

BUNINYONG AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Reg. No. A0030085Y

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

PO Box 98, Buninyong, Vic. 3357.

Newsletter

April 2014



Mrs Celia King Scott (1796-1879) of *Mount Boninyong*, portrait, oil, 1878, painted in Edinburgh from a photograph taken when she visited in 1862-4. Courtesy of Alison Cranswell, Canberra, great grand-daughter of Celia. In March 2014, the Scott family celebrated the 175th anniversary of the family's settlement at *Mount Boninyong*, their property at Scotsburn. Celia was the first white woman who lived in our district, and she laid the foundation stone of the Buninyong Presbyterian (now Uniting) Church in 1860. She was a great friend of Rev. Thomas Hastie, as were her sons Robert and Andrew. Portraits of members of the Scott family are incorporated into the beautiful stained glass windows in the Buninyong Uniting Church.

NEWS AND NOTES

Our April meeting will take place on Thursday 24 April at 7.30p.m. at the Court House History Centre. President Beth Kicinski will introduce the Ballarat Industrial Heritage Wiki. (We postponed our meeting for a week because of the Easter holidays.)

We were all shocked to read recently in the local press that the property *Lal Lal*, held by the Fiskin family for six generations since the 1840s, is being sold to a Chinese wool buying company. The property consists of 2000 hectares and is renowned as a fine merino wool property. It follows the sale of a number of other renowned Western District properties to Chinese wool interests, including *Larundel* at Elaine in 2011. It is particularly sad for us, because we have the portraits of five generations of the Fiskin family represented in our History Centre, all of whom served as Shire Presidents and were deeply involved in civic affairs.

For Auld Lang Syne: Images of Scottish Australia Exhibition

This amazing exhibition opened at the Art Gallery of Ballarat on 9 April, and runs until 27 July. It highlights the Scottish contribution to Australia from the First Fleet to Federation. The opening night was a grand affair, with highland pipers and dancers, excellent speakers, and some very handsome gentlemen in full Scottish regalia. Our own Graham Gooding was one of the gentlemen, and the most impressive of all was Malcolm Frazer, so tall and erect and proud of his Fraser heritage. Works have been lent from galleries and museums across Australia, and from private collections. It is the biggest exhibition the Gallery has ever staged, and the visitor with an interest in colonial history or Scottish heritage will be rewarded with hours of stimulation.

In association with the exhibition, the Gallery is presenting a Scottish Symposium on the weekend of 10-11 May, organised by Alison Inglis from the University of Melbourne and Anne Beggs-Sunter and Jennifer Jones-O'Neill from Federation University Ballarat. This will bring together 25 scholars from across Australia to present papers and discuss aspects of Scottish-Australia. Attendance at sessions at the Arts Academy is free, but participants should register. Members who are interested can request a program from Anne (a.beggs-sunter@ballarat.edu.au)

Garden History

Michael Taffe, well-known garden historian from Ballarat, is launching his history of the Ballarat Horticultural Society on Sunday 4 May, at 2.00pm at St. Patrick's Hall in Ballarat. There are many Buninyong links to the Society, especially through Dr. Robert Scott, Alfred Ronalds and Jim Nidschelm. Michael extends an invitation to any of our members to attend the launch.

Ballarat Heritage Weekend and Heritage Awards May 2014

Once again a big weekend is planned, thanks to the officers of the City of Ballarat. The theme for this year is 'Who made Ballarat', and we will feature our Scottish squatters

and the Rev, Thomas Hastie. A free vintage bus will transport visitors between Ballarat and Buninyong over the weekend, and Steam Rail will be operating a steam train on the Geelong-Ballarat line, with runs from Ballarat to Lal Lal and return. Check the City of Ballarat website for the program and booking information.

Our Heritage Plaques are up for a Heritage Award at the competition organised by the National Trust and the City of Ballarat, to be held at the Old Colonists' Club on Tuesday 6 May.

Biographical Queries

March-April 2014

BRUNT – Bertie was a farmer at Dunnstown in 1938, and was also a maltster, perhaps at the Dunnstown Distillery. He was a maltster at Dunnstown in 1954, and in 1968 was a maltster, Dana St, Ballarat (Ballarat Brewing Company)

CROMBIE – Martha, and her daughter, of Durham Lead, buried at Buninyong.

EAMES – It was lovely to hear from Phillip Eames in Nottinghamshire, UK, enquiring about Frank and Ivan Eames. He had read something in our newsletter, which prompted him to write, seeking to contact any descendants.

PATTEN – Martha Patten was born in Buninyong in 1869. Query from her granddaughter, who also attended the Buninyong State School.

Scotsburn Young Farmers' Club.

Recently, we received in the mail a remarkable donation from Dr. Leanne Morris of Deakin University. It was a record book from 1934 made by her aunt Doris James (nee Hopgood) whilst she was a member of the Scotsburn Young Farmers' Club in 1934. Young Doris was intensely involved in the care of her Dorset Horn ewe, whom she had purchased from Selwyn Scott. In her record book, she records, in beautiful copperplate, everything she learns during the year about the Dorset Horn breed. Newspaper cuttings are included in the book, showing the involvement of young people from Scotsburn in various competitions, including winning the *Argus and Australasian Shield*, presented for competition amongst Victorian Young Farmers' Clubs. Young Doris is shown proudly exhibiting her Dorset Horn. The book is revealing of the inspiration of her teacher at the Scotsburn State School, and the wonderful work that the Young Farmers' Clubs performed in encouraging and connecting country children from the 1920s. Reading the book prompts me to know more about this organization. If any readers can help, please contribute.

Buninyong in August 1851

The National Library's TROVE is an unending source of riches. In continuing research into the Presbyterians in Buninyong, the following lyrical description of Buninyong, on the cusp of Ballarat's emergence in 1851, is most revealing:

Geelong Advertiser, 25 August 1851

BUNINYONG. August 25, 1851. Buninyong lays west of Geelong some fifty miles. The approach to it is beautiful in the extreme, and commonplace indeed must be the soul that could look unmoved on the queenly mount, o'er topping the surrounding country in wooded majesty, and clothed with dark foliage, to her utmost summit, flushed with the golden sunset, as with a diadem of light. From the meadows at its foot, the road gently rises, and curves, round the base of the mountain, until you attain an eminence overlooking the township, to which the mount has given its title.

The first house built on this site was the Buninyong Inn, erected in 1842, by Mr. John Veitch. There are now twenty-two houses, independent of others to a short distance in the forest, comprising two handsome stores, two smithies, to which are attached the wheelwright branch of the business, a saddlery, and two shoemakers, independent of the inn just mentioned. But the first building, and the most important one that strikes the eye of a stranger is the school-house, which is used on the Sabbath as a place of public worship: it has been established about four years, and owes its institution to the meritorious endeavours of the Messrs. Learmonth, and other benevolent individuals residing in Buninyong. To the school, which is a spacious building, is attached separate dormitories, of comfortable and well devised construction, in which are placed baths for the use of children, besides these erections, there are store houses, and a private residence for the school-master; and at a short distance is the residence of the Rev. Mr. Hastie, the resident minister. The school has been as successful as its most sanguine supporters could desire, -there are at present forty boarders residing on the establishment, beside twenty day scholars from the immediate vicinity. Without laying claim to high pretensions, this school is calculated to confer a great benefit on the surrounding country, as well as the town, and affords an example worthy of imitation in other parts of the colony. It professes to teach a sound practical information, and to bring that teaching within the reach of all. It has a scale of charges suitable to the circumstances of parents desiring to educate their children. Sixteen pounds per annum is the sum charged for education, board, lodging, and washing, to both sexes- whilst to render the institution available to parents of humbler means, ten pounds only is charged for the same objects, and all are treated on equal footing. The school is under the superintendence of Mr and Mrs Douglass, than whom it would be difficult to find any more efficient, kind, affable, and painstaking. The children are healthy, well behaved, and seemed devoted to the tasks apportioned to them. Divine worship is celebrated here every alternate Sunday by the Rev. Mr Hastie, that gentleman being called upon to officiate on the intervening Sabbath at the Leigh.

Next to the Buninyong itself, the Green Hill may rank as the notability of the place. It may be termed a local Gretna Green, a journey thither generally resulting in a matrimonial engagement, so at least my 'chaperon' informed me. He himself had been married after a visit there, and a whole host of his friends had met with the same fate, with the exception of one, who escaped as a Benedict by galloping headlong down the main gulley. True, said my informant, that unhappy man endeavours to explain it away by stating that his horse took fright just as he was about to pop the question, but Tam o'Shanter ne'er fled with half the speed from the witches as did poor 1- - from matrimony. I mention this, thinking it may be useful to some guileless bachelor who might otherwise be induced to visit the fatal spot, which is about a quarter of an hour's ride from the Township, and a visit thither will repay a thousand-fold the dire perils I have referred to. Hidden among the forest trees, the Green Hill is not perceived until you arrive close upon it, nor even then does it convey the most remote conception of the glorious vista that bursts upon the view. Here from this hill-top, far as the eye can reach, extends a scene beautiful as the eye of man ever rested upon. Here mountain, hill, forest, and glade, stretch out to the extreme verge of the horizon, millions upon millions of tree-tops bow down to the passing wind, which surge as upon

a vast ocean of verdure, and give to the undulating ranges the semblance of huge billows. What masses of light and shade, brightest sun shine and darkest gloom ; yonder hill is bathed in liquid light, the very trceries of the contorted branches of the trees growing on its summit are visible, whilst from the distant gully the wreathed mist is curling in vapour, as though nature were offering incense to her God. There is the Buninyong clad to its highest tier, towering haughtily, and the Warraneep, like a puny offspring; yonder is Mount Emu, Mount Mercer, Mount Cole with its glistening diamond, Mount William challenging observation some eighty miles off, the Maiden Hills and the Grampians extending far as the eye can reach until they are lost in cloud-lands and the far distant, the Burrumbeet, bounded by a silver thread, glistening in the sun beams ; those are her lakes, looking a mere line of light, and many and many a headland, and fair scene, and lovely spot are there that I know not of, and feel whilst my memory will hoard up their beauties, that my pen is powerless to describe them. The wind is rushing down the ravine with a hollow voice, betokening the coming storm, the clouds are gathering round the crest of the Buninyong, which is nearly hidden and veiled by the mist, the more distant objects gradually fade into the gathering gloom, and he who would escape a thorough drenching had better turn homeward and hie away as fast as horse can carry him. A. C.

This is the rather florid prose of Alfred Clarke, journalist with the *Geelong Advertiser*, dispatched by his editor to cover the Buninyong gold discovery after the paper published news of Thomas Hiscock's discovery on 12 August 1851. His first dispatch from Buninyong was on 15 August.

There are a number of remarkable aspects to this article. First, that the journalist should be so moved by the Australian bush and its beauties. Secondly, his excellent description of the township of Buninyong, with its 22 houses and businesses. Thirdly, his amazing description of Green Hill as 'a local Gretna Green'.

Just a month later, another description of Buninyong appeared:

Geelong Advertiser 23 September 1851

A GLANCE AT THE DIGGINGS. We stopped that night at Mr. Morrison's, who, with Mrs. M., hospitably received us, and after a good night's rest, passed on our road to the far-famed Buninyong, and reached there about 10 o'clock. As we passed the Buninyong Hill, I could not but admire its bold eminence rising proudly with stupendous magnificence. It was a sight to enjoy for the moment, as we gazed on its lofty summit, and arrived at the township, if such it may be called, consisting of some few houses, a Free Church school, and chapel connected, with this is a boarding establishment of about 80 of both sexes under the care of Mr and Mrs Hastie, two stores, an Inn, a saddler's with a brass plate prominent on the door, belonging to Davis and Son,- rather a contrast to our saddlers here, the former a slab house, the later generally stone, with handsome fronts, there are besides wheelwrights, shoemakers, I believe a tailor, and I am positive a doctor. It will require the power of an extraordinary corporation, in the shape of a surveyor, to draw levels for this town, hill and dale, ups and downs are the prominent aspects, and how the government ever authorised such a township I cannot conceive. Why not have gone a little further to some level spot; but like the government they do things in a government way."

The Rev. Robert Hamilton arrived from Scotland on 12 September 1851, and was immediately posted as a missionary to the goldfields for the United Presbyterian Church of Victoria. He left an excellent picture of Buninyong and the new Ballarat goldfield in his 1888 history, *A Jubilee History of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria*, published in Melbourne. He describes the hysteria in Melbourne and Geelong, with 'men of all ranks and professions' forming companies and rushing off to the 'glittering attractions' of the diggings. He hires a horse in Geelong, and proceeds towards Buninyong, 'through the

park-like scenery of Australia Felix.’ At Buninyong ‘a very kind and hospitable storekeeper from Edinburgh furnished accommodation. His house was literally rushed by gentlemen of all professions on their way to the grand centre of attraction. The provision of the night’s repose was simple, if not amusing. At the time of rest, the many strangers filling the parlour did not need to retire, or turn in, or prepare a place to sleep, but only to take a blanket from the arms of the assistant storeman and lie down.’ (Appendix A)

From the description, this has to be the store of John Veitch, whose store was in the centre of the township, and who was a good Presbyterian. It is interesting that Hamilton does not refer to Rev. Hastie, although Hastie was a ‘Free Church’ man, so Hamilton would have had theological differences with Hastie. Hastie could well have been away visiting the Leigh. Hamilton proceeds into Ballarat, and conducts his first service in the open air. With no ‘Sabbath bell’ to summons a congregation, Hamilton raised his voice in prayer on a fine day, and soon attracted a crowd to hear him, and he was able to distribute a large number of religious tracts. After four weeks he returned to Melbourne, reporting that Ballarat was almost deserted.

The Ladies’ Presentation to Rev. Hastie, 1865.

When the Rev. Thomas Hastie and his family returned from their sabbatical visit to Scotland in 1865, the ladies of his parish decided that it was time to provide a better means of travel for their esteemed minister. The following account was published in the *Geelong Advertiser* on 5 June 1865:

A few years ago we used to regard Buninyong as the offshoot of Geelong, as it was the nearest and most important township in the western district. Its proximity to Ballarat has brought it into much closer relations with the latter town, however, and we seldom hear of it now except in connection with its more important neighbour. The old familiar names associated with Buninyong are still in our memories, and we are glad to learn of a very pleasing incident relating to one of them, the Rev. Thomas Hastie. Mr Hastie has been the Presbyterian minister of the district for a period of more than eighteen years, and in testimony of their appreciation of his labors, and their warm regard for himself and Mrs Hastie, the ladies of his congregation resolved to present him with a buggy, as a means of somewhat relieving him from the fatigue of travelling. Such was the forwardness of the people to contribute, however, that the original design had to be extended, first, by the addition of harness, then of furnishing, and lastly of a handsome horse. The presentation was made on the evening of the 31st ultimo, after a lecture by the Rev. A. Simpson, of Shelford ; and was accompanied by a gratifying address, read by R. M. Harvey, Esq , the District Mining Surveyor, on behalf of the ladies. It is pleasant to witness such a manifestation of good-will, and we trust Mr Hastie may yet have many years before him of usefulness among his people, and the enjoyment of their sincere regard in return.

It was a very handsome gift from the ladies of the congregation, and doubtless much appreciated by the Rev. Hastie. In the next generation, Ministers would be the first to benefit by the latest transport development, the horseless carriage!

COMING EVENTS

2 May – Ballarat Mechanics Institute Twilight Talks recommence. Joan Hunt will speak on Henry Bolte. 5.00pm for drinks, and talk at 5.30pm. All welcome.

4 May 2014 – Michael Taffe's new book, a history of the Ballarat Horticultural Society, will be launched at St. Patrick's Hall in Ballarat at 2.00p.m.

6 May – Ballarat Heritage Awards presented at Old Colonists' Hall in Ballarat.

10-11 May – Ballarat Heritage Weekend. (program on City of Ballarat website)
Buninyong Court House Historical Centre open.

17 May – Buninyong Farmers Market, and Court House open.

23-24 May – Buninyong Film Festival, Buninyong Town Hall

19 June – General Meeting, Buninyong and District Historical Society.

Reminder: Membership subscriptions for 2013-4 are now well and truly due. If you have not renewed your subscription, please do so as soon as possible. We have just renewed our public liability insurance policy and membership of the Royal Victorian Historical Society, at a considerable cost, relying on the support of our members. Your membership supports future publishing projects, and the ongoing care of our collections.

PPS St. Mary's Catholic Church Clarendon. In the February 2014 issue I drew attention to the lovely little Catholic church of St. Mary's at Clarendon. The church had its closing service on 9 March, when a very large congregation attended, and it was particularly pleasing to have Father Gerard Prunty, raised at Clarendon but now Parish Priest at Terang, officiating at the closing Mass. It was a very emotional day for the old Catholic families of Clarendon. On Saturday 12 April St Mary's was put up for auction, and sold to an undisclosed bidder from Melbourne.

Newsletter Editor, Anne Beggs-Sunter, a.beggs-sunter@ballarat.edu.au