool Creek, or Green's Springs) on the north-east boundary of the old Shire of Buninyong.

A recent visitor to the Society asked for information about Millbrook. Shock and horror! We had no information. So here is the result of some hasty research.

Millbrook was originally part of the Boorambeta Run, taken up by the Bradshaw Brothers in 1844. The Boorambeta pre-emptive right extends on the north-east side of the main road.

It seems that the area was originally known as Moorabool Creek, or Green's Springs. Erica Nathan gives a good history of the springs near the river in her book *Lost Waters* (2007). She refers to a survey of Moorabool Creek being made by the surveyor Bellairs in 1855 (p. 110). However there was never an officially surveyed township of Millbrook.

Tom Sullivan, whose family took up extensive land in the area, suggested, upon the advice of Dave Downey, that the name comes from a supposed flour mill on the Moorabool River, though no evidence has ever been found of it. The name 'Green Springs' came from the Green family who were early dairy farmers in the area. This name had to be changed when the railway line was opened, and a more specific name for the station was needed. Hence 'Millbrook' was officially adopted. Note that the railway line from Ballarat did not reach Gordon until 1879.

William Henry Bacchus, son of the Captain who took up Bacchus Marsh, took up his *Peerwerrh* run nearby in 1840. In 1850, when William Bacchus married in Bacchus Marsh, he gave his address as 'Millbrook'. (*A History of Bacchus Marsh and its Pioneers*, Crisp & Sons, Bacchus Marsh, 1936, p. 263) When gold was discovered in Ballarat, the road from Melbourne came through his run, and he established the Spread Eagle Inn, its name deriving from the Bacchus family crest of the eagle. When gold was discovered at Gordons in 1858, it was described as being 'five miles from the Spread Eagle hotel'. (James Flett, *Old Pubs Melbourne*, 1979, p. 80)

This area is part of the Catholic Irish triangle encompassing Dunnstown, Navigators, Millbrook, Gordon and Bungaree. A Roman Catholic church reserve was gazetted on a block facing the Gordon road of one acre in 1871 (Gov Gazette 1871/284)

St Patrick's Gordon was dedicated on 9 May 1875. (*Advocate*, 15 May 1875) There had been considerable discussion between the Catholic communities of Gordon and Millbrook over who should get a church, and the site was eventually a compromise between the two localities, built on land donated by the Ryan family, who considered themselves a Millbrook family. The church had two doors – the front door for the Gordon people, and the side door for the Millbrook people.

Millbrook State school No. 1972 officially opened 1 November 1877, in a solid brick building, which was demolished in 1968, following construction of a new weatherboard school in 1967. It had a difficult time competing with the local Catholic school, and when that school was destroyed by fire, the state school became the Catholic school!

In 1879 there were 143 children attending the Millbrook Catholic school, St. Thomas. (Father T. Linane, *Diamond Jubilee St. Michael's Parish*, Bungaree, 1970, p. 12) In 1903 the area of Spreadeagle boasted 14 Irish families within a square mile that provided 144 students to the Millbrook school. (John Murphy, 'The Savages from Bungaree', ACU Ballarat Honours thesis, 1995, p. 36).

In c 1930 St Thomas closed, and the 15 pupils transferred to the Millbrook State School, which re-opened as a State School on 13 February 1930 with an enrolment of 21 pupils. (*Vision and Realisation*, Vol 2, p. 804)

Millbrook had a St Patrick's Literary Society in 1887 which held fortnightly meetings (*Gordon Parish Centenary*, 1975, p. 9)

The Wallace, Millbrook and District Dairy Co-operative was formed in 1892.

Green's Springs has continued as an important water reserve at Millbrook, with a pump serving the CFA shed.

George Egerton of Bungal

We are all very familiar with the name of Egerton, through the locality of 'Mount Egerton'. So it was exciting to receive an email from a descendant of the youngest son of our early settler George Egeron of *Bungal*, on the Moorabool River. George gave his name to the locality of Mount Egerton, and it was fascinating to learn more of this family, who had to overcome all kinds of tragedy.

The biggest tragedy was for the six children of George and Bridget. The parents died suddenly within two weeks of each other in 1855, and suddenly the six young children were left in desperate circumstances. George, the eldest, was 11 years old, and the baby Sophia was still a tiny baby. George and his brother Thomas had been boarders at the Rev. Hastie's Bush Boarding School at Buninyong in 1850. What happened to the children is a mystery, apart from the youngest boy Francis who was taken into the family of the settler John Wallace of Ballark. Francis went to Queensland with one of the Wallace boys in 1870, and one of his sons John became Sir John Egerton, President of the Queensland Labour Party.

COMING EVENTS

16 October –Buninyong Farmers' Market and History Centre open 9.00 am to 1.30 pm

17 October Old Brewery, Buninyong. A concert to raise money for the 150th Anniversary of the Buninyong Gardens. 2.00 pm.

AGM 21 October 2010, at 7.30 pm