

Yarram & District Historical Society Inc.

MEMORY LANE

VOLUME 3

DECEMBER 2018



CARPENTER'S BRIDGE

CIRCA 1932 DURING FLOODING

Yarram & District Historical Society Inc.

Welcome to our third newsletter.

This year has been quite eventful in many ways.

We are still in our building but Saputo will be putting the site up for sale as industrial this next month. We do not know what the New Year will bring.

We have sadly lost three cherished members.

Nancy Foat, who was a great donor, and contributor, to the Historical Society.

Connie Bird, an ex-policewoman, who had a forensic knowledge of her family and its history and who carried out many tasks for the society.

Barry Earle another member who was an avid collector with an interest in history. They will all be sincerely missed.

Our former President Jim Kee had to step down this year due to ill health.

He has done a fantastic job of indexing all the photos and documents in our archive which are now stored in a new, easily accessible, cabinets.

His cheerful presence has been sorely missed. We thank him deeply for his great contribution to the Society and wish him well.

We have been changing around displays this year and adding to our collection.

We received some photos including one of the first teacher in Yarram, William Hickman Mason, from Tacoma Max in Seattle, no less. We are extremely grateful for this special addition.

We also received some photos of the Tarra Valley School and some copies of documents pertaining to this school from Max Cameron

Several more wedding dresses have been donated and we now have a very comprehensive collection of styles from the 20th century.

The Masonic Lodge also has donated items into our care as it was forced to close due to lack of membership.

We elected a new President, Bill Bodman, at our Annual General meeting.

Bill has been writing histories for us and making new displays for the past few years. He will help steer us through what may be a rocky time.

Some members were able to attend a meeting at the Sale Cultural Centre and were particularly interested in the Archive and Research area of the library.

Phillip Cashen, a distant member, is still putting out on his blog 'Shire at War' which makes for fascinating reading and is a wonderful social comment on this area during the First World War.

We hope you will enjoy the following article on the historic site of Carpenter's Bridge which marks the entry to the town coming from Sale and Traralgon. This article was contributed by Margery Missen with additional material from 'From These Beginnings' A History of the Shire of Alberton, Adams and the Gippsland Guardian on Trove.

With photos from our archives and some recent photos.

Carpenter's Bridge

The founder of Yarram could be regarded as John Carpenter.

He came from Devon, England to Melbourne in 1852 and settled on the north side of the Tarra River, where he established a flour mill and saw mill.

There was found need for a proper bridge across the Tarra River so tenders were called and received from Huntington and Co., 450 pounds sterling, R Searle 350 pounds, J Carpenter 344 pounds 10 shillings and sixpence, E Scott & Co. 692 pounds 10 shillings.

Carpenter obtained the tender and he completed it in October 1855.

The new bridge would have been welcome.

'Traveller', under the heading 'Correspondence', in the Gippsland Guardian for Friday 9th of October 1855, relates the fact that the bridge at Yarram Yarram is 'just finished'.

In fact the construction of the bridge saw the surveying of a roadway from Alberton to the new bridge and the releasing of allotments by John Orr from his survey that fronted the proposed roadway.

According to 'Local Intelligence' Gippsland Guardian, Friday 10th April 1857, John Carpenter's two mills on the Tarra River had been brought into full operation on the previous day.

From this time on the bridge across the Tarra was referred to as Carpenter's. An article in the Gippsland Guardian of August 1861 cites 'certain ratepayer's residing at Woranga praying the board to drain the road from Buckley's fence to Carpenter's Bridge'

Two months later another article reported on a new road (track), explored by John Carpenter and Darby, a local aboriginal, to take people to the diggings at Shady Creek and Baw Baw, starting at Carpenter's Bridge and ending at the bridge in Traralgon. It was a route shorter than that which was then in operation by 30 miles.



A Shire of Alberton council meeting, April 8th 1864, reported on the state of Carpenters Bridge and produced a plan showing the necessary improvements, for a new bridge, with the exception of flooring and handrails. The matter was fully discussed and it was resolved to call for tenders to do the work.

New piles were driven in, in May and Peter Tainsh completed his contract there in August.

However the following year John Dougherty was still complaining of the state of the flooring on the bridge.

In March 1914 children from the local school were using the pool at Carpenter's Bridge to have swimming lessons. A visit to Yarram in November 1914 by Frank Beaurepaire, the Victorian State Education's organiser of swimming and life-saving classes, found the pool too small but conducted talks for the Junior Certificate. Several boys from the local school were put through their tests for the Department's Junior Certificate of Swimming, John O'Connor, Kenneth Elder and David Hill succeeded in gaining their certificates. While visiting Mr Beaurepaire, also assisted by Mr Evans from Devon North School, gave an exhibition of life-saving.

The area was also known for the fishing. On January 20th 1915,

Messrs Coulthard and Adams were fishing and caught an enormous eel, which when cleaned turned the scales at 14lbs and measured 4'6" in length. A black fish was landed by Mr E. Newberry, it weighed 3 ¾ lbs and was also caught at Carpenters Bridge on January 24th 1914.

In March 1920 the Shire Council considered the possibility of a swimming pool in Yarram as a war memorial. The Water Trust couldn't supply sufficient water for public baths in the town, so a site was chosen on the Tarra River at Carpenter's Bridge. The site chosen by the committee was a picturesque spot



in the bend of the river, a place of historic interest. The baths committee chose the spot as the most charming, convenient and suitable for public baths. Over several months working bees were carried out dragging and clearing debris. The public subscribed sufficient cash to have other improvements, such as shed with concrete floor, opening hours were fixed and mixed bathing was not permitted. The Yarram Swimming Baths were ready by late 1921 and included dressing sheds, as well as ladders, diving board and depth boards.

Opening the Yarram Public Swimming Baths Tarra River circa 1922

A Committee of the Baths was formed and a set of rules was formulated.

All bathers must wear neck to knee costumes.

Obscene language or offensive conduct is strictly forbidden.

Camping or illegally trespassing is forbidden.

Gentlemen are requested to particularly note ladies hours and respect same.

Hours allotted were:-

Ladies Monday and Thursday 2pm-4pm

All other days 10am-12 noon

Gentlemen- all other hours. All other days 10am-12 noon.

This was a site used for years by local swimmers including the primary school.

In February 1922 the Gippsland Times reported the opening of the Yarram Baths. The Official opening occurred on Saturday 11th February 1922, with a large crowd in attendance.

Some 20 years previously, the Presbyterian Church held garden parties nearby, a popular gathering at a popular resort, in later years it dropped into disuse.

Carpenter's Bridge has also been an area of sadness with several locals having lost their lives there.

A Carrajung woman, a patient in the Yarram Hospital, was to be taken to Melbourne for an operation but the evening prior to the trip, she escaped and ran to the bridge where she jumped into the river and was drowned. Another local young woman also took her life there during the First World War when her bridegroom, a soldier, did not appear for their wedding, and another local took his life there when his girlfriend broke the relationship off.

Record floods occurred in 1934 when 763 points of rain fell on November 30th and December 1st. Ernest Alfred Parrott was attempting to get home on his bicycle, when he was swept over the embankment into 10feet of water. He held onto the fence for some time, until Thomas Zimmerman arrived and tried to rescue him. As he reached him the fence gave way and Parrott passed from view. His body was later found. Mr Parrott's funeral was held on December 3rd.

The Gippsland Times reported a meritorious effort by Messrs Edwards and Westwood in October 1939, when they worked continuously for 24 hours on a causeway, starting at 4 am on a Friday. Fifteen men were engaged in relays to do the work. The length of the completed operation was 80 feet. The total length of the bridge would be 230 feet and when completed would become the longest structure of its kind in South Gippsland.

November 1982 funding to the amount of \$1.1 million was made available in the Bi-Centennial Year Road



Funding Associations for upgrading bridges over the Tarra River, north of Yarram on the South Gippsland Highway. Tenders were called in 1983 and work completed in 1984.

The older bridge had been prone to flooding with water up to road level.

The Bicentennial Bridge and causeway took the risk for motorists away.

It left a road reserve which is used by campers and caravans.

Carpenters bridge in distance, part of the causeway in foreground.



The 1939 bridge over the Tarra River with the Bicentennial Bridge in the background

The Tarra River was named for Charlie Tarra an aboriginal from the Goulburn area who guided Angus McMillan to Port Albert.

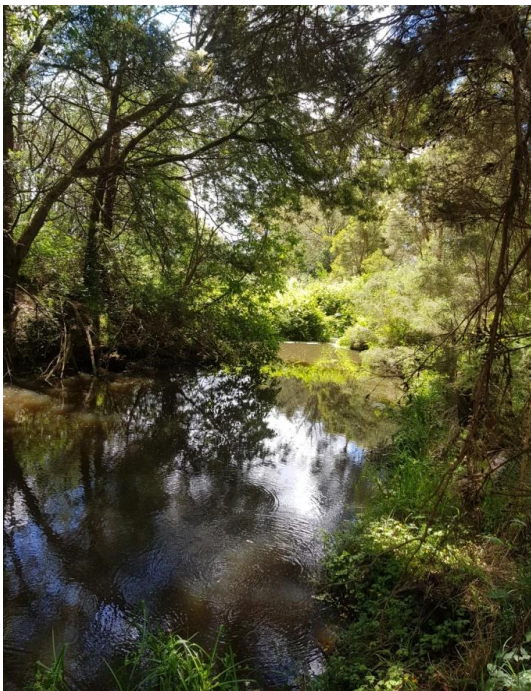
The local Kurnai /Gunnai tribe were the Brataualung and they called this river Blindit'yin/ Balagan, 'the platypus river'.

Today if you are lucky you may spot a platypus frolicking in the river. They are shy creatures but oh so delightful to be able to watch.

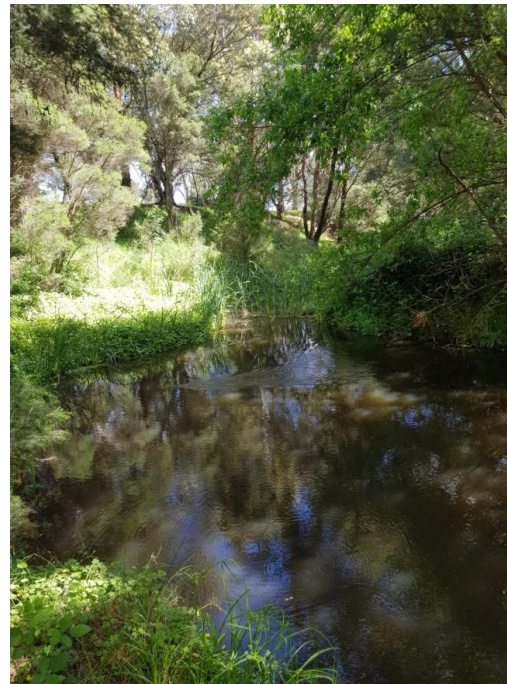
Unfortunately this area with all of its history is not fully appreciated and much of its charm is being despoiled by unthinking people.

The plaques from the 1939 bridge have been taken and more often than not there are vast amounts of rubbish littering this site.

The following pictures show the beauty of the river taken from the swimming pool area.



Looking into the pool across to Aylesbury



Looking back towards the bridge