

**YARRA GLEN & DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.
FOUNDED 1973**

NEWSLETTER

December 1998. Published December, March, June & September. Issue No: 1

From the President

Hi ! Let me welcome you to this our first "Newsletter" of the Society.

We hope to publish this Newsletter 4 times per year, bringing you some of the history of the early settlers of this area.

We will bring you, funny little anecdotes, also stories of the many hardships these very brave people faced, as they left their friends and families to come all this way to start a new life in a new country.

As I write this today, "Remembrance Day" I pause to think of the young, and not so young, men and women who went away to war, many, who never came back; they were the children and grandchildren of our early pioneers.

We meet together each month to collect, preserve and discuss the history of this district and we always welcome new members. If you have any photos of early Yarra Glen & district we would love to borrow them to take a copy and return them back to you.

At the present, we have 3 members on the sick list, our secretary, Betty Seddon, with a broken ankle, Vin Harris, broken hip, Kath Beach has had an operation on her eye. We wish them all a speedy recovery.

Until next time,

Yours Evelyn Smith.

FLASHES FROM THE PAST.

Items of interest taken from the files of local newspapers.

"EVELYN OBSERVER"

20th April 1883.

A rather curious explosion occurred at the Yarra Flats Hotel, Yarra Flats, one day this week. A swagman entered the hotel and put his swag down, when shortly afterwards an explosion occurred, and his swag "heaved up" and sovereigns were seen "flying in the air". The swagman very naturally at once started to gather up the golden coin, not noticing that his swag was on fire, and when afterwards put out with water was found to be destroyed. The swagman states that he had in his swag a tin of gunpowder and 38 sovereigns, but how the powder came to explode he could not say.

DID YOU KNOW ? That the first newspaper in the district was the "*EVELYN OBSERVER*", first published at Kangaroo Ground 31st October 1873. Unfortunately no early copies survive, the earliest held by the State Library date from mid 1882.

The next paper to be published was the "*LILYDALE EXPRESS*", dating from 30th June 1886. Then came the "*HEALESVILLE GUARDIAN*", from 21st December 1893. Copies of the "*LILYDALE EXPRESS*" and "*HEALESVILLE GUARDIAN*" may be viewed on micro-film at the "Healesville Historical Society". The "*EVELYN OBSERVER*" can be seen at the "Lilydale Historical Society". All may be seen at the State Library.

CHARACTERS - PAST & PRESENT

KEETS James. Yarra Flats. (From Victoria & its Metropolis)

A native of Cambridgeshire, England, born in 1830. Came out to Australia in 1849, landing in Melbourne from which he came to Glen Vale in the Whittlesea district and after a residence of two years there, to the neighbourhood of Portland where he remained for about 18 months, In 1852 he spent seven months on the Bendigo goldfield and going, thence to Plenty, rented a farm from Mr. James Patton for nine years. In 1865 he located himself on the Yarra Flats, renting a hundred acres from Mr. Joseph Hutchinson for 3 years, at the expiry of which time he selected 80 acres under Grants Act and from time to time selected and purchased an additional total of 200 acres.

James Keets died May 1911 and is buried in the Yarra Glen cemetery. He had married Martha Cullis in 1853 and they had 4 sons and 2 daughters. One son, George, born 1861 married Isobell Sadlier (aunt of Fred Sadlier) and these are the grandparents of our member Geoff Keets.

Fortunately the farm stayed in possession of the Keets family and Geoff & Sonia were able to move onto to the property formerly owned by his g-grandfather and so after more than 125 years we still have the Keets name in the district. Geoff can probably claim to be the only person in the district living on land taken up by an ancestor in the earliest days of settlement

NEXT MEETING

6th December. This will be a walk along King & Bell Streets, looking at the older buildings and the sites of former buildings. Meet opposite the Police Station at 1.30pm.

B.Y.O. afternoon tea at McKenzie Park. This will be our last function before Christmas, so all you super cooks show us what you can do.

January. No meeting.

February 9th, 7.30 pm

March 9th, 7.30 pm.

Membership Subscription : \$ 6.00. per year. Dates from 1st October.

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