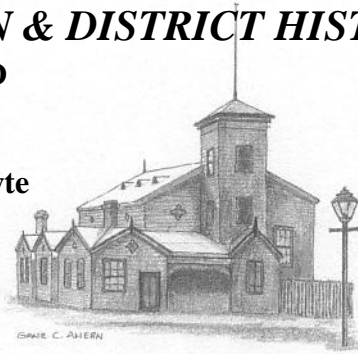


YARRA GLEN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

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Editor: Helen Mann Ph: 9730 1283 hma60229@bigpond.net.au

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FROM THE EDITOR

At the September meeting of the Historical Society we were fortunate to have Jan Oakley, President of the Yarra Valley Tourist Railway as our guest speaker. It was enlightening for us to hear what is going on behind the scenes – most of it by volunteers.

The installation of the Colourbond on the roof of the Yarra Glen station has now been completed and work is proceeding on the inside of the building. It took many months to finish the roof because a lot of structural work was required. There are plans to extend the trolley rides to Yarra Glen but the line has to be cleared and repaired first. Meanwhile the maintenance of the trolleys and the track for rides from Healesville to the tunnel have priority because they are earning badly needed cash. Jan also told us what she knows of the history of the Yarra Glen section. An article based on her talk and other sources starts on page 3 of this issue.

Amendment

In this column in Newsletter no. 16 (May 2005) I wrote that Minnie Boyd 'taught at the Sunday School of the Presbyterian Church' when she lived at Yarra Glen. This was based on a statement in Brenda Niall's biography *The Boyds*: 'Dissatisfied with the broad church Anglicanism in which she had grown up, (Minnie) had moved, before her mother's death, from the fashionable All Saints, St Kilda, to the local Presbyterian church.' (p.133). I have since been advised by Fred Sadlier that Minnie Boyd was a member of the Anglican Church, St Paul's, in Yarra Glen.

RECENT AND FUTURE EVENTS

Pioneer & Working Horse Festival

Gulf Station

January 2006

Eric Tetlow's latest indexing project is the Baptism Register of St John's Anglican Church, Heidelberg from 1848. This may turn up some interesting information – for many years Heidelberg was the closest Anglican church for the people at Yarra Flats.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2005 Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday 9 October 2005

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

2005

I am pleased to make my report for the past year.

After some discussion a Publishing Committee was formed in December 2004 with the object of publishing a History of Yarra Glen. Helen Mann is chairing the committee which also includes Leigh Ahern and Kristin Otto.

January 2005 saw Eric at the Pioneer and Working Horse Festival at Gulf Station where he put up a good photographic display, which the public appreciated, prompting questions and also giving us information. Leigh, Helen and I helped man the table of brochures and booklets on show.

February, we held our first meeting at Acacia Ridge Winery, home of Gavin Oakley and family. We met in the old restored house and after a short meeting Gavin gave us an interesting talk on the history of the house and winery.

Eric and I also attended a meeting of the Association of Eastern Historical Societies (A.E.H.S) held at the Knox Historical Society rooms.

March, we had Dot Peters, an Elder of the local Aboriginal people, enlighten us on what it was like growing up in Healesville. Dot also told us about local Aboriginal History.

April was busy and no meeting was held, but Leigh and I went to the 70th anniversary of Box Hill Town Hall, where we attended the A.E.H.S. Conference. The speaker was the son of a previous Mayor.

At our May meeting Leigh and I spoke to members about the April event and I also shared a letter written by a cousin who survived the "Titanic Disaster".

For June our member, Dorothy Flenley, spoke to us about growing up in depression years in Kew and about her early working life. We are encouraging members to tell us about themselves, it's always interesting.

July brought us Don Barker who is researching the history of Mechanic's Institutes and gave us much interesting information.

In August we were fascinated when Bobby Pierce and her friend showed us part of her huge collection of old buttons, explaining how and why they were made to particular designs – we will all have to check our button boxes.

At the September meeting, Jan Oakley, President of the Yarra Valley Tourist Railway helped us to really understand the problems and red tape involved in running the Tourist Railway Society. Yarra Glen Station is slowly being restored by volunteers. It was good to hear how much is actually being done along the line and hopefully more will be done as funding allows.

Apart from our meetings, Eric has put on photographic displays at Christmas Hills School for their 130th anniversary and more recently went to Dixons Creek School for their 130th. He is an incredible source of information to post and email enquiries on a regular basis.

Helen has published extremely interesting Newsletters featuring local streets and buildings and has built up a good data base on families in Yarra Glen and district.

We have printed more brochures to go in the Information shop.

Thanks to Leigh's good work our recent publications: *Along the Length* by Fred Sadlier, *History of Mining at Steels Creek*, *Steels Creek as I Knew It* by Ivy Arney and *Steels Creek – A Social History* by Vera Adams are all selling well.

During the past year copies of old photographs have been put up in the Bank, Post Office and various shops showing the building that was originally on that site in Yarra Glen.

We are so fortunate to have such a team of willing workers, yet we depend on all our members to attend meetings and support us.

Thank you for your encouragement to me and all the Committee

Brenda Cawte.

PRESIDENT

Office Bearers 2005/2006

President Brenda Cawte

Vice President Helen Mann

Secretary/Treasurer Eric Tetlow

Committee Members

Kristin Otto

Jill Sheffield

Leigh Ahern

Subscriptions

As mentioned in the May Newsletter membership fees have been increased. \$ 9.00 of each member's subscription is to cover insurance.

Ordinary Member \$ 16.00

Family Member* \$ 28.00

Service Member** \$ 7.00

* *Two adults living at the same address*

***A member who lives too far away to attend any function of the Society. Not covered by insurance*

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

At the Annual General Meeting two very deserving members were elected to Honorary Life Membership of the Society.

Mr Fred Sadlier, who has recently celebrated his 90th birthday, and **Mr Eric Tetlow**, who turned 75 on the day of the meeting, were both unanimously elected.

The motion to confer this honour upon Fred and Eric was supported "in grateful recognition of their service to the Society and their individual contributions to promoting and recording the history of the district".

Fred, ably supported by wife Gwen, has been a steady contributor to the Society since it was resurrected by Joan O'Shea in 1980. Fred has served in the past as a Secretary and has given generously of his time for many meetings and other activities, as well as willingly making himself available for history talks and interviews. His clear and concise recollections of an active life-time spent in the district are one of our group's real treasures. Fred is frequently acknowledged as the definitive reference on local history events. His own account of living and working on the Maroondah Aqueduct (entitled *Along the Length*) was published by the Society in 2003, and further documentation of Fred's colourful memories is currently in preparation.

Eric Tetlow, current Secretary and Treasurer of the Society, has (unlike Fred) only been in Yarra Glen since early 1992. However, what a remarkable contribution he has made in that time! Eric seems quite tireless in his efforts to keep the Society running smoothly and to ensure that we reach out to the community with our resources and our services at every opportunity. His unstinting generosity in providing accurate and detailed genealogical information to all who seek his advice is a topic of constant comment and feedback. We are extremely fortunate to have in Eric both an energetic and efficient "anchor-man" for the Society's administrative processes, as well as a superb ambassador in the wider history community.

Eric was presented at the AGM with his life-membership certificate by Society President, Brenda Cawte. Although Fred was not present at the meeting, a small but enthusiastic deputation was able to present

him with his certificate at home on the following Saturday.

We wish both Fred and Eric many more years of happy membership with the Society!

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NONAGENARIANS

In addition to Fred Sadler, whose 90th birthday is mentioned above, Mary Lawrence and Dorothy Fothergill are celebrating their 90th birthdays in November.

Mary and her late husband Bill were members of the Historical Society for many years. Bill was made a Life Member in 1986.

Dorothy Fothergill is a Life Member of the Society and a foundation member, having been present at the first meeting convened by Bill and Olive Herkes in May 1973.

We offer our congratulations and very best wishes to Mary, Dorothy and Fred.

* * * *

YARRA GLEN RAILWAY

Between 1883 and May 1888 travellers to Yarra Flats had two options: by horse drawn coach from Lilydale railway station or by horse drawn coach via Kangaroo Ground from Melbourne. The railway reached Yarra Flats in 1888, thirty four years after the first line laid in Victoria, the Flinders St to Sandridge (now Port Melbourne) line which opened in 1854. Gradually other lines were built and had extended to Bendigo and Ballarat by 1862. The line to Lilydale was not completed until December 1882, having reached Hawthorn in 1861 and Camberwell in 1882. The coach to Yarra Flats met the 9am and 6pm trains at Lilydale. The return fares between Lilydale and Yarra Flats were 2s9d and 1s11d.

In the early '80s the Minister for Railways, Thomas Bent, had recognized the importance of the district by including it in his Railway Bill. The first survey for the Lilydale to Healesville railway was a line parallel almost all the way with the coach road via Coldstream, a distance of just over 11 miles. The cost was estimated at £35,276. Political pressure resulted in the current route of more than 15 miles even though the estimated cost blew out to £148,987. The revised route had to cross the flood plains at Yering and tunnel through the Mount View Range at Tarrawarra.

Fifteen tenders were received for the construction of the Lilydale-Healesville line. The lowest, that of Messrs McNeil and Bath at £127,252/5/2 (about £8,500 per mile), was accepted. The time agreed for completion was the 31 December 1887. In February 1887 the *Lilydale Express* reported that the contractors were doing their best to be finished within the next ten months (*LExp 18 Feb 1887 p.2*). Three hundred piles had been driven in for the viaduct using red gum timber brought from Nagambie. Eight hundred men

were employed, and twenty bullock teams and a dozen six-horse teams were constantly engaged hauling material. The viaduct was 2 ½ kms long and eventually had 502 openings or spans of 4.5 metres each. Some of the piles driven in were 60 feet long!

The opening of the railway at Yarra Flats in May 1888 brought significant change to the town, including a change of name. A public meeting had been held in May 1887 to discuss an appropriate name and Yarra Glen was finally chosen.

The initial return passenger fares from Melbourne to Yarra Glen were 5/2 and 3/5 [*Municipal Directory*]. The line to Healesville was not officially opened until 1 May 1889 because of considerable problems encountered in building the tunnel at Tarrawarra.

The railway station often became the commercial centre of a town and in Yarra Glen it was no different. A new hotel (now the Grand) was built in anticipation of increased numbers of travellers, and the traders, banks and other services moved from the northern end of Bell Street to the southern end. Industries in the district which began to flourish included orchards and dairying because they had a means of transporting their perishable produce direct to markets. The timber industry benefited because the train could haul heavy loads much faster than horses and bullocks. Stock yards were built next to the station so that cattle could be transported to and from market via the railway. The railway yards at one stage included extensive stockyards with loading ramps, two large cranes for timber and other heavy items, two Goods Sheds. There was also a set of wooden gates that controlled the road crossing.

In February 1898 the viaduct caught fire but the flames were quickly put out, allowing the evening train from Healesville through although it was somewhat late. (*HG 12 Feb 1898*). Then in October 1914 another fire destroyed the Yarra Glen railway station. (*HG 3 Oct 1914*). It was replaced by the present building in April 1915 (*HG 24 Apr 1915*).

William Prior was Station Master at Yarra Glen from 1929 to 1932 and his daughter was in charge of Yering Station. Two staff members took her to and from work on a trolley. One night the north wind was blowing so strongly that the trolley drivers had to get off and push!

By the 1930s the flood waters were taking their toll on the viaduct. It was also anticipated that the train service would be converted from steam to electric. Ten of the open spans had already been enclosed to add strength to the structure and in 1932 work commenced on filling another 362 with earth from alongside the rail reserve. A drag-line excavator, specially manufactured to meet railway conditions was used to reduce costs to a minimum. It was operated by Percy Schultz who lived with his family in King Street whilst employed at Yarra Glen. The job took him about five years. To furnish suitable filling additional land was purchased to extend the railway reserve to a width of 3 chains. The result was the rectangular ponds that line either side of the viaduct across the flats. When the infill was

completed 7 bridges remained, the two largest comprising 38 openings over the normal river channel and 58 over areas of major flooding. Two bridges at the Yering end (four by 15ft openings) and a bridge of three 15ft openings at the Yarra Glen end were left to serve as under-crossings for stock. (*V.R. News Letter Oct 1932 Issue no. 25*). During the great flood of 1934 the excavator was almost completely submerged and the viaduct itself was under water.

Accidents among the workers were to be expected. In 1936 T. Tinsley, a railway ganger, was working on the viaduct when a track bar slipped and he fell 20 feet into the River. He struck his face on part of the bridge timber and severely injured his lip. W. Beavis, another ganger, dived into the river to his rescue and had to swim 3 chains to reach him. Tinsley was taken to Healesville Hospital for treatment. (*HG 25 Sep 1936*)

An electric train service was introduced on the Lilydale line in 1925 but steam engines continued to pull the carriages and freight cars to Yarra Glen and Healesville until the 1950s. In October 1957 a diesel rail coach passenger service was introduced and the number of trains was increased from two to four each way: a day return to Melbourne for business people and another for 'women to travel to the city for shopping and so on and return at a convenient hour'. From April 1958 an extra service was run during school terms to transport children to schools in Lilydale and further 'down the line'. Goods trains continued to be pulled by a steam engine for some years.

The diesel rail cars operated until 1978. After some failed attempts at re-opening the line for a tourist rail service the Lilydale to Healesville line was officially closed to all traffic in March 1983. Now twenty years later there is a demand for the line to be re-opened. Jan Oakley said that support is growing stronger with increased population and business expansion, especially in tourism and the wine industry.

Yarra Glen Roads & Streets

a series about their history

Oliver Street

Oliver Street runs east to west from the Railway Station to Yarraview Road. It is fully formed and sealed only between Sayle Street and Yarraview Road. The eastern section is still mainly a grassy expanse, fenced across one end before the land dips sharply down an embankment at the foot of which is the Railway Station.

One of the oldest buildings is the former Station Master's residence at no. 25. The block was originally purchased from Sarah Ann Samuel for £225. Almost opposite at no. 24 is the cottage built for the Railway Repairer who did maintenance work on the lines and buildings.

On the corner of Sayle Street was the dairy operated by Mr Bill Bell and his family.

At the eastern end of Oliver Street, perched above the Railway Reserve, was the 'Coffee Palace' operated by Mrs Arthur Keets. It functioned as a wayside refreshment stop for train travellers who were had to wait while the train was being loaded or shunting carriages. Later used as a residence this building was burnt down in the mid 1960s.

It is possible that the street was named after Calder Edkins Oliver (1855-c1930), a civil engineer whose early career was in railway construction. He then worked on sewage and water supply projects before joining the MMBW in 1891. When the Maroondah Weir and aqueduct project was commenced, Mr Oliver and another Board of Works officer, Mr Renwick, were employed as supervisors. They both brought their wives to live at Yarra Flats. Oliver apparently purchased land in the district because he is recorded as paying rates at Yarra Flats for the year 1888/1889. His only son, Calder Kernot Oliver, was born at Yarra Glen in 1888.

Sources: *Vital Connections: Melbourne and its Board of Works 1891-1991*, by Tony Dingle & Carolyn Rasmussen.
Healesville Guardian
Eric Tetlow

OBITUARY

Ivy Victoria Arney (nee Mulder)

6 December 1920- 30 September 2005

It is with sadness that we note the passing of Ivy who resided in the district for 38 years. She and her husband Arthur purchased 40 acres at the northern end of Steels Creek in 1950 with a dream of a gentle rural life for their family. Ivy was a talented artist, writer, poet and historian and the Historical Society was pleased to be able to include Ivy's memoir of her experiences in our Publication series this year. 'Steels Creek As I Knew It - 1951-1989' is a classic Australian story of the battler in the bush. Ivy recounted the dismay they felt when they first saw the run-down isolated farm at the end of Steels Creek but she said the low price sealed the deal. She wondered whether the decision would have been different if she had been wearing her glasses which had been broken just prior to their trip to view the property. Having a young family the Arneys soon became engaged in the community and the memoir gives clear accounts of the tiny bush school, concerts, beach parties, and sports days. Ivy's pragmatism and humour carried her through some very tough and challenging times for a 'city slicker'.

Ivy was well known and respected in Yarra Glen and active in many community activities. She was a leader in the Girl Guides, a member of the Red Cross and of the Agricultural Society,

In 1989, after the death of Arthur in 1988, Ivy moved to Coldstream and then recently to Kilsyth. She is survived by her children Ron, Peter, Jan, Richard and Sue and their families.