

BUNINYONG AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Reg. No. A0030085Y

Web Site <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~buninhis>
PO Box 98, Buninyong, Vic. 3357.

Newsletter



The Buninyong Uniting Church (formerly Presbyterian Church) built in 1860 to the design of the Geelong architects Backhouse and Reynolds. (Photo, 1990, from our collection)

August 2010

The Buninyong and District Historical Society will join in celebrating the sesquicentenary of the Buninyong Uniting Church. . Our meeting at the Town Hall Court House on Thursday 19 August at 7.30 pm, will feature Anne Beggs Sunter speaking on the life of Rev. Thomas Hastie and his legacy to Buninyong.

On Saturday 21 August, the Society will hold a walking tour of Buninyong's churches, culminating with an inspection of the Uniting Church. This will leave the Town Hall steps at 10.30 am. All welcome.

Then on Sunday 29 August, the official anniversary will be celebrated by the Uniting Church community.

FAMILY HISTORY ENQUIRIES

July-August 2010

ANGEL, Samuel – killed at Corduroy Bridge when a boiler exploded at Steam Saw Mills in 1856

BROCK – William Brock settled at Yendon in the late nineteenth century and was buried in the Catholic section of the Buninyong cemetery with an infant child in 1889. Query from Westmead, NSW.

CROMBIE - John Charles Crombie & Margaret Crosier were farmers at Hardie's Hill in the 1890s and their children attended the Garibaldi school. Correspondence with a descendant from Kirkstall in Victoria reveals that John Charles, son of the pioneer James Crombie of Hardie's Hill, is the author of a marvelous history of the Durham Lead area, written in 1934. This led us to correct our records. The manuscript had somehow been attributed to James Crombie, an error that appears in our book *Three Times Blest*. It is likely that James Crombie was a brother of John Crombie, who purchased the Mount Mercer Cattle Station in 1857 and who was murdered in 1859. His wife Martha retained the land until her death in 1884. Incidentally Martha was the sister-in-law of James Oddie, the great benefactor of Ballarat.

LEDWIDGE – Simon married Eliza Cooper at Holy Trinity Buninyong in December 1868. Simon was a butcher at Ballarat, and his descendant thinks he was at Buninyong, though we have no record.

MAGREE – James was working at the Yendon Railway Station when he married a Hayes at Buninyong according to rites of the Catholic Church. There are a number of Magrees listed in the Rates Index, but no burials at Buninyong. A query from Westmead, NSW

MASON, John and Louisa – John Mason was killed in an accident at Buninyong in September 1859, leaving his wife Louisa a widow with three young children. Louisa never remarried, but managed to raise her children as an independent woman. She died in 1886, and was buried at Buninyong with her daughter Sarah. Later her son William erected a headstone, which mistakenly gives his father's name as Frederick George. The mistake was made because a Frederick George Mason had also been

accidentally killed in Buninyong in September 1859. A descendant from Sydney visited us in July, making us think about the issue of how far can you trust the information on death certificates and headstones, and also how did widows with little means of support manage to make a living in the nineteenth century.

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 *Espresso Depot* opened in July after the former Whykes butcher shop changed hands again. The café is serving coffee and snacks throughout the day, and 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.

Buninyong Uniting Church celebrates its 150th birthday

When British settlers began to occupy the Buninyong region from 1837, they were mostly Scottish. The Learmonth brothers, John Winter and Andrew Scott were the leading settlers, and most concerned to nurture their Presbyterian religion and the education of the children of the settlers. Their first communal action in 1847 was to call the Reverend Thomas Hastie, from Linlithgoshire, to be their minister of the new Presbyterian parish of Buninyong and Shelford. The first log kirk was opened in June 1847.

The young Learmonth brothers were most concerned about education, and the following year established the Buninyong Presbyterian Boarding School, the first inland boarding school in Victoria. This was an innovative school where the children

or rural workers could board, and local children of the growing township came as day scholars.

In August 1851 with the discovery of gold in the vicinity by Thomas Hiscock, the local blacksmith whose children attended the school, life in the district was transformed by the arrival of thousands of hopeful immigrants from Europe, and the township of Buninyong became the centre of a burgeoning population, based on farming and mining.

In 1859 the trustees of the Buninyong Presbyterian Church decided the time had come to build a fine new church. The Scottish pioneers commissioned the beautiful Presbyterian church in the centre of the township. Tenders for building the church were advertised in late November 1859, and the Geelong architects Backhouse and Reynolds designed the brick and slate church, that was built by the local contractor Richard Rennie. An enthusiastic committee embarked on a fund raising campaign, led by Robert Gillespie and the Rev. Hastie. Members and local businesses were invited to contribute to the building fund, and to a sustentation fund, which would support the minister. Generous donations came from district squatters. Local businessmen also contributed generously. Altogether 852 pounds were contributed to the building fund, and 400 pounds to the sustentation fund, which included a government grant of 66 pounds.

This remarkably successful campaign meant that the new church was almost paid for at the time of its opening. The foundation stone was ceremonially laid on 27 March 1860 by Mrs Celia Scott of *Mount Boninyong*, the oldest resident in the district. The first service in the new church was held on 26 August 1860, accompanied by celebrations and a presentation to the Rev. Hastie of a handsome silver tea service.

In the 1950s the brick walls were covered with roughcast and plaster. In 1971 the church combined with the Methodist church to form the Buninyong United Church, which in 1977 became part of the Uniting Church in Australia.

The church has a number of fine stained glass windows. At the north end is a window placed in 1891 in memory of Mr and Mrs Thomas Scott. The magnificent window was manufactured in Edinburgh by Ballantine and Sons, and includes portraits of the Scotts.

Side windows in memory of Rev. Thomas Hastie, and Mr and Mrs Robert Scott were unveiled on 13 April 1900, again with portraits of those commemorated. These windows were made by the Melbourne firm of Zenken and Co.

There are a number of other stained glass windows that add to the beauty of the church, including one placed in 1982 in memory of pastor Stuart Davies, a Lay Preacher at the church for over 50 years.

The beautiful church in its extensive grounds is included in the Buninyong Heritage Precinct, and in 2009 gained a grant from Heritage Victoria to allow the steeple to be restored. This work is nearing completion in August 2010.

Banking on Buninyong

Banking services started in Buninyong in 1859, the year that the National Bank of Australasia established its first branch in Ballarat. Just one month later, the manager decided to open an agency in Buninyong, located near the corner of Learmonth and Warrenheip Sts. The bank purchased the site from the shopkeeper John Adams, who had established his bakery and general store next door.

On 14 April 1859 the newly formed Buninyong Roads Board decided that its account be moved to the Buninyong National Bank, and shortly after the new Municipality of Buninyong also provided good business for the bank. These were thriving days for Buninyong, with a great deal of mining occurring in the nearby gullies.

The agency was upgraded to a branch on 2 January 1866, the day a fine new building of stone and brick was opened. It cost 2,184 pounds. The manager lived in the residence above the banking chamber, and a second clerk was employed to assist the manager.

With the demise of gold mining in the early twentieth century, and the Depression of the 1930s, Buninyong's population and businesses fell away, and in January 1934 the branch was downgraded to a sub-branch of Ballarat. With the government strictly regulating manpower during World War Two, the government decreed in 1942 that the bank should be closed, a decision that was resisted by the Shire Council. After

the war it continued as a receiving office of the Ballarat branch until the Buninyong agency was closed in 1974.

With a population boom in Buninyong in recent years, community demand for a bank was rekindled and after a strong community campaign by the directors, Buninyong has a bank once again, with the opening of the Buninyong and District Community Bank, under the auspices of the Bendigo Bank, on 6 August 2010, in new purpose-built premises on the corner of Warrenheip and Eyre Streets. It is very pleasing to note that the new bank has been designed to blend harmoniously into the Buninyong heritage precinct.

A Mystery Solved at Clarendon.

There is an early map of the township of Clarendon published in *Three Times Blest*. As the historian of the township, I had long been mystified by an enclosure marked on the 1858 map, below Williamson's Creek. The mystery has been explained by a visitor to the Society, who had the papers of an inquest conducted in 1856 into the death of Samuel Angel at the Steam Saw Mills at Corduroy Bridge. The mill was owned by John Davidson, who in December 1957 secured a contract to build 2 miles and 73 chains of road between Corduroy and Scot's Bridge, for a sum of £10,003. So the substantial enclosure on the 1858 map, showing a number of buildings, was the Corduroy Steam Saw Mills, situated on the block of the present Recreation Reserve.

COMING EVENTS

August 19 – BDHS General Meeting – Anne Beggs Sunter will speak on the life and influence of Rev. Thomas Hastie, at the Buninyong Uniting Church, 7.30 pm

August 21 – Court House History Centre open. Hastie Heritage Walk. Meet at the Court House at 10.30 am to explore the sites related to Rev. Hastie's life. Court House open.

August 29 – Celebration of the 150th Anniversary of opening of the Buninyong Presbyterian Church in 1860.

18 September – Court House History Centre open.