

HISTORY THROWN AWAY

“Robbie” Roberts worked for many years as the manager of Coolart for Tom Luxton, then after Tom’s death, for his daughter, Margaret Roffey. When Coolart was bought by the Victorian government he stayed on as caretaker/advisor for a number of years. Robbie had many, many stories about the property and its history. The following is one he related.

“In the paddock near the big well there used to be parts of a shipwreck from a Norwegian sailing ship that broke up at Palmer’s Bluff at Balnarring Beach sometime between the 1840s to 1850s. Remnants of ‘The Barque’ as it was known, were visible near the Bluff. In the early 1900s a reporter from ‘The Age’ newspaper came to Coolart to write up a story about Grimwade’s country property. Grimwade was a wealthy, well-known public figure who bred race-horses at Coolart. He told the reporter about the wreck and the reporter mentioned it in his article.

There used to be a capstan here and depth markers. During one ‘cleanup’ a scrap metal man came and bought up some of the stuff. I remember there used to be part of the wooden decking rail from the old barque too. A lot of dole workers used to come to work in groups. Some of them were clearing and they got rid of stuff without knowing what it was they were throwing out. A lot of history probably got thrown away.”

The interview that Robbie referred to was given on 21 April, 1904 and was for the magazine “Punch”, not ‘The Age’ It was one of a series of articles, the theme of which was ‘Victorian Representatives’ at home. The journalist, who wrote as “Lauderdale”, spent the day with the Honourable F.S. Grimwade at his country residence, ‘Coolart’, detailing the property and lifestyle for the magazine’s readers. Lauderdale wrote *...to the right of us was Palmer’s hill close to which lies the remains of a wreck of a Norwegian barque which went ashore some forty years ago.*

During the 1990s a section of wood, the remnants of an old ship, was uncovered near Palmer’s hill, retrieved and given to the Historical Society. It was thought to be another remnant from the barque. It lay in the front yard of the home of the society’s secretary until her death. From there it . . . disappeared. Another piece of history thrown away?

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