

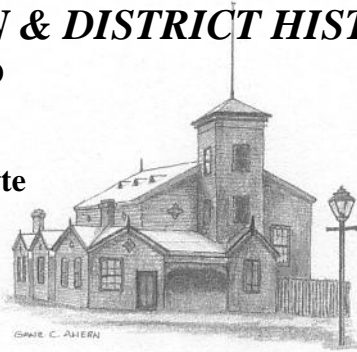
YARRA GLEN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

February 2005 (Published quarterly)

Issue No: 15

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RECENT & FUTURE EVENTS

GULF STATION PIONEER FESTIVAL

Another successful festival was held at Gulf Station on the weekend of 22-23 January with an estimated 4000 visitors. Eric Tetlow was asked to coordinate the stall for the Historical Societies of Healesville and Yarra Glen. Leigh, Brenda and Helen went along at various times to give Eric assistance.

HEALESVILLE TIMBER FESTIVAL

Sunday 13 March at the Healesville Racecourse

Held every two years the festival aims to promote and raise public awareness of the sustainable timber industry. There will be machinery and truck displays, working demonstrations, activities for children, craft stalls, historical displays, wood chop, bush push and more.

QUILT SHOW AT MONT DE LANCEY

4-27 February 10am-4.30pm

Closed Mondays and Tuesdays

Cost \$5 Details: 5964 2088

Yarra Glen Roads & Streets

a series about their history

Bell Street

Named for the Bell family of Gulf Station who rented land from John Dickson as early as 1851. By 1856 the Bell and Armstrong families had purchased more than 1300 acres and taken over Dickson's lease. William Bell (1831-1877) and his brothers-in-law, Thomas and Simon Armstrong managed the station. In 1860 William Bell married Mary Ann Little (1834-1916) and they made their home there, buying out the Armstrongs. William and Mary Ann had eight children, all but two of whom lived at Gulf Station for most of their lives.

Bell Street commences at the Vasey Houghton Bridge and ends at the corners of Armstrong Grove and Irvine Crescent. The section from the corner of King Street to Anzac Avenue is often referred to locally as the "Main Street". It currently forms a part of the Melba Highway

Bell Street was first sealed with bitumen at the end of the Second World War. It had a narrow strip of 'tar' up the centre of the road to the intersection with Symons Street or, as it was then known, 'the foot of the Post Office hill'.

The earliest existing buildings on Bell Street are Apple Porch Cottage at the corner of Irvine Crescent and the former bank building at the corner of Armstrong Grove. This corner formed the centre of the Yarra Flats settlement. With the coming of the railway in 1888 more substantial buildings were constructed at the other end of Bell Street and became the centre of Yarra Glen. Those still standing include the hotel (1888), the bank building, currently BanQ Restaurant, (c.1890), the Anglican Church (moved to this site from the intersection of Armstrong Grove and the Dixons Creek Road in 1895), Point Pleasant homestead (1880) and 'River View' (before 1890).

Yarra Glen Presbyterian Church



The Yarra Glen Presbyterian Church 1892-1976

FIRST CHURCH BUILDING

In the 1850s William Bell of Kangaroo Ground sent his son, William and sons-in-law Thomas and Simon Armstrong to manage Gulf Station which he had taken over from John Dickson. The Bells and Armstrongs belonged to a strong community of Scottish Presbyterians who had erected a slab building at Kangaroo Ground in 1851 to serve as school and church. Young William married Mary Ann Little in 1860 and they soon commenced their family of eight children. It is not surprising that they tired of the journey to the Kangaroo Ground Church services each Sunday.

A public meeting was called on 12 March 1866 to select a site for a similar building at Yarra Flats. A Committee chaired by Rev. D Boyd included Thomas Armstrong, William Bell, John Wilson, William Herbert, Edward Evans and John Williamson. A site of half an acre was selected before the next meeting on 26 March. In April a tender was received from Edward Young but he did not complete the building. Another contract was made with Samuel Lorimer who completed it at a cost of £95 by the end of 1866.

Minutes of a meeting show that by 1871 the building was being viewed as only temporary for church purposes. a "general meeting of the managers, members & adherents of the Church at Yarra Flats, [was] held at the schoolhouse and temporary Church on Feby 1 1871".

SECOND CHURCH BUILDING

On 3 June 1887 a meeting was called to decide upon construction of a new Church – whether it should be in brick or wood. The latter eventually prevailed, possibly for economic reasons. A new site was provided on the Dixons Creek Road (the same location as the current Uniting Church on Melba Highway). Mr C.H.Howe, an architect from Abbotsford, submitted plans in June 1891 and

building proceeded apace once a tender from Mr Ireland was accepted in February the following year. The final cost was £656. The superseded school-cum-church was retained and intended for use as a reading room for young men. [A new school had already been built in 1879].

The striking new church opened with much ceremony on Sunday 4 September 1892. The outer walls were of rabbit shelving jointed in imitation of Ashlar stone. Five windows, on either side and at the front, had Gothic arches and were glazed with blue and ruby Muranese, the centres filled in with Cathedral glass. The roof was covered with slate. There were two entrances at the front in the form of a porch either side of the building. These had pairs of doors with patented hinges that allowed the doors to open inwards or outwards and to close automatically. At the back of the building was a vestry which had a fireplace. Inside the church ventilation was provided by placing a hinged sub-cap at the top of the Kauri dado which enabled it to be opened two inches the length of the building. The ceiling (25 feet high) also had an opening of six inches, invisible to those in the church. The walls above the dado were plaster over a frame of Oregon pine. The floor had a fall from the entrance to the platform to allow the congregation a 'better view' of the minister. The pews were of varnished Kauri. Above the pulpit hung a banner proclaiming 'Glory to God in the Highest, Peace and Goodwill Toward Men'. It appeared to be carved in wood but when taken down for renovation it was discovered to have been skilfully painted on brown calico. At the front of the church was a picket fence which had red gum posts capped and moulded with red gum plinths.

A Tea Meeting was held on the Monday evening attended by over 350 people. The hall was decorated by the ladies of the church and the catering was done by Mr J. Smith. The minister's table was presided over by Mrs Herbert and Miss Darroch. The tea raised a sum of £22 – a good contribution to the outstanding debt of £267. The meeting that followed was held in the church, commencing at 8pm. This was addressed by a number of church representatives and visiting dignitaries interspersed with musical items.

The Tea Meetings became an annual event on the anniversary of the dedication of the church and continued to raise funds to pay the debt for the building as long as was necessary. Dorothy Fothergill recalls that

Long trestle tables were set up with white cloths in the hall. (in Victoria Hall early on, but Soldiers and Citizens Memorial Hall, after Victoria's demise). Lots of preparation, making scones, cream puffs and sponges and on the morning of the day, cutting ham sandwiches. Small white plates and cups and saucers had been purchased in the 1880s for

this occasion. The cups and saucers had pink bands and some gold stars.

Stables were provided at the rear of the church for the horses and vehicles of the congregation. The dividing wall between two of the stalls was at one stage removed to enable Mr Sam Scott to stable his pair of horses without unhitching the buggy.

CHURCH HALL

The population of the town and the congregation of the church grew over the years and extra space was sought for Sunday School classes, but also with a view to community activities. A hall was built alongside the church in 1956; the builder was Henk Vandenberg. The opening and dedication of the new hall was held on 25 November 1956. Church members started a catering service to raise funds to pay back the loan from the Church Synod. They cooked and prepared food in their own homes, provided their own transport, and travelled far and wide to functions which often finished after midnight.

FIRE

The community which had worked so hard for these facilities was devastated when the Yarra Glen Presbyterian Church was set on fire by an arsonist on the morning of 26 August 1976. The alarm was raised at about 4:30am. It took only about half an hour for the fire to race through the 80 year old weatherboard building. The arsonist was a 21 year old pastry cook and stable hand from Croydon. He was also charged with setting fire to the Ruskin Park Primary School and the Dorset Hall on Maroondah Highway during the same week. The judge sentenced him to six years in jail with a minimum term of four years, and instruction that he receive psychiatric counselling.

The pews and many of the other furnishings destroyed were priceless because they had been in the church since it was built. The communion table and chairs were a memorial to Mrs Janet Roberts, the funds for their purchase having been raised in the community by Miss Bath in 1935. The chalice was about the only item saved and it had to be re-plated. Fortunately the hall was saved and Services were held there until the new church was completed in 1979.

PRESBYTERIAN MANSE

In October 1913 tenders were called for a Manse to be built at Yarra Glen. The one storey home was built on the corner of Bell Street and Petticoat Lane (now called Yarra Street). From the 1930s the Presbyterian Church appointed Home Mission students to Yarra Glen and many had young families so the Manse was

well occupied for many years. The last minister of the church to live there was David Ross and his family.

In the 1970s the Yarra Glen Church was once again united with the Healesville Church and the minister resided at Healesville. The Yarra Glen Manse was then rented for many years. After the Church fire in 1976 the Elders decided to sell the Manse to assist with payment for the new Church building. The Manse was sold in June 1980 but eight years later, in August 1988, it was also destroyed by fire.

THE CURRENT CHURCH: THE UNITING CHURCH

The third church building to be raised by the Presbyterian congregation at Yarra Glen was designed by architects Rosenfeldt and Gheradin & Associates. Max Carter won the tender to construct the building. It is a contemporary design built of brick with seating for more than a 100 persons and cost \$60,000. It was opened and dedicated at a service on 18 February 1979 as the Uniting Church because the union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches of Australia had occurred in the period since the fire.

THANKS

The grateful thanks of the Editor go to the contributors to this issue of the Newsletter:

Eric Tetlow – for his research and information resources

Eileen Palmer – for the obituary for Fanny Taylor

Dorothy Fothergill – for sharing her memories and advising on details

And thanks to 'Hoogies' Hardware in Bell Street who continue to provide us with space for our photo display.





Gertrude Bolton b.10 Dec 1904

Former State School student turns 100

The Society recently received a query from New Zealand seeking information about Gertrude Bolton who had attended the Yarra Glen State School in 1914. Gertrude had been born at Barretstown, Ballymore Eustace, Co Kildare, Ireland on 10 December 1904 and the family was about to celebrate her 100th birthday.

Gertrude arrived in Western Australia on the *SS Zealandic* on 8 November 1913 with her parents, six sisters and a brother. After spending Christmas in Perth they moved on to Yarra Glen where Gertrude's mother Elizabeth gave birth to her last child in February 1914, a daughter called Patricia.

The school age children were enrolled at the Yarra Glen State School by their father Isaac who stated his occupation as farmer. The register records

Henrietta born 9 December 1900

Gertrude born 10 December 1904

Isaac born 15 July 1906

Eileen born 25 Aug 1907

Cecily born 23 Nov 1908

Elizabeth found the weather in Victoria too hot (is it any wonder when they arrived in the hottest month of the year and she was about to give birth to her ninth child?). So Isaac and his eldest daughter went to New Zealand to find employment and a place to live, finally settling in Mayfield on the Canterbury Plains. It is not known how long Elizabeth and her children remained at Yarra Glen before following Isaac but it can be assumed that Gertrude's time at SS No. 956 was a brief one.

Gertrude eventually married a farmer and they had three children. Her brother Isaac and sisters Cecily and Patricia aged 98, 92 and 90 respectfully were there to help her celebrate her centenary.

OBITUARY

Fanny Maria Taylor

5 July 1913 – 25 November 2004



Fanny Maria Beach was born to James Ernest Beach and Fanny Hargreaves on 5 July 1913 on her parents' farm, "Hazel Dell" in Dixon's Creek, the second youngest of ten children.

Her father was a bullocky who carted timber to the saw mills throughout the area and when necessary, worked across Victoria and into NSW. Just before Fanny's 7th birthday, her father James was trampled by one of his bullocks in a work accident near Toolangi. This meant that the family needed to bond together to survive without a regular source of income.

Fanny lived her early life at Dixon's Creek, being christened at the Dixon's Creek Methodist Church which she attended regularly throughout her time in the district. In 1989 she laid a plaque to commemorate the building of this Church.

Fanny helped around the farm from an early age with chores such as milking and feeding the animals. The only transport was by foot, with a one mile walk to church and school, two miles to the post office and three to the store. Water was carted from the creek on a horse-drawn sled for use in the house while clothes were washed at the creek in tubs filled with water heated over a campfire.

Fanny attended Dixon's Creek Primary School until 14 years of age. She then helped her parents on the farm until she met, and eventually married Tom Taylor in the Dixon's Creek Methodist Church on 11 February 1938. The couple moved to Rand to continue farming and raise their seven children. Sadly, their first daughter, born prematurely died in infancy.

Fanny lived through a time of great change and in her later years wrote the book *Daughters of old Dixon's Creek* to ensure that the early pioneers were never forgotten. It gives many insights into the life of the district in the early years. She was buried in the Yarrowonga Cemetery on 27th November 2004.

Fanny is survived by her children, fifteen grand children and thirty great grand children.