



Snippets

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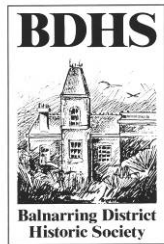
Balnarring and District Historical Society Inc.

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BALNARRING BEACH'S FIRE BRIGADE

(Doug White first came to Balnarring Beach as a young lad in the early 1920s. His parents bought beachfront land where they built a holiday home. His association with the area lasted throughout his life, broken only by the years he was in the army during World War 2. He eventually retired to live at the beach as a permanent resident. Doug had an intimate knowledge of the beach and a curiosity that lasted throughout his life. These are his reflections on the Fire Brigade that was set up at the beach c. 1940)

The Fire Chief was Bill Edwards who lived in Mason Smith Street and whose wife ran a tea room from the log cabin in their front yard. Other members included the ranger, Peter (Robbie) Robertson, Alec Patching, Bill Seddon and Wally Turner. Wally ran the library in his house on what is now Library Road. He was in charge of issuing a fire kit to each resident and to some of the more regular campers.

This consisted of a knapsack, a fire bucket made of metal and painted red and a 'flogger'. The flogger was a broom handle that had strips of leather cloth attached to one end. This was to fight any ground fires that broke out. The knapsack was a galvanized metal container that held four or five gallons of water. It was equipped with a shortish length of hose to which was attached a long nozzle and the nozzle worked with a slide action pump. It had shoulder straps attached to the container so that it could be worn as a back pack.

There was a fire tower with a bell in the main reserve. The ranger was the only person allowed to ring it if a fire broke out.

The only fire Doug can remember was when Jim Douglas' house in Fethers Road caught fire. Apparently the fire fighters were so puffed from running to the scene they didn't have the energy left to throw their buckets of water!!



Fire-fighting knapsack and floggers

FOXY'S HANG-OUT

Herb Downward, who had a wicked sense of humour, and his friends kept up a great deal of banter about different things. One particular topic that drew a lot of good-humoured fun was the landmark known as Foxy's Hang-Out where neighbouring farmers strung up the dead foxes they caught.



(the letter is presented as written))

Mr Herb. Downward,
Sir/

With the greatest esteem and veneration it is desired to bring before your notice, once again and for the third time, the fowl position of things at that obscene place known as Foxy's Hang-Out.

It is 'obscene because they don't wear 'ob-nail boots now-a-days when looking for Burr Fox. They only wear those sissy suede desert boots. It's no good. Now look here, if youse lads over seventies had worn them suede desert boots with the laces properly tied up, when after fox's years ago, you'd have sneaked upon them and killed them all out, long, long ago. And the fox's would not have tales to tell.

Foxy's Hang-out would have been known only to the boys of yesterday, not young blokes like wot get about with that Collins Coot, 'olden up the Dandenong's, and stopping the time clock at the Dandy Town Hall, instead of letting the market get on with its business.

Now take today's young fellows – seventy and still a Sinner, got to have a Tam-O-Shanter on the Top Knot and a Walking Stick, Sir. And then cannot crack a Fox on the Scalp so what hope is there for another offering of Burr fox to the Hang-out, that unique spot of Gum Trees assembly known far and wide over the hills and far-a-away as FOX-EYS' HANG-OUT.

Any-how things are getting not too good a round the Blue Look-Out – the upward draught of the Fox-Scent interferes with space travel way-up and after three runs around the world, the head gets dizzy and the Space=Ship gets the Gully Stumpy awful and chasses the Hen and Chickens out of the Milky-Way.

All for this time Sonny,
Yours truly
Owz-at Evolutionist.

BALBIROOROO WETLANDS

by **Brian Thomas** (from: 'Peninsula Alternative' – Autumn 2004)

The Balbirooroo Wetlands is a small and peaceful wetlands nature reserve located on land adjoining the primary school. On former farmland that was part of the area acquired by the Education Department, the creation of the wetlands was a combined venture of the school and wider community. Before work began the land had two small stands of swamp bark and a section where reed beds grew.

The project to reclaim the land began in 1994, with much volunteer assistance, and the reserve was officially opened in 1995. The name chosen for the new reserve was Balbirooroo – the Koori name for the ibis. Ibis are frequently seen in this area and the bird's image is the symbol adopted by the Primary School for its logo.



Here, Bryan Thomas, former ranger at Coolart, writes of how the Wetlands were formed

I received a phone call from two teachers at the school – Ian Wisken and Heather Goddard – who knew that I had experience in wetland management and construction and invited me to the school to ask my opinion on the feasibility of creating a wetland [on land behind the school]. The spot was gently sloping with a small remnant stand of paperbarks which indicated the area was indeed swampy to start with.

We gathered more interested people around us both from the school and the wider community and soon had a core of very enthusiastic people with a wide range of skills. And then the planning commenced. We wanted to create not only a wetland but also to revegetate the area with plants that were native, specifically to this area so that we were not only creating habitat for wetland plants and animals but creating complimentary bush land and habitat links to nearby remnant vegetation on roadsides and reserves.

We drew up plans which included the dimensions of the wetland we intended to build and a planting map listing the plants we intended to use and where we were going to plant them. Grants were applied for. Melbourne Water became interested and made a great contribution and the ball was well and truly rolling. In April 1994 we excavated the wetland and from the very first Ian and Heather were there getting the school kids involved in what was happening.



Over the next ten years the school and local community put in many hours of volunteer work – planting, weeding, installing signs and walking tracks and boardwalks. The wetlands were linked to other subjects in the school curriculum and a literacy trail was developed, Aboriginal culture explored and art subjects were all incorporated. Recently I was involved in a Ranger in Residence program with the school in which I worked with all grades looking at the invertebrate life in the dipnet pond. The wetlands have become a major focus of the school and are definitely seen as one of the positive aspects of Balnarring Primary by the students.

The wetlands are obviously a great asset to the community but the people we have always had in mind when planning the wetlands are the students. In these days of



ever diminishing bushland we wanted to give them a positive example of what can be done to restore habitat for wildlife and hopefully fill them with a sense that wild things need our protection not only because we find them attractive or that they may be in some way be useful to us but because of their intrinsic natural value.

Together with the dam on the adjacent property we have seen some pretty interesting sightings including rare species like a Magpie Goose, Freckled Duck, Wood Sandpipers and the endangered (in Victoria) Lewin's Rail which I suspect is even breeding there. Japanese Snipe migrate from Japan each year and spend summer on the wetland. In fact, it is one of the best places I know of to get a look at these shy birds. A quiet walk around the wetlands in the early morning or evening

and you can almost always see one probing the mud on the shore line or exploding from the undergrowth almost at your feet with a loud “k-r-a-a-k” of alarm to fly off and land at some distant part of the wetland.

Last November we had our tenth anniversary and it was celebrated by the school children who incorporated circus performances, “Soundscapes” around the wetlands and a scarecrow display and BBQ picnic by the whole community.

On the morning of the anniversary I took a walk around the wetlands to see what had been achieved. Passing the ephemeral wetlands I watched the Masked Lapwing and their three almost full grown chicks. Their successful breeding is due to an island of pebbles which we built for them to nest on and where they are having more success breeding than when they used to nest in the car park! Wood Duck and Purple Swampheens pecked amongst the grass and a Royal Spoonbill sat and preened on a log, its plumed head dress being ruffled by the breeze. A Japanese Snipe took off from the near side of the wetland and flew swiftly to the far side where it promptly dropped into the long grass and disappeared.

I took a few minutes to sit at the hide and I was surrounded by birdsong. . . . The profusion of birdlife left me in no doubt how successful the wetland had become. We have even been successful in attracting mammals. Ringtail possums nests built of twigs and leaves can be seen in the trees, koalas pass through – the trees now being large enough to support their weight – and amongst the grasses swamp rat runs and burrows can be found. The secret to all this wildlife is, of course, the creation of habitat, a place that provides food, shelter and a place to breed.

Everyone who has helped with the wetlands has created not only a thing of beauty but also a wonderful recreational experience for the community, a valuable learning resource for the students of the school and a home for many wild creatures.

(Almost twenty years have passed since Brian wrote this article for “Peninsula Alternative”.



In 2006 Balbirooroo was awarded the Land Care Prize for young people caring for nature. This award is made by the Port Phillip and Western Port Catchment Management Authority. As reported in the ‘Independent’, by then the wetlands and associated woodlands had developed into naturally functioning ecosystems.

There were sixty-five indigenous flora species and, within the area, eighty-eight different birds had been identified along with six mammals, five frogs and six reptiles.

Balbirooroo has become a wonderful asset of the both the community and school.)

THE WALLACE FAMILY

by Helen (Wallace) Barclay

Members of the Wallace family were well known to the early residents of Merricks Beach and neighbouring Balnarring Beach. Descendants still live locally.

Robert John Wallace - known as Jack - was born in Edgerton, Victoria in 1887.

The fifth child of nine he came from a family of farmers, so the early years were spent on the farm. Eventually he headed to Melbourne and worked as a shipwright in Melbourne Ports.

In 1913 he married Ellen Holden (also known as Ella) in Clifton Hill, Victoria and 1914 brought the birth of their son, John Holden Wallace, also known as Jack. Two years later, in 1916, came the birth of a daughter, Dorothy Ellen Wallace.

The 1920's saw them back on the farm in Bolinda, near Romsey and this was where the connection to the Wood family began.



Jack Wallace

Jack Wallace Snr started to train under S.O. Wood to be a veterinarian. S.O. Wood was a veterinarian in Caulfield who had bought land and built a home at Palmers Hill, Balnarring/ Merricks. He offered Jack Snr a job working and managing this property.



Jack Jnr., apprentice jockey

The offer was accepted and in 1928 Jack and Ella moved to Balnarring, living at Warrawee until a house was built on the Palmers Hill property opposite the Wood's house.

At this time Jack Jnr was an apprentice jockey at Mentone and Dorothy went to Merricks School.

In the early 1930's Jack Jnr had a serious accident at Caulfield whilst working a horse and was unable to continue in his chosen career. After months in hospital he returned to Palmers Hill to recover and to help his father.

The Wallace family were very close friends of the Ferguson family who owned the adjoining property and both families were horse and farming orientated.

In the mid 1930's Ella operated the Merricks Beach store. Jack Jnr and Dorothy helped when required and one job was delivering milk to the campers. They used a sled drawn by the family horse, Blossom.

Jack Jnr was in charge of Blossom with Dorothy



both ringing the bell and pailing out the milk from the milk can with a dipper to customers



Dorothy followed her love of horses, competing successfully in all types of events at shows, gymkhanas and hunting near and far. Also the Royal Melbourne Show saw Dorothy mixing and competing against some of the Gary Owen entrants in other events.

Jack Jnr met Nova Barker who was a former Miss Tasmania winner and they were married in 1939. They spent much of their time with Jack Snr and Ella, as did Dorothy.

Jack Jnr joined the Army at the beginning of WW2 but didn't serve overseas due to injuries obtained from his riding accident. He was enlisted in the Horse Transport Division which transported the army horses. After the war Jack Jnr and Nova went to her homeland, Tasmania, where she died from TB in 1946. Jack Jnr returned to Victoria and worked at various jobs in the Melbourne area.



Miss Leanna Wallace (Balnarring), chosen as Miss Show Girl.

Dorothy had moved on and had a daughter, Leanna and son John. After the birth of John, she and the children moved back in with her parents. Dorothy worked at the Cheerio Store in Balnarring Beach, helping with meals and afternoon teas etc. She was also involved in CWA and various other groups. Her daughter Leanna attended Merricks School in 1949 and was one of the first pupils at Red Hill Consolidated School along with brother John in 1951.

In 1959 Leanna was awarded Miss Red Hill Show Girl at the Show.

Jack Snr was well known and was instrumental in the beginning of the Balnarring Racing Club. He was also secretary and pony measurer. In the early days the Wallace name was incorporated into the naming of a couple of the races. He broke in horses and trained them, and also held a Victorian Racehorse Trainers Licence. The judging of stock at the Red Hill Show, stewarding at shows and gymkhanas was done with much enjoyment and he was often called upon to treat ill animals. When the Palmers Hill property was sold S.O. Wood had in place conditions that stated Jack Snr was to have a lifetime residency of the house that had been built for him and use of the land.



The Wallace cottage , opposite Palmer's Hill

Jack Snr continued managing the property throughout the years until it changed hands, first to the Slater family and then Mrs Glover. Jack then took on the role of caretaker of the property. It was around this time that Dorothy moved closer to Melbourne to seek employment.

It was after the passing of Ella in 1953 that Jack Jnr (who had been working in town) married again. His new bride was Edna Stevens from Kensington and a daughter, Helen, was born. Throughout his life Jack Jnr continued his love of horses, managing stud properties and obtaining his Racehorse Trainers Licence. About 1961 Jack Snr became ill so Jack Jnr, Edna and Helen returned to Merricks to care for him. He died in 1963. After a clearing sale was held, the house and property were vacated. Jack Jnr and family moved to Bittern then Hastings.

Leanna followed in her mother's footsteps showing, riding dressage, eventing horses, and in later years as a Judge. She still has a keen interest in all aspects of the horse world.

Her daughter Kellie Bray won Fashions of the Field at the Balnarring Races 150th Anniversary meet in 2013.

Jack Jnr's grand-daughter, Andrea followed her love of horses riding at Pony Club, Novelty Racing and is now working at racing stables.

Horses have played a huge roll in the Wallace family over many, many years.

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