

Snippets

from our collection

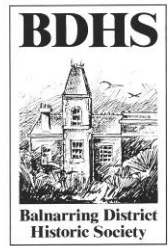
Balnarring and District Historical Society Inc.

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Editor: I. Hackett



FRED BLEASDALE

(information from *Cheryl Jackson* and *WW1 records*)

Recently a donation was made to B.D.H.S. of two framed certificates from World War I.



One is a Certificate of Honour from the Shire of Flinders and the second, the Welcome Home Address from the Balnarring Community. These had been presented to Alfred John Bleasdale on his return from active service in France.

Fred and his brother, Arthur, lived at Bittern on a farm next to the Van Suylen orchard. The two brothers ran a buggy repairs business. Fred was a painter who re-touched or restored the paintwork of the body of the carriage while Arthur, a blacksmith, repaired the metalwork parts. They also kept chooks and sent the eggs to a Melbourne market. However little money came from the eggs because of transport costs and many eggs (reportedly) arrived cracked. The Bleasdale brothers had taken up the farm in Bittern some time before the outbreak of WW1.

Alfred John was the sixth and youngest child of school master, Thomas Bleasdale and his wife Agnes. He was born at Rokewood in 1883 when his father was head teacher at the school there. Fred, as he was known, started school at Beechworth when the family moved there from Rokewood and he finished his education at Princes Hill in North Carlton. Fred had four older brothers and a sister. His brother Arthur, co-owner of the Bittern farm, was nine years older than Fred and the third child of Thomas and Agnes. He was in South Africa fighting with the Australian Military Forces during the Boer War which



aged between 1899 and 1902. Some time after his return to Australia he and Fred formed a partnership and bought the farm at Bittern.

Fred was in his early 30s when the First World War broke out. In September 1916, at the age of thirty-three, he enlisted in the A.I.F. Two months later he was aboard *H.M.A.T. A20 Horatata* which sailed from Melbourne bound for Plymouth. He was now a Private in the 6th Battalion, 23rd Reinforcements. The battalion went on to Etaples in northern France and from there to the front. Fred was hospitalised twice in the next six months, suffering from trench fever, a debilitating disease spread by lice. Then in September, 1917 he was wounded in action during a skirmish in which he saw his mate killed alongside him in the trench. By mid-



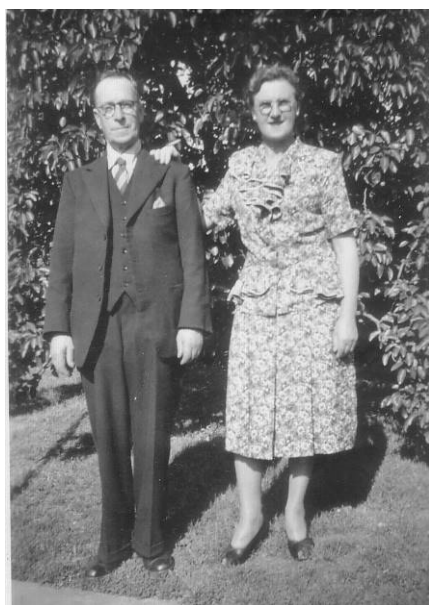
November he had recovered enough to rejoin his unit. Then in January he was attached to a salvage division for duty. Fred was transferred to the 1st Australian Division Salvage Company in February of 1918. The salvage divisions had been formed to recover equipment from the battlefield so it might be repaired, thus reducing waste. He was again hospitalised toward the latter part of the year, this time suffering from influenza.

Private Bleasdale (r) and friend

After the Armistice Fred had leave in England before being transferred back to the 6th Battalion. He returned to Australia on the *Prinz Ludwig* in July 1919.

Alfred Bleasdale was formally thanked by the Balnarring community at a Welcome Home evening in the local hall at which he was presented with a medallion and a Welcome Home Certificate. The hand-lettered certificate made mention of his injuries. *It is with feelings of profound sympathy that we see evidence that You have not escaped unscathed.* In the same manner, he was awarded a Certificate of Honour by the shire, acknowledging his years of service for the King and Empire.

Meanwhile, while Fred was overseas, Arthur married local girl, Margaret Jones, in 1919 and sold the property in Bittern. He kept aside Fred's share of the money to give to him on his return.



After the war Fred went back to his old trade as a painter. At first he worked for Kellow Falkiners, painting cars then later for the Victorian Railways, painting trains. His workplace was the Newport Workshops which he referred to as "Little Siberia" as it was a very cold place. He left from his home in Lygon Street, North Carlton each morning in the dark and returned in the dark. However, it was while working at Newport he met the girl he would marry. Evelyn Grace Edwards ran the lolly shop in Rathdowne Street in North Carlton and her brother had asked Fred if he would drop off his bag there for him. Thus began a seven- year long courtship.

In 1926 at the age of 43, Fred married his 29- year- old sweetheart. The couple bought a house in Miller Street, North Fitzroy which became their home. Their only daughter, Evelyn, was born the following year.

Alfred John Bleasdale died in Fitzroy in 1966.

The certificates he received on his return from active service were framed and held pride of place on the lounge room wall of the house in North Fitzroy. Fred's granddaughter, Cheryl Jackson, grew up knowing them all her life. It was she who donated them to B.D.H.S.

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DAVID BAKER WHO 'OUGHT TO BE DEAD'

The third verse of the poem reproduced in the last issue of 'Snippets' (February 2023) referred to "old Dave Baker" who "ought to be dead after a fellow here made an attempt just for fun, and raising his gun took aim and then pulled, but it never went off." Further research gives the event that triggered this verse. It was reported in the Peninsula Post on July 31, 1925.

David Baker was returning home on horseback when a man he had once employed as a horse driver accosted him, taking aim at him with a double-barreled shotgun and pulling the trigger. However, the cartridges were damp and the gun misfired. The would-be assailant was overcome by his would-be victim and reported to the police. He was arrested and faced a court trial in Hastings.

It was reported here that Mr. David Baker, of Flinders road, Balnarring, had a sensational experience one day last week. As he was riding on horse-back to his home he was approached by a man whom he had formerly employed as a horse driver, who took aim at Mr. Baker, both barrels misfiring. It was discovered later that the cartridges were damp. Mr. Baker dismounted and seized the man, taking the gun from him. The matter has been reported to the police, who arrested the culprit, finding a revolver fully loaded in his possession. He will appear at the next sittings of the Hastings court to give an account of his erratic behaviour.

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HOTEL FOR SALE

From the Weekly Times Sat. February 16, 1878

For Sale or To Let

Balnarring Hotel and Store

Substantially built having ball and dining rooms, three parlours, seven bedrooms, with a tower overlooking the whole of Western Port Bay; also stabling, sheds, store room and 300 acres of good land.

Terms liberal

Post office connected with store

Apply at hotel, Balnarring

THE HEARTBREAK OF THE STONE FAMILY

Families in earlier times were generally large and the death of a child was commonplace. However, in some families, this loss was repeated again and yet again. The Stone family had the misfortune to be one such family.



Ern and Annie Stone came to Balnarring in 1908 to take over the running of the Junction Store, the area's general store. Prior to that Ern had a boot store in Melbourne and the family home was in Brighton. The couple had married in 1892 and their large family of nine children consisted of eight sons and one daughter. The children were all born in Brighton except for the youngest who was born after the family came to Balnarring. Their only daughter was their third-born.

Of their sons only three lived to raise their own families.

The couple's first child, a son, Eric Gordon, died in infancy in 1892. Their second child, another son, was born two years later. He was named Ernest Leslie. A daughter, Muriel, was born in 1896 followed by Ronald William in 1897. Annie next gave birth to twin sons, Archibald Russell (Russell) and Robert Lionel. William (Bill) followed in 1904 and Clifford was born two years later, in 1906. Vernon, the last of the Stone children, was born in 1910 with his birth being registered in Schnapper Point. The older boys (Ron, a ten-year-old when the family moved house and Les, thirteen) clearly remembered the horse and cart ride to the peninsula. One of the twins, Robert (Bobby), died the year the family came to Balnarring. He was nine years old and died as a result of rheumatic fever. The other twin died in 1914 at the age of fifteen from heart disease. His death was registered at Hastings. Russ was buried alongside his brother in Brighton.

The boys all enjoyed the outdoors and were keen sportsmen. They played cricket, tennis, football; went hunting and fishing; rode motor bikes. The Stones bought land at Tulum, (Balnarring Beach) and Annie opened a second store there which catered to the summertime

crowds. Cliff was shot accidentally when the gun he was carrying discharged as the cart in which he was riding crossed the wooden bridge at Balnarring Beach. He was hoping to shoot ducks. The year was 1925 and Cliff was only nineteen.

The Second World War claimed the life of Vernon. He enlisted at the age of thirty and died in New Guinea in 1943.

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C.F.A. COMPETITION IN REGIONAL AND STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

(from C.F.A.: 60 years of Service to the Community. 1937-1997.)

Competitions are now an integral part of the C.F.A. The State Championships have been held annually for about 150 years except during WW1, WW2, and the COVID pandemic of 2020. The first one was held in Melbourne in 1874 and was more a demonstration of handling equipment. Unique skills are required of rural brigade members and it was found that competition improved both training and efficiency. The focus of such competitions is on fitness and promoting general well-being.

The Brigade's first involvement with regional championships occurred in late 1957 with five delegates attending meetings at Baxter Fire Station. The Brigade supplied judges for the first years of the championships and it was not until the mid -1960s that the Brigade started competing at Keysborough. Training was carried out at Bill Edgar's home, 'Kalimna' on Frankston-Flinders Road, Merricks on Sunday mornings and Wednesday afternoons. Success was limited for many years, with the occasional trophy being gained at Regional level. Entry to the State Championships was by invitation only, usually the first placed Regional team in each event, consequently Balnarring did not compete in too many. The first time Balnarring competed at a State Championship was at Frankston in 1966.



*Balnarring C.F.A.'s hose truck.
1963.*

[photo: R. Nuske]

Events conducted then were much different from those of today. Examples being: 16-foot rope climbs, one-man knapsack and five-man pumping & driving. Balnarring had many good competitors including D. Bulk, G. Freestone, R. Freestone, D. Iles, T. Watt, E. Mason, D. Mason, B. Storer, P. Edgar and M. Carr.

The Brigade first started visiting other Regional

championships in 1969 at Poowong in Region 9, gaining the *Best Visiting Brigade* trophy. The seventies were lean times for the brigade with only limited success. Regional night competitions however, commenced in 1974 and the brigade won their fair share of trophies and were consistent then, as they are now. M.Carr, P. Edgar, T. Watt and P. Allen were at the forefront in the early days. This followed on into the 80s and 90s with M. Wrangles, P. Merrick, M. Crow, P. McComb, D. Power, R. Mawson, T. Pope and D. Underwood.

Our Ladies Auxiliary have also been on the winner's dais in night competitions with Marlene Edgar, Cheryl Merrick, Julie Underwood and Mary Allen to name a few.

The juniors also have had much success over the years, sometimes gaining more trophies than their senior counterparts. They had won the Aggregate Trophy many times at Regional level and have also won trophies at other Regions. Names that come to mind are Doug Allen, Aaron Edgar, Justin Underwood, Tim Pope, Duncan Mathers, Brad Krahe, Nathan Terry, Dee Dee Niblett, Sally Anne Niblett, Naomi Allen, Simon Bulk, Sean Kerr, Jason Kerr and Rachel Edgar come to mind.

As the 1980s came, the Brigade competed at more and more championships in other Regions. A new uniform was purchased and we all looked smart in navy pants and sky-blue shirts. Overnight trips to Region 6 (Colac) were frequent, as were those to the pubs. A weekend trip to Region 17 (Warracknabeal) was organised in 1982. What a trip that was! Forty bodies trying to sleep on the floor of Rupanyup Fire Station and then trying to shower at the local footy club the next morning, was a sight to behold. Many trips were also made to regions 9 & 10 with a lot of success gained.

At the State Championships in 1990 (Colac) and 1991 (Mooroopna) Balnarring were part of the winning Discipline Shield squad. This was the Brigade's first taste of success at state level. More was to come!

In 1994 grading was introduced which put brigades on a more even par. The A-Team after two years in A Division, slipped into C Division in 1996 and this must have rallied the troops. The team gained three 1st placings and one 2nd placing, making them aggregate winners of C Division by 30 points. The B -Team was placed in B Division at this championship and gained a third place. Overall this had been the most successful championship of the Brigade.

1997 saw the Brigade with three teams running in the State championships at Wangaratta, one in each division. All teams were competitive, however the C-Team was the most successful, gaining a third place and two fourth places in the events in C Division.

The Brigade is fortunate enough to have a full length track for competition training and this has been made more functional with the addition of floodlights to allow training in the evenings.

The Region 8 championship Committee awards the Mosley Award annually to junior fire fighters in the Region, as a recognition of their dedication to training and work within their brigade.

This award commenced in 1986 and five members of the Balnarring Brigade have received this award.

Justin Underwood	1990
Brad Krahe	1991
Ryan Merricks	1996
Ben Hunt	1996
Josef Barter	1997

* * *

1902 POPULTION FIGURES

(120 years ago the population of the Mornington Peninsula is recorded as being close to 6,000 persons. The number of people living in Balnarring was just below 500.)

Mornington Standard February 15, 1902

Under the direction of the Licensing Court, Senior-Constable O'Callaghan of Mornington has prepared a return of the number of permanent inhabitants of the several licensing districts of the peninsula. It is as follows:

Balnarring	485
Dromana	345
Flinders	420
Frankston	1,340
Schnapper Point	1,090
Tootgarook (Sorrento, Boneo, Rye &c)	1,240
Tyabb District	1,085
Total	6.005

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BALNARRING'S ATHLETIC CLUB

(from the Mornington Standard Thursday 2 March 1899)

In March 1899 the inaugural meeting of the newly formed Balnarring Athletic Club. was held at the cricket ground in Balnarring. The day went without a hitch. Events were deemed 'very satisfactory' and competition keen on a day that was near perfect weatherwise. The name "athletic" covered a range of sports not now classed as athletic events.

Climbing the Greasy Pole was one such sport. It caused a great deal of merriment and excitement until the pole was ultimately conquered by Jim Byrne in the best time. Ted Buckley won the boy's high jump, clearing 3 feet (just short of 1 metre). Twelve boys under the age of 10 participated. In the men's high jump both M.Byrne and J Tuck cleared 4ft 10inches (1.5 metres) to tie for first place.

The Old Buffer's Race was won by J. Davies snr. No age range was given to qualify for the race and ten 'old buffers' presented at the starting line.

Olive Oswin won the race for girls under 10-year-olds. She beat fourteen other girls to take the prize.

Twelve couples lined up to compete in the Siamese or three-legged race with the pair, White and Delamare finishing first.

There were two events involving horses.

Tilting the Ring probably had its origins in medieval jousting in which a competitor had to ride at a ring and attempt to secure it on a lance before proceeding to the next. The trial was a popular one, drawing twenty-four starters and was it won by a young lad, Paul Vansuylen jnr. who secured five of the six rings. Then there were high jumps for horses. In the pony jump Mr Grindal's pony, 'Moorooduc', cleared 4 ft 2 inches (1.27 metres) while the winner of the horse's high jump cleared 5 ft 2 inches (1.57 m). This was 'Toprail' owned by C. Adams. The sport, also known as Puissance, was an event at the 1900 Olympics.

The final events were competitions now commonly seen at country shows – the wood chop and wood saw. Jack Shand outperformed the other competitors in both events, although the wood chop was a close contest with second place-getter, D James, trailing by just one stroke and a half. Shand chopped through a log of 18 inch (46 cm) diameter in 40 seconds and took 2 minutes 35 seconds to saw through a log of the same diameter. In the 11 stone (approx. 70 kg) and under wood sawing contest, the 14 inch (36 cm) diameter log took the winner, B. Hopcroft, 1 minute and 32 seconds while J. Davies Jnr won the wood chop.

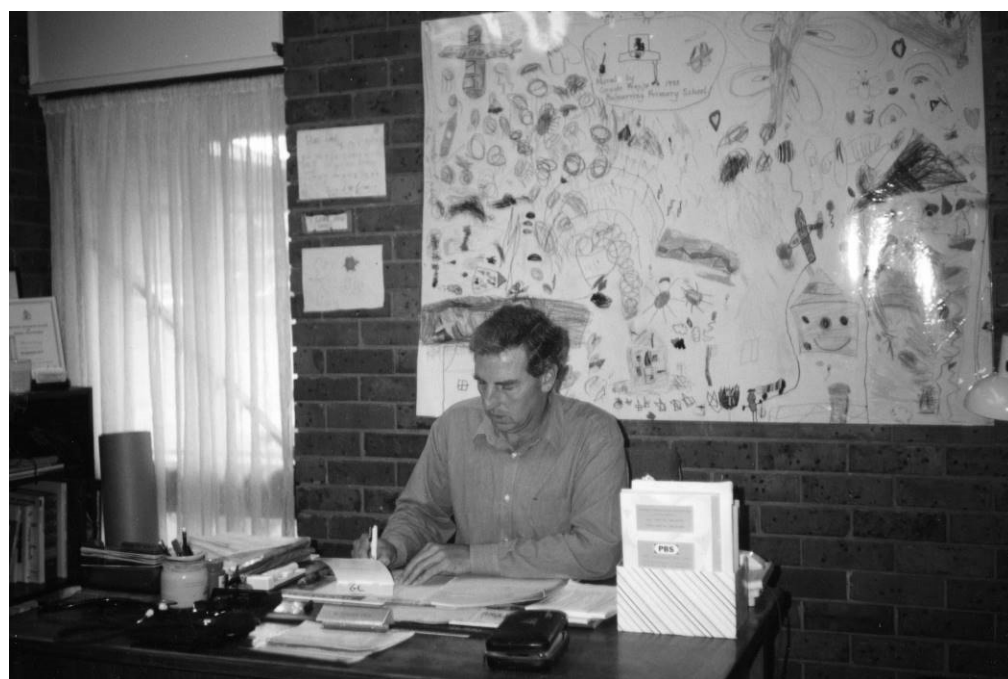
A big crowd turned up to watch the athletic sports and gate takings for the day amounted to £11 15 s.

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“THANK YOU”, DOCTOR GRAHAM

This photo was taken about 1992 in Dr Graham Cato's room at Balnarring's medical clinic, then located in Russell Street.

The artwork behind the desk was one of three murals that had been drawn for him by the



pupils of the Balnarring Primary School.

Graham had been asked to give a talk to the junior classes at the school. As a thank you, the classes at each level had combined to draw a mural for him.

This was quite unexpected and Graham, in his own words, was really chuffed to receive them. The three murals were hung in the clinic.

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