



Snippets

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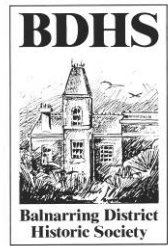
Balnarring and District Historical Society Inc.

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Editor: I. Hackett



SOMERS PRE-SCHOOL

*(From a talk given by **Rod Nuske** at the 30th anniversary of the Pre-School)*

The first pre-school at Somers began in 1947 as a play group that met on the enclosed front verandah of Jean Stone's house. When the weather was fine the children played on the front lawn. Jean did not charge the families whose children attended as she believed this was something the community needed. Somers had a number of young families with small children and the community saw the need for a permanent home for a pre-school group.

In 1950 a committee was formed to approach the Flinders Shire Council. Ron Stone acted as president while Miss Bunny took on the role of secretary/treasurer. The committee comprised of Marjorie Boadle, Ruth Matthew, Bob Stone, Jean Stone, Jack Nash, Jack Reynolds, Jess Montgomery, Mr Hart and Brenda Stone.

The Committee checked various local sites on which a building might be erected and finally, in November 1952, the block of land in Ocean Grove Crescent was purchased from Mr McLennan for £200. The goal was to raise £1,000 which, together with grants from the Shire and the State Government, would be sufficient to build a centre. By 1954 the land had been paid for and £800 forwarded to the Shire as the community's share.

Funds had been raised by a number of social activities. For the first four years some type of fund-raising event was held within the community each month. These included a yearly Gala Night when buses were hired to bring people from further afield to Somers to enjoy a group of activities including dancing, darts, fortune-telling, chocolate wheels, lucky envelopes, push penny, drinks and sweets. Dances, cake stalls and fortnightly raffles were also run on a frequent basis and a bottle drive was initiated as was the collection of old newspapers and magazines for sale to the Australian Paper Mill.



Several problems had to overcome before the plans were approved and construction of the centre was undertaken by Wes Wade in 1956

Under construction

Local woman, Bet Campbell was approached to see if she was interested in taking on the role of Play Group Leader. Bet agreed and enrolled in a course which she completed just prior to the completion of the building and the opening of the Centre. The Department of Health appointed her as the Play Leader for both Somers and Balnarring in 1957.

The Official Opening was held on 12 May, 1957 with Dr. Meridith officiating.

Bet spent five half days at Somers and three half days at Balnarring. The Play Leader's salary was fixed as £9/10/- plus a Christmas bonus. The following year this was raised to £10/-/-.



The centre was also home to the Infant Welfare service and a nursing sister came once a week to check babies. This service was already in existence. It had begun in the pavilion in the caravan park.

The front room of the new building also served as a library on a Saturday afternoon with books being swapped around periodically from the Shire Library.

The centre at Balnarring was identical and served the same purposes.

By the mid 1960s numbers at the pre-school had fallen away to nine children. Until then many of the children were from navy families stationed at Cerberus and renting in Somers. When the Navy transferred the Midshipman College to another location, the Navy families moved away.

The two pre-school centres were merged and Bet worked at Balnarring, conducting ten sessions per week with children coming from many areas, including Somers.



By 1975 the number of children of pre-school age had increased and Liz Edmends established a parent-run play group that operated for two hours each week. Then, when the Balnarring Centre had to be closed for major construction work, Liz suggested that the Balnarring sessions be re-located to Somers. She, Bet Campbell and Jan Eabling managed two groups who each had two sessions each week.

Bet Campbell 's qualifications did not allow her to direct the new Balnarring kindergarten so she stayed on with the three-year olds at Somers until her retirement in 1979.



Liz leads a sing-a-long



Bet Campbell and Liz Edmends

From the archives: Memoires of Somers. **Wes Wade** writes about the Pre-School Centre

'It was a brick veneer building with a tile roof and contained a large assembly room - with fireplace – a Sister's Room with private toilet facilities - a toilet /bathroom with baby sized toilet pedestals and large, low, stainless steel wash troughs. It also had a library – a large room with a separate entrance. It was called the Infant Health and Pre-School Centre. I built it for the Flinders Shire in 1956.

It had a daily gathering of pre-schoolers for the morning sessions under the care and supervision of Betty Campbell. The Nursing Sister attended each Thursday for the baby health care advice and weighing of the babies. The library was open to the public two evenings each week and on Saturday afternoon.

Two or three mothers were rostered on each morning to help Mrs Campbell with the activities. These also included the hygiene part of their training, their light food snack and their sleep.

A Baby Health Centre Committee was formed to provide inside and outside equipment such as 'covered' sandpits (to keep off cats) and spring boards and climbing rails and all the gear to keep kids happy and active and laughing. There were no men on the committee and so, after some suggestions from the ladies, Rod Nuske and I joined it. Strangely enough we joined the other committee also - the one at Balnarring which Mrs Campbell supervised in the afternoon.

Rod and I would listen with awe to the ladies organizing, say, a food stall at a local function. Everyone would go into detail on recipes and who would cook what and when and how much. Rod and I came out of those meetings wiser men and more able to face the cruel outside world. We were also more aware of the care and attention of the work done by our ladies.'

A BALNARRING BOYHOOD

by Jack Cavanagh

(from Some Balnarring Memories of the Cavanaghs.)

Jack Cavanagh was the son of Jim and May Cavanagh. He grew up in Balnarring during the 1930s. Jack's grandfather, James Cavanagh Snr migrated from the Isle of Arran and at first worked at the Cole's property 'Minto' and at Coolart. He later established his own farm "Montrose" in Stanley's Road. Jack's father, James Jnr, joined the army when he was just 15 and saw service in Belgium. On his return from WW1 he worked at Coolart where he met his wife-to-be. After marriage he farmed at 'Montrose' where he and May raised their four children. Later he built a house on a one-acre block not far from Stone's Store. These were the Depression years between the two wars and here Jack describes how they earned extra money.

My brother and I would sometimes borrow a 12 gauge double barrelled shot-gun and cartridge belt from Uncle Les and go rabbiting. Rabbits were so plentiful that we could line up two and get them both with the same shot. I once fired both barrels at the same time and the recoil almost knocked me over. Uncle Les would take us out ferreting. A net would be placed over each burrow, a ferret sent in and within minutes the first rabbit would come racing out only to be caught up in a net. Had to dig out a ferret once. It either got lost or found something to eat.

Our extra pocket money came from selling empty bottles to a Bottle-O who would call every six months, or selling rabbit skins. The new skins were turned inside out and stretched over a wire bent in the shape of a 'U'. They would then hang on a shed wall and, when dry, could bring up to ninepence a pound.

I went cherry picking several times. One shilling per hour and all you could eat.

My father once had a job clearing and burning all the scrub and ti-tree along the Merricks Creek in a paddock north of Flinders Road belonging to Coles. It was from this area that he collected wattle-bark, binding each armful with hay-band and, when dry, dispatching by rail to a tannery in the city. This paddock remained clear grazing land for many years but the scrub gradually returned.

He won a contract to cut and deliver fire-wood to the railways. He would harness "Snowy" the horse to a lorry and drive to a timbered area on the Bittern Dromana Road between Balnarring Road and Stumpy Gully Road where he had an arrangement with the owner. There the trees would be chopped down, cut into axe-handle lengths, split with wedges and loaded onto the lorry for the trip to the railway siding. To make the job easier he bought a 1912 model, 4-cylinder Hupmobile (the last model with acetylene head lights) and a saw-bench. He would drive to work, jack up one rear wheel, connect a belt to the saw-bench and with occasional help was able to complete the contract successfully. If the belt slipped and flew off he would light a piece of car inner tube and let the molten rubber drip into a bucket of water. This made a sticky belt dressing that lasted for days. The firewood was built into a long, high stack next to the siding and when partly dry would be loaded up and sent to the city.

It was a sad day when "old Snowy" died. To see him lying there, never to be harnessed again. But a job that has to be done, has to be done, so Dad and Uncle Les got their shovels, dug a large hole and pushed him in. . . .

BALNARRING

They tell me Balnarring's a wonderful sight,
Where they don't have street lamps to brighten the night;
If ever you wander at night in the damp,
You've to brighten your way with a kerosene lamp.
There's not many houses, but plenty of scrub.
There's a school and a store, but there ain't any pub.
But for all its dryness that town will do me,
Where the hills round Balnarring sweep down to the sea.

"Tis a sandy old spot. But there's plenty of Stones*,
For there's Ron and there's William. The breaker of bones.
Not to mention Bananas, who tends to the shop,
And is never seen shicker, but likes a wee drop.
You'll see him fly round when there's business right there,
And you'll see he is keen by the wave of his hair;
But for all of his keenness he knows where to be,
Where the hills round Balnarring sweep down to the sea.

You'll find old Dave Baker, who doesn't like bread,
With a life like a cat, for he ought to be dead.
But you couldn't kill him with an axe or a gun,
For a fellow here made an attempt just for fun,
And raising his gun took aim and then pulled,
But it never went off and the fellow was fooled.
And old Davie stayed in this cold country,
Where the hills of Balnarring sweep down to the sea.

There's a nice little church and there's also a hall,
But there's seldom a dance and never a ball,
But if you're lucky and land at a dance,
To get you a partner you've Ted Buckley's chance,
Unless you have buck sets with young Stanley Main,
Or tie a chaff bag round the legs of Dave Strain
You've no luck, and lonely you find you will be
Where the hills round Balnarring sweep down to the sea.

A.H.
(Balnarring)

Ron and William (Bill) Stone were two of the sons of Ern Stone who ran the general store. Ern's nickname was 'Bananas' as he was very bandy-legged.

W.A.A.A.F.– JOAN SWEENEY (A.C.W.)



When World War 2 broke out in 1939, my two brothers and I wanted to join up but we were too young. Bill and Ray wanted to join the Navy and I, the Air Force. When the Woman's Australian Auxiliary Air Force (W.A.A.A.F.) was formed in 1941 I decided that was for me, enlisted and was called up on my 18th birthday in 1943.

...

Joan with her brothers, Ray and Bill

Did my rookie course at Larundel: Name: Joan Sweeney
Rank: Air craft Woman
Number: 110811
Mustering: Equipment Assistant
Pay: Six shillings per day.

All our clothing was supplied and we wore a blue uniform most of the year, but for a short time in the summer when we wore a cotton khaki shirt and skirt. Hair had to be one inch above the collar of our shirt and little make-up. Hats were worn at all times and on straight. Officers and nurses wore uniform all the time, the rest of us wore overalls to work and the official uniform all other times. It was illegal to wear civilian clothes and our two identification tags (dead meat tags) had to be worn on a string around your neck at all times.

In November 1943 I was posted to Victoria Barracks but I did not like Melbourne or where I was billeted at Toorak, so I successfully applied for a posting to No.1 I.T.S. Somers early in 1944.

On my arrival at No.1 I.T.S. I had to hand my papers in to all relevant departments and collect my bedding, which consisted of a pillow, two pillow cases, three blankets and a paillasse. This was a hessian bag filled with straw. When the straw turned to chaff you emptied it out and refilled it with straw once again. To my horror I found that on C.O.'s Inspection (every Tuesday) we had to fold our bedding up as we did on Rookie course.

...

After the first day settling in I found my next day began with Reveille at 0600hrs. A quick shower, make your bed and over to the Mess for breakfast. Back to the Waaafery, tidy your hut and do rostered duties e.g. a quick clean of the showers, toilets etc and to the Equipment section by 0800 hrs.

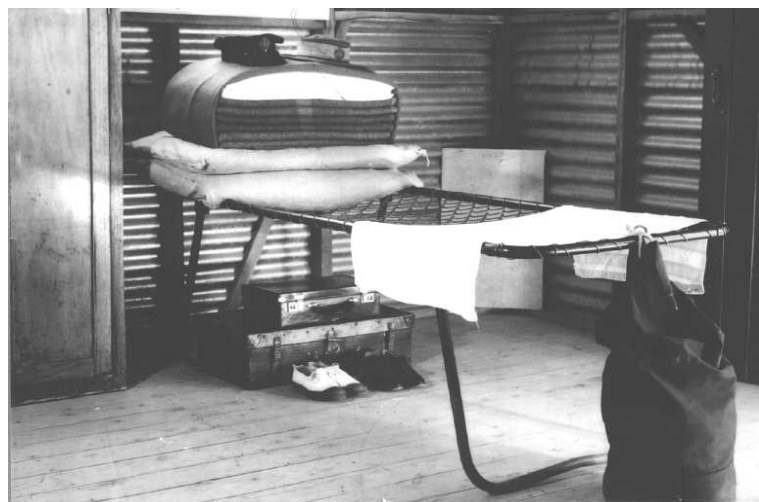
The job I was given was on the front counter, with several others, issuing clothing. We issued the 'New Intake' with their first uniform and if the clothes didn't fit they could come back on Exchange Day and exchange them. There were also U.S. days when all personnel could exchange worn clothing for a new article. We also issued the Trainees with their Flying Gear when they passed out and moved on to their next station. Putting me on this counter was a disaster as my mother never discussed with me the size of clothing that my brothers wore and when a slender, red-faced trainee fronted up on Exchange Day with his O.S. underwear I think our Equipment Officer thought I would do better downstairs in the Tool section and so I went to Equipment Hut No 11 with Cpl. Smythe as my boss. I liked the work

here except at the beginning when Cpl. Smythe would disappear and a smart Airman would come inside and ask for things like a 'skyhook'. After looking everywhere, I would ask questions like "How big is it?" "What is it made of?" "What do you use it for?" I would get vague replies and gestures until Cpl. Smythe would return with a big grin on his face. Yes, I had been had!

Stand Down was at 1700 hrs then back to the Waaafery to freshen up and over to the mess for tea. The Waaaf had its own mess. We lined up with HQ Airmen to get our meals then went to our own mess (long wooden trestles, no table cloths). Every few days the Orderly Sergeant would escort the Orderly Officer to our Mess and he would ask "Any complaints?" to which we would reply, "No Sir". We often wondered what they would do if we replied Yes, Sir." The meals were okay, except for the baked beans. Yes, I know they are good for you but I have had enough of baked beans in the Air Force to last me a life time.

After tea the rest of the evening was ours (except on 'panic night'). The Rec. Hut at No 10 was a popular place as we could mix with the Trainees and have tea and coffee and grilled cheese on toast - Waaafs volunteered to do the work and the Comfort Fund supplied the food. The boys could walk with us along the road to the Waaafery's front fence but when Taps finished at 2230 hours we had to be inside the gate and quickly into bed (sometimes overalls and all) as our sergeant came around to check that we were all in bed. Monday night was 'panic night' which meant as soon as tea was over we had to return to our quarters and clean the whole Waaafery properly, showers, toilets, laundry, garden and our own huts. (The Rec Hut was closed on 'panic night'.)

Tuesday morning was C.O.'s Parade for the whole Camp, except essential personnel. Instead of being at work at 0800 hours we had to be on the Parade Ground by 0800 hours in full uniform for C.O.'s inspection which was followed by the C.O. inspecting our quarters.



Joan's bed and belongings, ready for C.O.'s inspection

This was the morning that we had to fold our bedding up, as we had done every day on our Rookie course. We had to fold the paillasse in three and use one blanket to wrap the other two blankets in plus our pillow. Our beds could not be remade until after work. (I never worked out why it had to be done that way.)

While the C.O. was doing his inspection those of us who had been on parade had to go on a route march. Along Lord Somers Road to the Store, left at the store, left across the road at the top, then left again into Coolart Road. One morning as we turned left into Coolart Road another Waaaf (Terry) and I were bored so Terry offered to piggyback me the rest of the way. Our sergeant caught us piggybacking one another and we were told to report to the Waaaf Officer on our return. We called our Waaaf Officer "Madam" so when we got a

lecture all we could say was “Yes Madam, No Madam.” Our punishment was to piggy back one another around the Parade Ground after tea but the word got around what we had to do and I think all personnel were going to be in the vicinity of the Parade Ground that night to see the circus clowns. ‘Madam’ thought better of the punishment and called it off, but we were told next time it would be loss of leave. “Thank you, Madam.”

Most of the camp got weekend leave once a fortnight, from after lunch on Friday until Sunday at 2359 hours. Dyson buses would take us to the Frankston railway station. The Navy personnel from Flinders (H.M.A.S. Cerberus) would go by train from Crib Point to Flinders Street station. The obvious thing would have been to take us to the train at Bittern. But it was thought to be a better idea not to let the two services travel on the same train. The sailors called the Air Force “Menzies Mannequins” or “Blue Orchids” which didn’t always lead to peace yet if the Air Force got into a fight with the Yanks in Melbourne the Navy would have been right in there with the R.A.A.F. or vice versa.

Friendships were made and would last a lifetime. Amongst my friends was a co-worker named Marge . . . I remember one day when I was sick and was sent to my hut. Marge went to tea without me. Tea was an extra nice roast so Marge had her tea and washed her plates and talked the cook into giving her a meal to bring back to me. She woke me up to tell me she had this roast for me. I didn’t feel like eating and obviously wasn’t very gracious in my reply. She took the meal to throw it into the rubbish tin, got to the door of the hut, looked at the roast and sat on the step AND ATE IT. I later thought I could eat a roast and asked Marge for it and was told what she had done with it. No, we weren’t good friends for a few days, but I got over it.

The most important memory that I have of my time at Somers was when I was walking along a street when an announcement came over the P.A. system which started with “Attention All Personnel”, then went on to say, “Germany has surrendered; there is Peace in Europe.” I don’t think I will forget that day. After lunch there was a Church Parade in the Main Hall. It was the biggest Church Parade I have ever seen, every member except essentials must have attended that service, as personnel filled the Hall and out onto the street. There wasn’t any rejoicing, we went back to our normal duties as there was still a war on, but at least there was hope.

(Joan was later posted to Mildura before being demobilized in 1946.)

It was hard getting back into civvy life, we didn’t speak the same language but we learned to adjust in time.

I never regretted my time in the services. We had fun, it taught us a lot, we stood in queues for everything, shared a hut with about twenty other girls, no private rooms, our worldly possessions was what we had in half a wardrobe, a kit bag and a couple of small suit cases and when we slacked off we were always reminded “There is a war going on. Men are giving their lives so you can have a better way of life.”

* * *

From The Somers Sun – the Camp newspaper, started in July 1941 by Don Allan and printed weekly.

THE AIR FORCE SPIRIT

A certain A.C. was in financial trouble recently. Pay day was past and gone and not to re-appear again for many moons. Moreover 5/- (five shillings) a day isn’t much. Then out of the blue comes trouble. A.C.’s wife was seriously ill and a trip to Tassie was necessary in order to see her. Cooks and Messmen rallied around the afflicted brother and in less than an hour, subscribed over £10 (ten pounds) which enabled A.C. to visit his home by plane .

Kindness in another’s trouble. What do you think about THAT!

BALNARRING 1915

Rail to Bittern 42 miles, thence by coach 4 miles.
Shire of Flinders and Kangerong. Parish of Flinders

Baker, David	farmer	Meehan, Jno	farmer
Balmain, Jas. A.	farmer	M.I. & Library – Buckley D.	sec.
Birch, Jos. E.	farmer	Oswin, Richard	farmer
Broughton, Thomas	farmer	Parfitt, Edgar H.	farmer
Buckley, David	farmer	P.O. Judd W.	post mstr
Buckely, John	farmer	Reid, George B.	
Casey, Charles	farmer	R.C. Church	
Cook, Hy T.	farmer	Sherwell; Thomas A.	farmer
Gomm, Wm		Stanley, Robt	farmer
Grant, Donald	farmer	State School Judd Wm	tchr
Grayden, Richard		Stone, Ernest G.	store keeper
Holt, Edw	farmer	Stuart, George	
Humphries, Edward	farmer	Taylor, Thomas	farmer
Hurley, Wm	farmer	Thomas, Alex W.	farmer
James, Frdrk		Tullis, Robt L.	farmer
Johnson, Jas J.	orchardist	Turner, George	farmer
Joyner, John		Ward, William J.	
Judd, Wm	schl tchr	Wesleyan Church	
Lane, George			

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOW DUE!

Thank you to all those who have already renewed their membership.

A reminder, if you still have not sent in your form and subscription.

If you do not wish to re-join, please let me know so your name can be removed from our list. (ph. 5983 5326)

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