

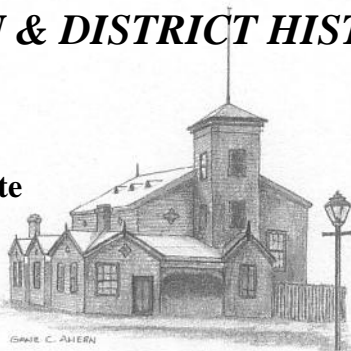
# YARRA GLEN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.

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## NEWSLETTER

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### FROM THE EDITOR

On 24 July 2005 the Roman Catholic congregation of Yarra Glen celebrated the 115<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St Aloysius Church. [See feature article on pages 3 & 4]. One thing became apparent in preparing this article: whereas the Scottish Presbyterians moved to Yarra Flats from Kangaroo Ground along the north side of the river, the Catholic people came from the southern side, from Yering and Lilydale, and were predominantly of Irish and French/Swiss descent.

In the last issue (no.16) we published a poem called *A poem on Yarra Glen*. It has since been discovered that it was published in the *Lilydale Express* in 1985 although written long before that date. It was printed alongside a special feature on the history of the Yarra Glen Football Club. One of the poets has been identified as George Lorimer (1880-1963) a well-known local bullock team driver. His co-writer, O. McKenna has not yet been traced – if anyone has more information we would be pleased to hear of it.

The verse opposite appeared in the *Evelyn and Whittlesea Shires Advertiser* of 13 August 1920. It was written as a contribution to the debate on a proposal to amend the Local Government Act of 1915 to give local councils the ability to raise their rates. Frank Cornwall was a solicitor in Collins St Melbourne and President of the Rating Reform League. He travelled to many towns to advocate reform but appears to have had an irascible personality that was not always conducive to convincing the public of his arguments. Cornwall claimed that under the old system the landowner was penalised with higher rates if he made any improvements, thus discouraging development. "Unlock the Land" in a letter to the Editor 16 July 1920 also supported the amendment saying it called upon those who currently only worked a portion of their land to use it or pay a penalty in higher rates. Another letter in the *EWSA* 23 July gave the opposite view, saying that much land in the Shire was very poor and could not be improved. If a landowner was taxed on his unimproved land he was being taxed on something he could do nothing with and therefore land values should be assessed on improved land only.

Yarra Glen

*Lines prompted by the view across the road from the largest building there*

Have you heard of the township of "Yawn-agen"

On the moss-banked River "Slow",

Where blooms the wait-a-while flowers fair,

And the soft "Go easys" grow?

It lies in the valley of "I don't care",

In the Parish of "Let her slide":

"That tired feeling" was first felt there,

Where the Give-it ups abide.

The land lies idle on "Lazy hills",

'Twould grow corn well (Cornwall), they knew it;

But the hills are untilled and progress is killed,

Through Councillor Herbert Hewitt.

He tells them the tax is a tax upon land,

And it's not a tax at all:

It's the value which "progress" adds to the land,

Being taken from one, for all.

Councillors Smedley and Charlie Bath,

And ex-President William Hubbard,

Openly laugh at the land shark's wrath,

For the speculator acts like a sluggard.

For Yawn-agen is drowsing to sleep,

And attacking the sluggardly brothers:

(The "hinderers" who only have acres to keep),

And who keep back the value of others.

Yes! Yawn-agen will become "Wide-awake",

The River "Slow" provides electric power for the town;

Where there's post and rail fences there'll be fine residences,

Slab cowsheds in main streets will come down.

City people will stream in and values will rise,

And railways will centre; both owner and renter

Will thank on their knees, that it's not all bush and trees,

And that 'twas Cornwall that opened their eyes.

*"Unlock the Land"*

## Yarra Glen Roads & Streets

a series about their history

### Sayle Street

Sayle Street runs north from Oliver Street to Anzac Avenue. Until the 1970s the section between King Street and the Roman Catholic Church was merely a road reserve with not even a wheel track — in the winter time the area at the bottom of the hill was a swamp. Apart from the Catholic Church which was built in 1890 (see feature article) the other public building in this street was the town's second police station. It stood on the corner of Oliver and Sayle Street from about 1890 until 1944. The old stables (much modified) still stand at the rear of the site.

It is quite probable that the street was named after John Sayle who owned land between the Catholic Church and King Street. In June 1891 he purchased the land from William Herbert, being lots 22, 24, 26 on the plan of subdivision 2566, Crown Allotment 9 in the parish of Burgoyne County of Evelyn. These blocks approximate to the current street numbers 6-10 at the bottom of the hill.

John Sayle was born in 1820 and christened on 14 January 1821 in the Parish of Andreas, Isle of Man. His parents were William and Ann Sayle (nee Cleator). He also had a brother William who was christened in 1828. Both brothers apparently came to Australia as there is a record that William died in Melbourne in 1860.

When Hubert de Castella arrived at Yering Station to visit his brother Paul in 1854, John Sayle was manager there and had been for some time. Paul de Castella had purchased Yering from the Ryrie brothers in 1850 and Sayle was possibly his first manager. Hubert de Castella describes Sayle as a skilled horse rider and cattleman. In 1856 Andrew Ross also records an encounter with Sayle:

*'... (Ross) proceeded to the Yarra Flats, and riding along he was fortunate in meeting Mr Sayle, then residing at Mr Castella's, and who invited him to stay....The morning following (they) visited places in the neighbourhood, thereafter riding through that(sic) was then known only as the Heifer Paddock to Rourke's.'*

The relationship between Sayle and the de Castellans appears to have been one of mutual respect. When Paul de Castella sold Yering and moved to Lilydale in 1894 John Sayle was one of the speakers at the Burgoyne Hotel when a presentation was made to de Castella.

John Sayle married Emma Jane Cooper in Victoria in 1858; they were aged 38 and 27 respectively. The Sayles had six children: the first born, a son, in 1859 at Hawthorn for whom no name is recorded; Edith Anne, born 1861 at Yering; Percy Howard 1863 at Yering; Mabel Laidlow 1867 in Lilydale; John Lee 1869 in Lilydale; and Gilbert De Pury also at Lilydale, in 1873. [The Register of Deaths records the latter as Gilbert Cooper Sayle when he died in 1941].

In the 1879 Electoral Roll John Sayle was listed as a farmer and a landowner at Yarra Flats but we

have so far been unable to identify the land he owned at that time.

He was active in local affairs, there being several notices in the newspapers of his attendance at meetings. He was present at a meeting on 10 July 1886 at the Yarra Flats Hotel which was called to discuss the building of an Episcopalian Church. Mr Sayle was voted Chair of the meeting and was a member of the Committee that was subsequently formed. (The meeting resolved to build in brick on a piece of ground given by Mr R.R. Woolcott. At the next meeting on 24 July it was reported as being for the 'proposed new Church of England'). In February 1894 "Vagabond", writing in *The Illustrated Australian News*, said that he had found 'Old Mr Sayle, the Manxman, is also still hale and hearty.' On 16 June 1894 Sayle was at a meeting that discussed the new Butter Factory being erected by the river.

John Sayle died on 4 September 1901 aged 81 and is buried at Yarra Glen Cemetery.

His widow Emma Jane was living at Christmas Hills in 1903 with her son Gilbert and daughters Edith and Mabel. On the 1903 Electoral Roll Gilbert is listed as a farmer. He had married Janet Jessy Thompson in 1899 but she is not listed on the Roll. He later married Florence Isabel Stanley in 1916. Edith Sayle married John Mackintosh Brooks in 1905. Emma died at Camberwell on 11 November 1904 and is also buried at Yarra Glen. In the same grave is buried Edith Mary Sayle (1907-1989) who is the great-niece of John and Emma. We have not yet identified her parents.



Sources:

*Reminiscences of Andrew Ross*, Andrew Ross Museum Kangaroo Ground, 1995

*As It Happened*, vols 1-2, Lilydale & District Historical Society 2003

Hubert De Castella, *Australian Squatters*, 1987.

## ***St Aloysius, the Yarra Glen Roman Catholic Church***

The first ministrations of the Catholic Church were undertaken by priests from the Heidelberg Mission. Father Bourgeois was appointed to Heidelberg in 1851 and he travelled on horseback to visit Lilydale, Healesville, Warburton and Yarra Flats about once every two months.

In the 1860s a push came from the residents in the Lilydale area for a chapel and a small wooden building was completed in January 1865. This was upgraded to a stone church in 1871. A newspaper notice on 24 April 1889 announced that Mass would be held in the Yarra Glen Hall the following Sunday. Mass was also held from time to time in the homes of Hubert and Paul de Castella. In October 1889 St Patrick's Lilydale became a parish and Father Thomas Lynch became the first parish priest for Lilydale as well as a district that included Yarra Glen, Warburton, Healesville and Mitcham.

Father Lynch is said to have been very supportive of establishing a church at Yarra Glen and it appears that plans were in hand as early as 1888. In *The Advocate* 15 Jan 1888 it is stated

Mr Armstrong, a Presbyterian, some time since gave an acre of land for a Catholic Church. The site is all that could be desired, as its position in the township, which is springing up, will be central.

This is confusing however because land maps of the time show that he did not own land in what is now Sayle Street. It is possible that he donated land near the Yarra Flats Hotel as the other churches were then in that vicinity. A different version of the source of the land appears in Merna Fitzpatrick's memoir of St Aloysius. Merna Fitzpatrick, nee Kennedy (1920-1995), recalled that a "family of Farrells, who owned the Grand Hotel, had donated the land on which it is built". Official documents show that William Herbert owned the land – in fact he owned the whole section of the town from Sayle Street through to Bell Street. In a Land Title document of 26 June 1891 (a year after the church was built!) William Herbert recorded that

being desirous of providing a site for a Roman Catholic Church and buildings connected therewith do hereby transfer to The Most Reverend Thomas Joseph Carr of East Melbourne Roman Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne The Reverend Thomas Lynch of Lilydale Roman Catholic Clergyman and William Cavanagh Farrell of Yarra Glen Licensed Victualler

lots 10 and 12 of subdivision 2566. Carr, Lynch and Farrell received the Title to the Land on 3 July 1891. On 22 August 1910 the Assistant Registrar of Titles named Thomas Joseph Carr and Thomas Lynch as the registered sole proprietors of the property and transferred the Title to the Roman Catholic Church Trusts Corporation for the Diocese of Melbourne. William Farrell had died in 1901.

Mr Charles Fletcher won the tender to erect the timber and iron building "...on a hill near the Burgoyne Hotel. The spot is a very pretty one and overlooks the Glen." [*Lilydale Express* 18 July 1890]. The church was regarded as a large, spacious and costly edifice, a credit to all connected with its erection. The Archbishop of Melbourne, Rev. Dr Carr made a special visit to formally open the building on Sunday 19 July 1890. He was the guest of Paul de Castella of Yering on Saturday night. After the Sunday morning ceremony at Yarra Glen he travelled on to St Brigids at Healesville.

One of the families who made a major contribution to the establishment of the Yarra Glen Church was the de Castellans of Yering. In 1888 the de Castella family had tragically lost their son Rudolph, aged 29. He died after falling from his horse while suffering an epileptic fit. The family purchased a set of Stations of the Cross during a visit to Florence and presented them to the new Church in memory of their son. The ceremony to dedicate the memorial was conducted in September 1891. Mrs de Castella also presented a large brass lamp, obtained in Rome, that hung on long brass chains in the sanctuary. Other prominent Catholic families included Petty, Ryan, Kennedy, Fletcher, Gibson (Chateau Yering), Wilson (Christmas Hills) and Papworth. The Catholics were a minority in a small community that was predominantly Protestant.

On 25 November 1899 a new parish was established at Healesville and its boundaries included Yarra Glen. The Reverend Patrick Gleeson, an Irishman, was the first pastor followed by another Irishman Father Gerald Byrne in 1905, and then an Australian born priest Father Henry Bakker in 1910. These men celebrated Mass in Yarra Glen 'whenever time permitted'.

From 1919 to 1927 Father Kennedy took charge and travelled from Healesville to Yarra Glen on the train. He would have breakfast at the home of one of the parishioners before or after the service. These included the Kennedy family who lived on the corner of Oliver and Sayle Streets; Miss Jenkins who lived in the cottage next to the Church; or the Murphy family where he sometimes stayed overnight. These services were held on a Friday at 8am and therefore the State School did not open until 10:00am because the Head Teacher and his family went to Mass, travelling in a covered phaeton. Miss Marie (May) Petty (1866-1952) was regarded as second only to Father Kennedy as custodian of the Church. She would walk down from Symond Street after locking up the Post Office to prepare the Church for services. She also conducted the Sunday School for many years.

Father Coyne replaced Kennedy in 1927 and continued until 1941. He took over the instruction of the children from Miss Petty and made an extra trip to Yarra Glen on Saturdays for this purpose. He was followed by Father Murphy. As the population grew so did the demand for Sunday Mass. Arrangements

were made for young priests from Watsonia to travel to Yarra Glen, usually staying overnight on Saturday to say Mass on Sunday morning. These included Fr Dobson, Fr Christopher, and Fr Ryan who were Franciscans from 'La Verna', and Fr Burke and Fr O'Brien, Jesuits from Watsonia. It is said that the latter often walked from Watsonia to Yarra Glen and, after Mass and breakfast, would be driven home in a car by one of the parishioners.

In 1954 the Cistercians at Tarrawarra Abbey were asked to provide a priest to conduct Mass and Confessions at St Aloysius. A parishioner Jack Murphy would call in his car for the priest. The services at this time were held at 9am.

Fund raising functions were necessary in such a small congregation. A successful concert was held in the Victoria Hall on 8 February 1900. A more ambitious series of events was undertaken on 5 May 1911 when a carnival was held at the Yarra Glen racecourse. After the race meeting a concert and Ball were held in the Hall.

Until the 1960s the Church and small cottage next door were the only buildings on the hill – they were approached from Rudolph Street (now Anzac Ave) and there was no made road between the cottage and King Street (just a road reserve which was extremely wet in winter). Pine trees were planted in the early years and when fully grown surrounded the Church. These trees were removed in the 1990s during another period of renovation when the building was re-stumped, the front porch enlarged, a meeting room added, and a car park was laid out.

On July 24 2005 the congregation of St Aloysius celebrated the 115<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the building. Unfortunately the de Castellás' Stations of the Cross had succumbed to the effects of moisture and silver fish and were removed a few years ago. But the fabric of the building remains strong and members of the church community have spent many weekends this year repairing and repainting so that it will stand for many years to come.

#### Sources

*Advocate* 15 Jan 1888

*Lilydale Express* 18 July 1890

*The St Aloysius Story: a brief history of St Aloysius Church, Yarra Glen.*

*Vine and branches: the story of St Patrick's, Lilydale.* Commodore Press, 1989.

Bernard Morrissey, *Valley, mist and mountains: Saint Brigids Parish centenary* 1999.



*Aerial photo of Yarra Glen taken in 1972 showing St Aloysius Church surrounded by the pines (centre). The photograph also shows as a darker strip the unformed section of Sayle Street between the church and King Street*  
Source: K.L. Marriott, *The Yarra Valley*, 1975.

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## **RECENT & FUTURE EVENTS**

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Yarra Glen & District Historical Society  
Sunday 9 October 2005 1:30pm

### DIXONS CREEK PRIMARY SCHOOL 130<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Saturday 10 September

Dixon's Creek Primary School is celebrating its 130<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a "Back To" at the school on Saturday September 10 between 12 and 4pm. All past and present teachers, students and friends of the school are most welcome. Tea, coffee and a light afternoon tea will be available. *Please bring any photos or other memorabilia, as we have little at the school and it would be great to get copies for the school for future reference.*

In the evening there will be a Family Bush Dance at the Yarra Glen Memorial Hall 7–11pm. Tickets are \$10 per adult, \$5 per child and \$30 for a family. BYO drinks and basket supper. Tea and coffee provided. If you are interested, please consider getting a table together with family and friends to help make this an even more memorable occasion.

For tickets and further enquiries contact Amanda on (03) 5962 9341 or email: [magjshull@bigpond.com](mailto:magjshull@bigpond.com)