

YARRA GLEN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.

A0030684D

ABN 68 883 314 408

PRESIDENT: Mrs. B. Cawte
Phone: (03) 9730 1801



SECRETARY: Eric Tetlow
29 Henderson Rd., Yarra Glen, 3775
Phone: (03) 9730 1445
etetlow@alphalink.com.au

NEWSLETTER

November 2007 (Published occasionally)

Issue No: 26

Editor: Helen Mann Ph: 0429 006 152 helen.mann@bigpond.com

FROM THE EDITOR

November marks a significant event in the history of Yarra Glen when ownership of the Grand Hotel is relinquished by the Lithgow family. Four generations of the family have been involved in the operations of this local landmark since the early 1930s, and prior to that with the Yarra Flats Hotel. It seems an appropriate time to put together some of the research material relating to our hotels that Eric Tetlow has collected over the years.

In her Annual Report Brenda mentions that I have established a home in Queensland – a small town on the Burnett Highway called Eidsvold. I have done this so that on my frequent visits to my grandchildren I have convenient accommodation. One thing for certain is that part of me will always reside in Yarra Glen – being a fifth generation Yarra Glenite it is very much my “country”. But in this wonderful land we live in there are many places where one can feel at home. My intention is to divide my time between Victoria and Queensland as well as between generations of my family.

No matter how far one roams one usually finds a connection to home. One of the first Eidsvold locals that we have met is a man whose grandfather lived in Christmas Hills; his name was McCallum. I am hoping to learn more of this family’s history.

Helen

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2007 AGM was held on **Sunday 14 October** at 1:30pm in the Yarra Glen & District Living & Learning Centre.

Those elected to positions on the 2007-2008 Committee were

President: Brenda Cawte

Vice President: Jill Sheffield

Secretary/Treasurer: Eric Tetlow

Committee members : Kristin Otto

Leigh Ahern

Leslie Baird

The guest speaker was Bill Murcott who gave another talk on the Williamson family but this time illustrated with excellent slides. It was wonderful to have so many visitors attending who are related to or have a particular interest in the Williamson family. Visitors outnumbered members!

REMINDER – Annual Memberships Fees now due!
Single \$12 Family \$16 Absentee \$10

Annual Report of the President 2007

The past year has seen our membership grow to 37 which encourages the work we are doing together.

You will recall our first meeting in February when we enjoyed getting together and planning for the year

We had our usual photographic display and books for sale at Gulf Station in March which again was well received.

At our meeting Helen Mann spoke of her recent travels outback – very interesting also to hear of her new home. Helen, our Vice President kindly drafted a submission for a home for our Society to be sent to SYR Council once we have completed our list of requirements. This was discussed in April.

In May Helen chaired the meeting and the speaker was Mr Bill Murcott who enthralled members with his talk on the Williamson family.

The July meeting was also very interesting, Stamp Boxes were new to us all – Hedley Deacon brought many varied and beautiful examples for us to see.

We like to have a member tell us about their family in Yarra Glen. Geoff Keets kindly spoke of four generations here and his time chart helped our understanding better.

Show and tell is always fun. We had a video, books, an unknown object to identify and a mystery photo at another meeting.

Helen Mann has produced many excellent Newsletters for us and has kindly offered to continue with them whilst living in Queensland and sometimes down here. We have appreciated the research and work she puts into our Society.

Three new books were published and others re-printed, all of which are selling well.

I would like to thank Helen in her absence, and Eric for all the time and effort he gives us as Secretary and Treasurer and for all the research he does in reply to emails and other enquiries.

Thank you all for supporting us and Good Luck in 2008.

Brenda Cawte.
President.

HISTORY IN THE MAKING!!!

The Yarra Glen & District Historical Society now has its own accommodation.

On the 1 November the Society moved into a room at the rear of the Yarra Glen Memorial Hall.

See photos on page 4.

HOTELS & PUBLICANS

Yarra Flats Hotel

In 1862 gold was found at Woods Point. Within twelve months the Yarra Track had opened up between Eltham and Woods Point and hotels appeared at staging points along the way. Thomas Muncaster Bell (1821-1902) saw a commercial opportunity and opened the Yarra Flats Hotel in 1864 on the site where Melba Lodge now stands. Also established on the Yarra Track by this time were the Kangaroo Grounds Hotel (Andrew Ross), Watson's Creek Hotel (William Cleaves), and the Flying Squirrel at Christmas Hills (Robert Lorimer). Thomas Bell was the first licensee at Yarra Flats; the first record we have found shows that he was granted a license on 5 February 1868. Thomas Bell owned the hotel until his death but the license was transferred to Anne and Thomas Batt in 1871. Before then Batt had been a pound keeper at Eltham. The hotel was the meeting place of the Yarra Glen Hunting Club and both Tom Batt and Tom Armstrong had a pack of hounds.

It was a fine sight on hunting days to see those participating in this favourite pastime assemble on the old road in front of their hotel. The ladies, sitting side-saddle ... (W. N, in *The Age* 5 Jan 1935).



The Yarra Flats Hotel in the 1870s when Thomas Batt was the licensee.

A spacious ballroom was added to the hotel and it was the scene of many Hunt Club Balls and other district entertainments. The hotel was at the centre of the little community – its near neighbours were the general store, a blacksmith, Farrell's Commercial Bank and Commercial Store, churches, a school, the Racing Club, the saleyards and beyond that the Post Office. The licensing records show that Thomas Batt was granted a special license for the Yarra Flat Race Meeting in December 1872. By 1879 he had moved to Bairnsdale. In 1881 William Farrell took up the license.

In April 1883 a swagman was in the bar of the hotel when suddenly his swag exploded – it contained 28 gold sovereigns, which flew about the room, and a tin of gunpowder. The newspaper report stated that the man was unable to explain why the gunpowder exploded. There is little doubt it would have been a talking point for some time.

In June 1888 an advertisement appeared in the paper for a public auction of the Yarra Flats Hotel under instruction from Mr Thomas M. Bell. (*Lilydale Express*). Apparently the auction was unsuccessful because Bert Lithgow eventually inherited the property (see below). William Farrell's license expired in December 1888 and was taken up by William Briggs.

In June 1894 John Irvine inserted an advertisement in the *Lilydale Express* stating that he had leased the hotel and 'nothing but the very best brands of Wine and Spirits and Ales and Porter will be kept in stock.' Jack Irvine's son Tom held the license in 1908.

Robert (Bert) Lithgow took over the license in 1909 and held it until he purchased the Grand Hotel in the 1930s. He was the nephew of Thomas Bell's wife Mary and had been adopted by the couple. Bert eventually inherited the Yarra Flats Hotel. When he purchased the Grand Hotel the license of the Yarra Flats Hotel was transferred to the Grand Hotel and the original license was cancelled. The Yarra Flats Hotel building then became a private residence until it was demolished in the late 1990s to make way for Melba Lodge.

Junction Hotel

The Junction Hotel was built on J Cullis's land on the corner opposite the cemetery. Edward Cullis was granted a license on 11 September 1872 which was renewed on 4 December 1872. Thomas Trott was licensee in 1880 and Alfred Lowman from 1882 to at least 1885. An application to transfer the license to James Phelan in December 1884 was postponed and it is not known if a new application was made. At this time the hotel contained eight rooms.

Sam Smith held the license from December 1888 until his death in 1905. He was well remembered by William Newman one of the stage coach drivers.

One must not forget Mr Sam Smith, the jolly old proprietor of the Junction Hotel... 'Burying Sam Smith' was the popular excuse made by some of the old-timers to their wives if they dwelt too long at this old inn. (*The Age* 5 Jan 1935).

In late April 1889 "a gasoline tin, which was hanging in one of the rooms,..." caught fire. Quick action prevented the hotel from being burnt down. It was however a precursor to the eventual fate of the building. In August 1935 the building was still owned by the Smith family but no longer being used as a hotel when it was destroyed by fire.



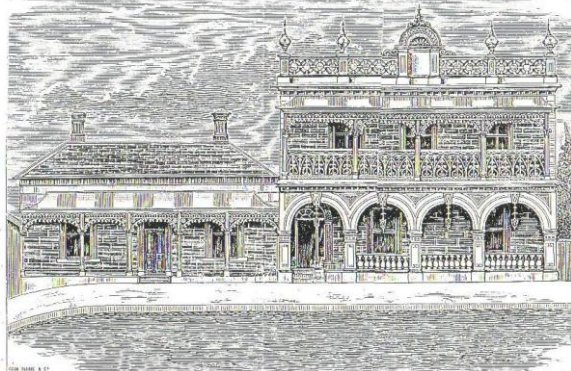
Sam Smith's Junction Hotel in its heyday

Burgoyne (later the Grand) Hotel

Henry Farrell was a hotelkeeper at Yarra Flats in 1887. In December 1887 he applied to the Licensing Court for a Victualler's License for the Burgoyne Hotel which he described as 'containing six rooms, exclusive of those required for the use of my family and servants.'

Henry's brother William Farrell saw the potential tourist trade which would develop with the opening of the railway line in 1888. At the Licensing Court in December 1888 William Farrell's license for the Yarra Flats Hotel was transferred to William Briggs and William then appears to have bought into his brother's business at the Burgoyne. On the other hand the property may have been owned by someone else and Henry just the licensee. In a newspaper interview Farrell is reported as saying that in '1888, the present year, I bought the hotel property known as Burgoyne, and have added a large number of other rooms to keep pace with the requirements of the ever increasing business'.

The Lilydale Express reported on 18 February 1888 that workmen were 'making good headway with Mr Farrell's new hotel'. It was built in two sections with the first stage being completed by early 1889.



Henry Farrell's original 6 room structure is on the left before being demolished to make way for the second stage of the new hotel which included the tower.

The completed two storey building was officially opened in September 1889. It had a large kitchen, 24 bedrooms, eight sitting rooms, a dining room and a billiard room. There was a public bar and a private bar. The 90 foot tower provided views of the surrounding countryside. The total cost including the land which comprised 20 acres was £10,000. The renewal of the license for the Burgoyne Hotel was granted to Henry Farrell in December 1888. At the same time he was granted a temporary license for the Yarra Flats Races on 26 December and the license for the second bar at the Burgoyne. In January 1890 Henry applied to have his license transferred to his brother William.

Apart from fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part of YG&DHS Newsletters may be reproduced without the permission of the Editor

When Rachel Dawson applied for the victualler's license she also applied for permission to change the name to The Grand Hotel which was granted.

In *Tanglewood Tales* Alec Sewell provides a small vignette of Mr Gedye:

In the days before the general use of cars when we lunched [at the Grand Hotel] on the way to, and dined on the way back from, [Toolangi], the licensee was a Mr Geddes (sic), who had been an up-country storekeeper. Having reached a suitable age, and having done well for himself, he decided to retire to the suburbs. This did not please, so he took the Grand, and thereafter devoted himself to his fruit, vegetable and flower garden at the side of his hotel. To him the bar trade was a nuisance. The bar was invariably empty, and to get a drink one needed considerable powers of persuasion to separate him from his garden. I remember a workman walking through the bar and out on to the stone steps at the side which then led down to the garden. 'What about a drink, Mr Geddes?' 'If you want a drink, go up to Lithgow's,' was the irritable reply.



There was no doubt about who owned the Hotel at this point in time

In September 1921 the *Eltham & Whittlesea Shires Advertiser* reported that Mr O'Connor had sold the Grand Hotel, Yarra Glen to Mr Hutchinson formerly of the Olinda Hotel, Lilydale.

John Lithgow says that his grandfather, Robert (Bert) Lithgow bought the hotel in 1932 for £3050. "Quite a bargain, considering the Farrells had paid nearly three times that more than 50 years earlier." (*Weekend Australian 2005*). As mentioned above Bert Lithgow transferred the Yarra Flats Hotel license to the Grand Hotel.

In the 1940s the local policeman Constable Fleischer was diligent in his work. In November Bert Lithgow and his son John found themselves before the Healesville Police Court where Jack pleaded guilty to selling liquor after hours and his father to allowing people on the premises after hours. Sydney McIntosh was charged with being on licensed premises after hours. The newspaper stated that Bert Lithgow had been in the hotel industry for 31 years without an offence. However in December 1941 Bert Lithgow was charged once again with supplying liquor after hours to the same Sydney McIntosh and to Henry Smith.

Since taking over the hotel in the early 1970s John Lithgow has renovated it extensively and added a private home at the rear. The hotel is now a ten-room 'country pub' with a bar and cafe area, bistro and dining room. From November 2007 Fred Whitlock and Alison Whyte are the new owners of the Grand.

Eric Tetlow has compiled a list of the licensee's of the Burgoyne Hotel:

1888	Henry Farrell
1890	William Farrell
1903	Mrs M. Farrell
1905	Christina Holland

Name changed to *The Grand Hotel*

Dec 1905	Mrs Rachel Dawson
1910	James Wilkin
1913	Leonard and Claude Gedye
1919	John O'Connor
1921	George Hutchinson
1924	Samuel Nelson
1925	Mary Jane Whatman
1927	Maude Spargo
1928	Henry George Benjamin
Apr 1930	Mrs Bessie Benjamin
Jun 1930	Alice Hutchinson
Jul 1930	Frederick Wm Whiteway
1932	Edward Harper
1933	Michael Burnett
1934	Nora McMahan
Jan 1935	Clifford Houghton
Nov 1935	Robert Joseph Lithgow
1946	John Samuel Lithgow
197?	John Robert Lithgow

Sources:

Alex Sewell, *Tanglefoot Tales*, 1989.
 Alan Marshall, *Pioneers and painters*,
 W. N. [William Newman], 'Yarra Flats', *The Age*, 5 Jan 1935.
Eltham & Whittlesea Shire Advertiser.
Evelyn Observer.
Lilydale Express.
Victoria and its Metropolis, Vol. 2.



Yarra Glen Roads & Streets

a series about their history

Farrell Avenue

This street is marked on town plans as early as 1888. It runs parallel to Bell and Sayle Streets between King Street and Anzac Avenue. However for many years only the northern end from Anzac Avenue to Herbert Street was in use. The southern section was opened up when the land was sub-divided in the early 1970s and the street was formed and sealed.

William Cavanagh Farrell (1844-1901) was born in Preston, Victoria. He lived on his father's farm at Darebin until 1862 when he left for the Jordan diggings. He claimed to be the first to travel the Yarra Track with a team of packhorses. In 1872 he returned to Ivanhoe where he married Margaret Hearn. He then owned and operated a hotel for six years at the end of which he let the hotel and selected 320 acres of land on the Morwell River.

He could not have farmed for long because by 1881 he was in Yarra Flats. He took over the license of the Yarra Flats Hotel and also operated a daily mail coach service to the railway terminus at Lilydale. The railway had been extended from Hawthorn to Lilydale in 1882. It is said that he purchased a Cobb & Co license from Sloan of The Folly at Christmas Hills. (Marshall, *Pioneers and painters*).

William Farrell was a bit of an entrepreneur. In 1886 he built the bank building that still stands (as a private residence) on the corner of Armstrong Grove and Bell Street. It commenced operation as the Commercial Bank. He later added a general store which was called the Commercial Store.

His brother Henry also came to the Yarra Flats and together they rebuilt and established the landmark building in the town now known as the Grand Hotel. (see article in this issue).

William was a Councillor of the Eltham Shire from 1890 to 1901 and served two periods as Shire President in that time.

He was a Justice of the Peace in 1892 when he presided over the inquiry into the death of Samuel Seth Burgess.

William and Margaret had six children. The last three were born in Yarra Flats. Their eldest daughter married Dr William Kilpatrick who lived at Lilydale but regularly visited Yarra Glen in his professional capacity. His advertisement states that information about his consultation times was available from the Burgoyne Hotel.

Below are the first pictures of our new home. The door is open and a display set up already – a great start.

