

BUNINYONG AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Reg. No. A0030085Y

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

PO Box 98, Buninyong, Vic. 3357.

Newsletter April 2025



The Crown Hotel, in early 1900s, showing the unpainted brickwork, and verandah extending the length of the front entrance. (Buninyong and District Historical Society Collection, 96-268). The low section extending up Learmonth Street may be earlier than 1885, perhaps surviving the big fire of 31 December 1884. This was demolished in 1956.

NEWS AND NOTES

We received the decision of **VCAT**, to allow eight accommodation units to be built at the foot of Mount Buninyong, a proposal our Society opposed because of its negative impact on an important natural landscape. The Melbourne panel members decided that there is more 'net community benefit' in favouring development rather than protecting the environment. A very disappointing outcome.

On Ash Wednesday, 6 March 2025, a **bushfire broke out on Mount Buninyong**. Quickly CFA crews were on the scene, along with helicopters and aircraft, who quickly got the

fire under control. It burned right up to the contentious property on Yendon No 2 Road that had been the subject of the VCAT appeal.

We were sorry to hear that **Clare Gervasoni** relinquished her post as curator at the Blainey Library, Federation University. Clare was a very knowledgeable and generous mentor to our Society in caring for our collections. We hope she will continue her involvement with local museums and the CHHA.

We noted with great interest a current PROV project to transfer **school records** from the Department of Education, and to document the administrative history of all schools. Many Societies have rich material in their collections relating to little rural schools that have long ago disappeared. This is certainly true of Buninyong and district, and we will be contributing to the project.

The **Buninyong and District Community News** is now available through the National Library's TROVE system, covering the years 1977 to 2022. This project was an initiative of the Buninyong Joint Library Trust, paying tribute to the work of Neil McCracken over the years in indexing historical records.

The City of Ballarat is preparing to undertake works at the **Buninyong Town Hall** to improve disability access. A community consultation was held on 27 March which Simon and Anne attended, to ensure access to the Historical Society.

Buninyong Botanic Gardens and Swimming pool.

On 26 March 2025, Ballarat City Council considered a motion moved by Cr. Ted Lapkin to rescind the decision to remove all the trees from Cornish St. and reconsider how best to remediate the Gong wall and purity of water, guided by the 2023 Buninyong Botanic Gardens Landscape.

The city budgeted \$1.4m for reconstruction of the reservoir wall. The leaking Gong Reservoir wall was identified as a public safety risk in 2019, In our submission to the City, we reminded them that the Gong wall had been gently leaking since the 1870s, which no negative consequences.

We joined with the Friends of the Buninyong Botanic Gardens in asking for Council to consider alternative measures which will not damage the heritage of the Gardens by removing 100 trees and widening Cornish St, thereby cutting a gaping hole through the middle of the Gardens. An online petition aiming to stop the "permanent removal of 100 trees" from the gardens garnered more than 1700 signatures.

Multiple speakers addressed the council in favour of and against Mr Lapkin's motion. Sadly, Councillors voted to continue with its plans for Cornish St, supported by Buninyong Ward Councillor, Ben Taylor.

The last hope for gaining a better solution to the Gong now rests with Heritage Victoria, who will have to assess the tender documents prepared by Council.

We also learned that progress on stabilising the walls of the old Swimming Baths has stalled, although officers estimated the work will be completed by August.

CROWN HOTEL BECOMES BUNINYONG HOTEL

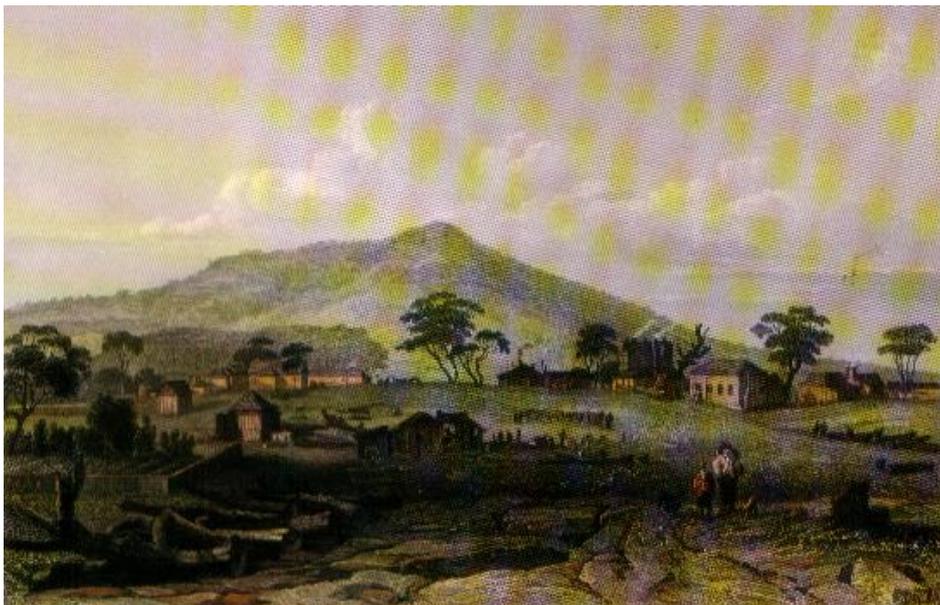
For nearly a year, Simon Coughlan has been working on the historic Crown Hotel, doing extensive repairs and renovation to the interior of the building. It finally opened in April.

The first hotel license granted in Buninyong was to John Veitch in 1843 for his Buninyong Inn. He sold out to Margaret Jamieson in 1847.

With the discovery of gold at Buninyong in August 1851, Mother Jamieson's hotel became a mecca for gold seekers. Immediately the Geelong man George Selleck decided to open an hotel. He purchased from a Mr Hoyle the corner allotment on Warrenheip and Learmonth Sts, the most prominent location in the town, very close to Mother Jamieson's Buninyong Inn. He built a two-story wooden building, and the new hotel opened in April 1852.

In John Sadlier's *Recollections of a Victorian Police Officer*, published in 1913, he recalls his posting to Buninyong and Ballarat as a police cadet in the very early 1850s, until May 1854. He writes of the first court operating at Buninyong, and the gold escort, which made a weekly journey from Buninyong to Geelong and thence by steamer to Melbourne. Prisoners were also escorted from Buninyong to Geelong. Sometimes groups of prisoners were transported 'in a sort of German wagon hired from George Sellick (sic), the Buninyong innkeeper'.

Selleck's Hotel can be seen in Henry Winkles engraving of Buninyong in 1853. William Kelly in *Life in Victoria* (1853) described a visit to the hotel. The Selleck family was a leading one in town.



Henry Winkles, 'Buninyong Township', lithograph, 1853.

Argus, 30 June 1853

THE DIGGINGS.-No. X. (FROM OUR SPECIAL COMMISSIONER.)

I walked over to Buninyong yesterday. That place is now assuming some importance, and far exceeded my expectations. Mrs Jamieson is erecting a large and substantial hotel of stone, and stores are in process of formation for some distance along the road. Sellick is also making additions to the unpretentious edifice of times past.

In the early stages of the gold rush, as Ballarat blossomed over the range from Buninyong, the two Buninyong hotels had a virtual monopoly, as hotels were not allowed to operate on the goldfields. But this changed in 1854, when a new licensing act saw many new licenses issued in Ballarat and vicinity. Mrs Jamieson, who had embarked on building an expensive stone hotel in 1853, was bankrupted and died soon after. But George Selleck managed to weather the storm.

In 1856 the writer Louisa Meredith visited Buninyong and stayed at the Crown, which she praised in her account *Over the Straits* as a pleasant and comfortable hostelry. On 4 September 1858 George Selleck was the first publican in the area to be granted a billiard license.

The hotel was home to many important civic events. The first meeting of the Buninyong Roads Board was held at the Crown Hotel on 30 August 1858, with George Selleck elected at the top of the poll. In 1859 George was elected to the new Borough of Buninyong, with the meeting again held at his hotel. Meetings of the Borough Council continued to be held at the Crown Hotel for many years.

The hotel became a civic centre, especially at election times, when candidates would address the crowds in the street from the balcony, and the hotel assumed duty as a polling station.

When the Buninyong Football Club was formed in 1875, the team met at the Crown Hotel and walked to the recreation ground (now the Golf Course) for the game.

The hotel was destroyed by fire on 31 December 1884. The Buninyong Masonic Lodge, who had met in the hotel, lost most of their equipment in the fire. On 23 February 1885 the ceremony of laying the foundation stone for the new hotel took place, and was described in the local newspapers, which reveal that the new brick and stone hotel was built by Richard Rennie of Buninyong for £2000, with the coach house and stables costing £400. The architect was George Lorimer of Ballarat.

Many licensees followed George Sellick who died in 1869. In 1885 the hotel was leased by Edward Collas, who had ten children, and he remained till 1888. The property was owned by J.P. Wilson in 1925, but was owned by Frank Herman (a director of Goller & Co.) in 1927. Later Goller & Co. sold the hotel to the Ballarat Brewing Company.

In 1933, the height of the Depression, the Buninyong Hotel was pulled down, and the Crown became the sole hostelry in town.

Donald McRae became licensee in 1935, and his family ran the hotel until 1970. Before the era of the TAB, Lew McRae was known around the district as an SP bookmaker, and the Crown was the place to get a bet on the horses.

The Ballarat firm of Goller and Co. owned the hotel, until it sold its hotels to the Ballarat Brewing Company in the late 1980s. Major renovations took place in 1956, under the architect John Vernon. A report by the Licensing inspector described the old back section:

It is of wood, semi-detached from the front. It should be renovated or torn down. It consists of four bedrooms, a bathroom, a storeroom and a billiard room. It is not habitable and has not been used for very many years.

At this stage old outbuildings were demolished, and the old stove from the hotel kitchen was removed across the road to *Marjella*, the home of Lilian McRae Corner, who ran the hotel with her brother. A new male toilet block and laundry were constructed. The hotel was painted and repaired, and a Ballarat architect prepared plans to modernize the kitchen and bathrooms. In 1955 the inspector reported that the hotel had only one bathroom! A new lounge and dining room and female toilet block were constructed on the north side of the building.

William and Dorothy Bruty were licensees from 1970 until 1981, followed by Russell Elms. The development of the tertiary institution at Mount Helen put pressure on the Hotel to obtain a special late night refreshment license.

In 1984 the hotel was extended and re-modelled under architect Ewan Jones, with bottle shop added. A photo published in the *Courier* on 11 January 1985 shows the hotel in process of being repainted in a light colour, and the 'Gothic' roof additions to the dining room, as well as the new bottle shop, with matching roof. From this time the dining room began to play a much greater role in the service of lunches and dinners, and the hotel had a TAB agency in the entrance foyer.

In 1998 the hotel was raffled by the Ballarat Brewery to raise funds for the Sydney Olympics. The winner, a Geelong man, put it on the market. The Irishman Colm Moroney took over in July 2001. New licensees in 2008 removed the TAB agency, and re-painted the hotel in an even lighter shade. They also added a glassed-in conservatory over the balcony beside the dining room.

In June 2024, the hotel was closed for renovations of the interior by owner Simon Coughlan (whose father Jim had been a major shareholder in the Ballarat Brewing Company). The bottle shop was let to the Ballarat pasta makers Carboni's, and immediately became a popular spot for an outdoor snack from January 2025.

The hotel re-opened in April 2025, now calling itself 'The Buninyong Hotel'. In tribute to his family connection with the Ballarat Brewing Company, Simon commissioned a mural on the wall of the former bottle shop.

1859 Election for the seat of Grenville

As we go to a Federal Election on 3 May this year, it is amusing and surprising to reflect on the excitable public response to the 1859 colonial election for the seat of Grenville. Key candidates in Buninyong were Robert Gillespie, manager of the Buninyong Bank, and George Black, erstwhile newspaper man and champion of Eureka.

Star (Ballarat, Vic. : 1855 - 1864), Friday 23 September 1859, page 2

GRENVILLE ELECTION.

The polling for candidates for the representation of Grenville took place yesterday (Thursday), for the Electoral District of Grenville, at the Buninyong Hotel, where the Returning Officer, W. H. Bacchus, Esq., presided. There were two other polling places; one at the Crown Hotel, where the Deputy Returning Officer, Mr Hammond, presided, and one at the Police Court, where Mr Bradshaw fulfilled the duties of Returning Officer. Messrs Lock and Gillespie's central committee rooms was at the Crown Hotel, outside the door of which, about 200 persons were collected in the forenoon. The Eureka Stockade was fought over again in words at least. Even music was brought into requisition to insure the votes of the waverers. About half past one o'clock, a band in the interest, as was supposed, of Mr Black, paraded the principal thoroughfares of the municipality, followed by about 200 persons, whoever and anon gave a vociferous cheer for their favourite. Several of the mining companies "knocked off work" at one o'clock, and accompanied the band alluded to, to the various leads in the locality. Two flags hoisted on poles were also borne in the procession. At eleven o'clock a placard was put outside the door of the Crown Hotel, announcing the state of the poll, around which an eager group collected in a short time.

It is understood that there are about 1500 voters on the electoral roll for the district, so that the polling was very languid until one o'clock, after which it became very spirited until the closing of the booths at four o'clock. About three o'clock there could not be less than 1000 persons present, and then the fun commenced fast and furious. One person in an advanced state of intoxication essayed to harangue the crowd on the "iniquitous conduct of Mr Gillespie, for charging him 2s 6d at one time" for crossing his fields with a horse and dray." He however, "caught a Tartar" in a miner, who asked the speaker, "If he would allow a man with a horse and dray to go through his cabbage garden? The speaker seemed to be non-plussed at this interrogatory, and he burst forth into a tornado of abuse against Mr Gillespie and his supporters. Shortly before the closing of the polling booth at the Buninyong Hotel, the individual alluded to divested himself of his clothing, with the exception of his trousers, and challenged one of Mr Gillespie's supporters to fight, and a scene of barbarity ensued which baffles description. Each of the combatants were backed by their friends, and in a semi state of nudity they fought for ten minutes in the public street. They were then separated and accompanied by several hundred persons, they retired to a paddock where, amid torrents of rain, they fought round after round until at length they seemed quite exhausted, and the man with the two-and-sixpenny grievance received a frightful wound over one of the eyes and a severe contusion on the mouth. The other had a frightful gash on one of the cheeks, and from the time mentioned until our reporter left at eight o'clock a series of brutal encounters took place without let or hindrance, the belligerents almost in every instance divesting themselves of their garments. At one time Mr Daly, Police Magistrate, interfered, but a drunken rowdy attempted twice to "bonnet him" from behind, and the two or three policemen who were present were quite powerless, and allowed the combatants to have it all their own way.

The results from the Buninyong polling favoured George Black, but late votes from country booths swung the result to a victory of Robert Gillespie.

Think of the 1859 election as you go to the Buninyong Primary School to cast your vote this year, and enjoy a democracy sausage. Let's hope it is a much more civilised affair.

Buninyong Football Club 150th Anniversary, 2025



Celebrating the anniversary, club historian Stan Hunter in centre. Photo courtesy *The Courier*.

The club was formed 1875, playing at the Recreation Ground (now the Golf Course). A public meeting was called on 26 May 1875 at the Crown Hotel, and it was agreed to form a football club. The first players were Mr Little (captain), G and T House, G Davies, T and J Goode, W Uren, M Bradley, H Bull, Bilson, A Millar, McCarthy, J Field, M Maloney, Williams, R Thompson, Seal.

Mr Trezise became President, and J Goode Secretary, with meetings held at the Crown Hotel. In 1880 players included P. McCarty and R. Parsons.

By 1900, the Club was using Royal Park. There were frequent seasons when the Club could not field a team, especially between 1915 and 1932, when the re-formed club adopted Royal Park as its home, which lasted until 2006, when the new football ground became available.

In 1984 the Buninyong Football Club became the Buninyong Football and Netball Club.

Reference: *Buninyong Football Netball Club 1875 to 2017*, compiled by Stan Hunter, Buninyong, 2017.

Ballarat Star, 12 June 1875

The Ballarat Football Club proceeds this afternoon to Buninyong, to play the first match with the newly formed club there. Cabs will leave the Buck's Head hotel at half-past one o'clock.

Ballarat Star Monday 14 June 1875,
FOOTBALL.

The football match between the Ballarat and Buninyong clubs took place on Saturday afternoon in the Borough Park at Buninyong, and resulted in a victory for the Ballarat team. Only one goal

was kicked during the afternoon, and that was secured by Mr C. Henderson. Soon after play commenced the Buninyong club, who 'kicked with the wind' nearly scored a goal; the ball was within a yard of the posts when Thompson hit it with his hand instead of kicking the leather, and the ball went between the posts.-This was the only chance the Buninyong club got.-In regard to the play, it may be stated that the members of the newly-formed club worked most desperately and deserved better luck; they played well, so far as rushing and rough tumbling is concerned,- but the kicking might-be improved. The ground was wet and slippery in places and caused innumerable spills; once some amusement was occasioned by a Ballarat player falling into a hole full of water and having to exhibit his swimming-powers.: Messrs Little and T. Holt acted as captains of the Buninyong and Ballarat teams respectively, and Mr A. Green acted as central umpire. 'Mr W. Clarke, M.L.A. braved the dangers of the game and did some hot work for Buninyong. After time had been called, an adjournment was made to Mrs Young's hotel, where refreshments were provided by the Buninyong club.

COMING EVENTS

Saturday 19 April Open Morning 9.30am to 1.00pm

**Saturday 3 May Central Highlands Historical Association Meeting at Learmonth
Historical Society, 10.00am. (and Election Day)**

Saturday 17 May to 31 May Ballarat Heritage Festival.

Saturday 17 May BDHS Open morning, Court House, 9.30am to 1.00pm

Thursday 17 June BDHS Meeting 7:30pm

Reminder: Have you renewed your membership for 2024-25?