

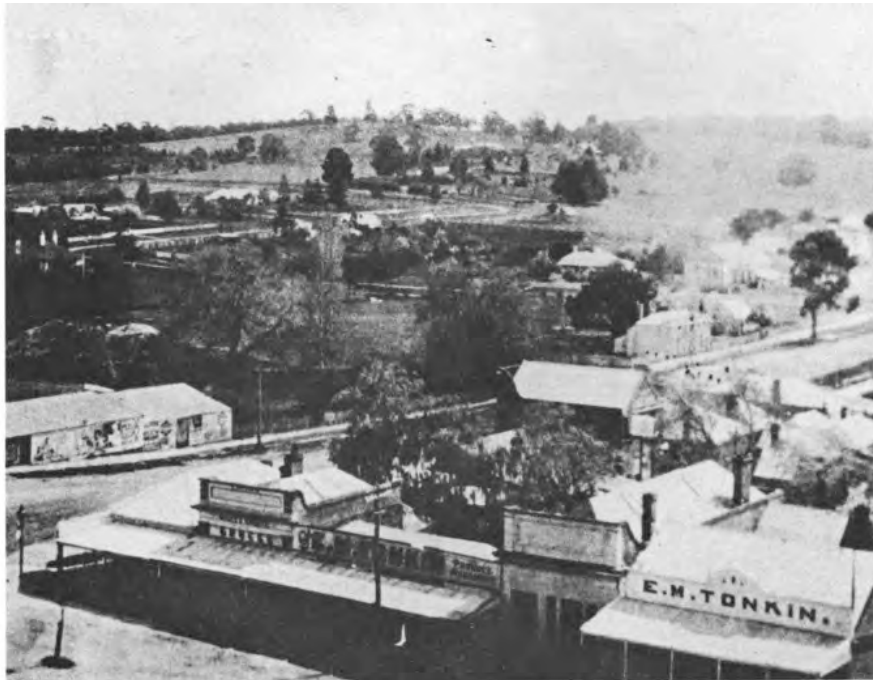
BUNINYONG AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Reg. No. A0030085Y

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

Newsletter

JUNE 2011



View of Buninyong, 1920s, showing shops in Learmonth St. from the Warrenheip St. corner.
(see Rita Brown's story of the shops during the 1950s in this issue)

Our next meeting takes place on Thursday 16 June, at 7.30 pm, at the Court House History Centre. Our Guest Speaker will be Les Alderton, who, with his wife Jenny, is a new member of our Society and a post-graduate student at the University of Ballarat. He will give us a taste of his research into early contacts between Aboriginal people and European settlers in the Western District of Port Phillip in the 1830s and 1840s.

Buninyong at the Ballarat Heritage Festival, 6-7 May 2011

The Festival was a very successful event, and we were very happy with the number of visitors we had over the weekend. On Saturday 6 May we conducted a walking tour of Buninyong with a good group of walkers in fine weather, who then joined the capacity crowd in the Court House for Anne Beggs-Sunter's talk about using historical maps. With generous assistance from the City of Ballarat, we were able to mount an interesting exhibition of maps of the Buninyong-Ballararat area, with the bonus of three special maps from the City and the Gold Museum. On Sunday we offered another walking tour, and talked to visitors at both our Buninyong headquarters, and at the Mining Exchange. Warm thanks to the members who manned our two venues. A good initiative was the 1950s vintage bus, which transported visitors between Ballarat and Buninyong throughout the weekend.

150th Anniversary of the Geelong-Ballararat Railway.

Anne and Andy lawn attended a lively meeting at Meredith on 2 May, to continue planning for the 150th Anniversary of the opening of the Geelong-Ballararat railway in April next year. We will offer an exhibition, possibly at the Lal Lal Railway Station.

150th Anniversary Celebrations for Botanic Gardens

The Friends of the Buninyong Botanic Gardens began the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the Gardens with a bumper luncheon at the Buninyong Town Hall on Saturday 14 May, when Mrs Tamie Fraser, the wife of former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, was the charming and witty guest speaker. She gave an illustrated lecture on the four very different gardens she has created. It was lovely to see Tamie being assisted on technical issues by her younger sister Christena Hindhaugh, who is secretary of the Gardens Committee. Christina and her committee, which is chaired by Peter Hiscock, deserve great credit for their organising efforts on what proved a lovely lunch, and a good fundraiser for the Gardens.

Fortuitous Oral History

A bonus for our Society at the Gardens Lunch was the fact that your secretary was seated next to Rita Brown. We had never met, despite the fact Rita has lived in Learmonth St. for nearly 60 years. But we got talking, and a few days later Rita allowed us to record an oral history interview to be added to our collection. Rita gave a delightful insight into Buninyong in the 1950s.

Bill and Rita (Margarita) Brown operated the Milk Bar and grocery opposite the Crown Hotel from 1955 to 1962, when Miss True Sincerity took over the shop. Rita was founding secretary of the Kindergarten, with Beth Ritchie as President.

The Browns, who were both born in Melbourne, came to Buninyong in 1955, when they found a vacant shop advertised in the township, with a house attached. The property included the corner shop on the Warrenheip St/ Learmonth St intersection (which became a gift shop) and the former Hedrick bluestone shop next door, (which became a Milk Bar and Fruit Shop.) The Milk Bar concept was just taking off in popular culture, influenced by American culture.

The hours were 9.00 am to 9.00 pm, very demanding for a family. Bill and Rita worked in the two shops, and they employed locals to help.

Findlay McNaughton supplied milk to the citizens of Buninyong, and the Browns purchased cans of milk from Findlay for use in their business. They did not sell bottles of milk, because that was Findlay's market.

They sold bread to travellers. Rita remarked on Paddy Jones's local bread, which was a chewy white loaf. She purchased a few loaves for sale in the shop, but preferred the bread made by Davies in Ballarat.

Rita recalls the celebrations around the Olympics in 1956. The community arranged a debutante ball in the Town Hall, and Rita's three sons were miniature debs.

She also recalled the community celebrations in conjunction with the turning on of water in Buninyong.

Rita and Bill were very involved with Holy Trinity. Their three boys went to Buninyong Primary School, and Rita was very involved in the introduction of the Buninyong Kindergarten. Rita became the Secretary, and Beth Ritchie the President. And they enthusiastically raised funds for the new kindergarten, which opened in 1964. Rita recalled that the architect was inspired by the shape of the Rotunda in the Botanic Gardens in designing the kindergarten. The committee raised funds through fairs, rag drives, and collecting bottles. (The rag drives involved collecting unused materials from households, which would then be sold to garages for work in car maintenance)

The Milk Bar became a place where the teenagers of Buninyong 'hung out', buying their malted milks, and sipping them under the veranda of Learmonth St. Rita told the story of how the local lads liked to play a prank on travellers coming through Buninyong from Geelong. They would carefully package a box of dog excrement, wrap it up in brown paper and string provided by Bill Brown, and then put it on the highway. The teenagers then gained great entertainment from watching motorists stop and investigate the packages!

In 1956 Bill and Rita sought a new home for their family, The old residence attached to the shop had many problems, so they purchased a big block on the corner of Learmonth and Winter Streets, and commissioned Lloyd Coxall to build them a new brick veneer house.

Rita and Bill were 'burned out' by the early 1960s, and sold their Buninyong business. Bill established a second-hand book business in Sebastopol, and then later in Central Square in Ballarat.

Biographical Queries

April-June 2011

HOGAN, Ann – a 26 year old servant living at Buninyong in 1866 when she married Matthew McNamara at St. Alipius in Ballarat East in 1866.

STONE , Thomas, woodsplitter at Whim Holes in 1875 when his daughter was born.

ZIMMER, Johan – German, born 1811, at Durham Lead as a gardener in 1869. Purchased land and was growing wheat on his farm in 1878 when he died suddenly, leaving a widow with five children. Query from a descendant in Gippsland.

Any clues about these families, please contact the Secretary, a.beggs-sunter@ballarat.edu.au (NB It has been a great pleasure over the Summer holidays to be able to put some family members in contact, showing the value of this column in our newsletter.)

Visit to Eyre Cottage, one of our earliest properties c. 1856

On Saturday 4 June, about 15 members gathered to visit the former home and garden of Robert Allan, one of Buninyong's founding fathers. This beautiful brick cottage in Eyre St. has been restored by the present owners and custodians, Rob and Dianne, who welcomed us to their property and gave us a guided tour of the historic property. It is remarkable that two important nineteenth century artists depicted the site – Francois Cogné in 1859 with his view from the garden, and William Tibbits in the early 1870s with his watercolour of the cottage. The present owners and their heritage architect, Wendy Jacobs, used the Tibbits painting to restore the original look of the verandah posts. A sensitive addition, using old bricks, opened up the rear of the house and added a striking new kitchen. But Rob showed us the old kitchen stove made by McIvor's foundry in Ballarat, and other original features lovingly conserved. It is wonderful to see one of our earliest homes so well cared for, with respect for the memory of Robert Allan, who not only commissioned this residence, but also gave the Library building to the citizens of Buninyong, and left his fortune in 1878 to establish a scholarship scheme for young people associated with the Buninyong Presbyterian Sunday School.

Death on Durham Lead Road.

Johan Zimmer of Durham Lead, who was born in Germany, had set out in the morning of 1 March 1878 with a load of wheat to take to the Buninyong mill for gristing. Later in the day his body was found beside his dray, near Learmonth's Pre-emptive, as he was returning with a load of flour. He had the considerable sum of £8 on his person. The inquest, conducted at the Pioneer Hotel by Dr Sparling, showed that he had died from some unknown cause.

This information, from Zimmer's inquest, throws a little more light on our quest to find out more about Buninyong's mysterious flour mills.

COMING EVENTS

June 16 – Meeting of our society, with guest speaker Les Alderton on early Aboriginal-European encounters in the Western District.

June 18 – Court House History Centre open 9.00 am to 1.30 pm.

August 18 – General Meeting Court House History Centre