



Snippets

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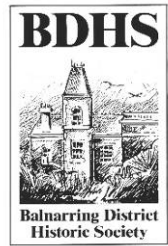
Balnarring and District Historical Society Inc.

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THE BALNARRING BEACH LADIES' MID-WEEK TENNIS GROUP

Recollections from Robyn Agg and Betty Patching

1974 saw the introduction, by the Mornington Peninsula Tennis Association (MPTA), of a mid-week ladies' competition.

The following year a small group of women who lived in the Balnarring/Balnarring Beach area formed a club using the courts at Balnarring Beach for their home matches. These courts were between the Robertson's Park Picnic Reserve and the Ranger's Cottage, part of the camping reserve on the south side of Merricks Creek. Built by the Foreshore Committee towards the end of the 1940s, they were public courts that could be hired for a small sum per hour. It was also possible to hire a court for a longer nominated period. Just exactly what the women paid has now been forgotten but it didn't amount to much. They played against teams from neighbouring communities including Crib Point, Somers, Hastings, Main Ridge and Shoreham. The match was as much a social outing as it was a competition game, although the will to win was always strong. They formed a strong enough team to win the Premiership flag at the end of that year. These first players were Robyn Agg, Betty Patching, Maisey Tovey, Gail Williams and Jenny Calliess



The courts at the beach had an asphalt surface which had to be swept before games could commence. The surface was generally littered with twigs, leaves and occasionally small branches from the overhanging trees. Possum droppings also formed part of the litter. At first the surface was rather rough but the women succeeded in having

the courts re-surfaced. Each woman contributed to the cost of purchasing the balls needed for the tennis match, putting in a certain amount of money each week. This was recorded in a small exercise book. Collecting the money was rather a casual arrangement – there was no appointed treasurer. Robyn took the money for the first year and the balls were kept at her house. She brought them with her each Wednesday. Each woman also brought along a

“plate’ containing something for lunch when it was a “home game” and they were the host team.

The lunch break was held in the Ranger’s Cottage. The ranger at the time lived off-site but the kitchen had electricity and water and was available to use. The surfaces had to be checked for mouse droppings before being put to use. It was over lunch that the women could mix with the visitors from the opposing team and catch up on local chitchat.

For ‘away matches’ the women car-pooled, sharing travel to and from the courts where the game was held on that particular Wednesday.

Dress was strictly white, either a skirt and top or a ‘tennis dress’. If the day was a hot one, a man’s handkerchief was wetted and tied around the neck to keep cool.

The courts were adequate but not ideal and Gail Williams pressed the point with her husband who was on the local council. The following year a public meeting was held in the Balnarring Hall to re-establish the Balnarring Tennis Club and, soon after, new courts were built at the newly-opened recreation reserve in Bruce Street.

The premiership flag, won by the group of women, is still proudly on display in the Balnarring Tennis Club House.



MEMORIES OF FENTON HALL

*From the **Huntley** family*

(The Friends of Merricks Hall have invited people from the district to contribute their memories of Fenton Hall to be kept in an archive box.)

“These memories remind us of the reasons we would like to regenerate a community in Merricks North.”

I consulted my Huntley siblings and mainly we all remembered the annual Guy Fawkes Nights with a bonfire, fireworks (boys letting off penny bungers under the girls’ feet, BBQ and trestle tables of cakes, lucky dips. etc.

My sister remembered our mother telling a story about her and Dad’s wedding reception being held there in 1945. She said she was embarrassed because Dad made her wear a red velvet formal dress and pearls which she thought inappropriate. As it turned out, she was right and was very overdressed. They were presented with a radiator as a wedding gift which caused her further embarrassment as it resulted in numerous “blue” jokes and giggles.

She also recalled a fancy dress competition which she and I won, going as Peter Pan and Wendy. I would only have been about three, she was about eight. She said she remembers parading around, holding my hand and wishing she could have been a fairy or something more glamorous than looking like a little boy dressed in drab brown. She said I, as Wendy, had to just wear my nightie and that Mum had borrowed the Peter Pan costume from Mabel Brown who, at that time, lived in ‘Nonda Wonda’.

Another memory of Fenton Hall is riding our ponies around with Ceci and Eve Cairns, feeling sorry for the kids stuck inside at Sunday School.

These days Fenton Hall does have a lonely, neglected feel to it, stranded on the side of such a fast travelling, busy road. Back in the day though, when the constantly busy, albeit tenebrous, Merricks Post Office was on the corner opposite, and the road at that point was a country T-intersection, it felt more alive and incorporated into our daily lives.

LORRAINE COLE

by *Rick Daley* (9/2/2024)

Mary Lorraine Cole was commonly known as Lorraine Cole to her family and friends and fondly to employees and some associates as “Babe”

Lorraine was the younger daughter of Thomas Cole Jnr and Mary Elsworth Cole (Elsie). Tom and Elsie moved into “Larnoo” at Merricks after it was constructed in 1910.

Tom’s grandfather, (Thomas Cole Snr) first leased land at Merricks in 1874 before acquiring land and building what is now ‘Minto’ at Merricks for Tom’s father, George Cole. George cleared bushland to create farmland and commenced the long farming and community involvement of the Cole family at Merricks and in the surrounding areas.



Lorraine as a small child with her parents and older sister

George arranged for ‘Larnoo’ to be built after the wedding of Thomas Jr and Elsie.

I recall Elsie Cole telling me her of her early days at ‘Larnoo’ which is situated on a hill with panoramic views over Westernport Bay. Before trees grew and a garden was established the house and surrounds were exposed to strong winds from all directions. She recounted washing being blown off the line and seeing bushfires approaching from the north during the summer.

Sadly George Cole passed away at a young age meaning that young Tom and his brother Les were left with the responsibilities of further developing and managing the farm. Tom was 15 years of age when this occurred.

Settled at ‘Larnoo’ Tom and Elsie started a family, their elder daughter Phyllis being born in 1911. A few years later Lorraine was born completing the family. Both girls were educated by governesses on the property. Unfortunately, Tom also died at a relatively young age in 1938, and this resulted in responsibility for managing the property passing to Elsie, Phyllis and Lorraine supported by paid employees and Les, until he passed away in 1952. At the time of Tom’s death both girls were in their twenties.

The two girls had clear responsibilities. Phyllis was responsible for helping her mother in the house and tending to the flower and vegetable gardens and orchard as well as the house cows and chooks. Elsie Cole looked after the household and also did most of the administration necessary to keep the farm running. Lorraine and Phyllis assisted with this task later taking it over when their mother died in 1981.

Lorraine took over responsibility for managing the farm. Permanent farm hands were employed as well as a jackaroo. Lorraine further developed the enterprise. From around 1963 I spent most of my school holidays on the farm helping with various tasks. A number of children from Merricks Beach would visit the farm, particularly the shearing shed, when shearing of crutching were in progress and they were always warmly welcomed by Lorraine. In 1966 the family offered me the opportunity to become the jackaroo on the property. I commenced work there early in 1967 and worked there for the next four years. Initially I resided at 'Larnoo' with the family.

I always called both sisters, "Miss Cole". I always found Lorraine to be a very hard-working and fair employer. Having grown up on the farm she had assisted her father in various tasks and relied on diaries he, and later she, had kept to manage seasonal activities on the farm. She often told me stories about events that had occurred on and around the property. These included the establishment of an encampment of American soldiers on the property during World War 2 and the use of the Red Hill railway, which ran through the property, to transport stock to market from stockyards at Merricks Station until the line ceased operation. When I started full time employment on the property it was 1,800 acres in size with a further 200 acres at Shoreham. Lorraine managed both Southdown and Corriedale Sheep studs, maintaining all required registers. These breeds were crossed to produce fat lambs. There were thousands of sheep and also several hundred cattle. Annual shearing, even with fine weather, took three weeks.

Lorraine was a member of the committee which ran the annual Red Hill Show and every year would display stud sheep at that show. She was also a qualified wool classer and would class the entire clip with the Corriedale sheep producing fleeces of varying quality. Each year she would pick out several fleeces for showing at Red Hill and also at the Royal Melbourne Show. The large number of ribbons and trophies that adorned her bedroom and other areas of the homestead were testament to the quality of the stock and wool produced.

My recollection is that Lorraine was the foundation Secretary of the Peninsula Rural Landholders Association in which all the family were involved. The family were also staunch supporters of the Liberal Party and I recall a number of visits by Federal and State politicians to fund raising activities at 'Larnoo'.

Lorraine maintained a keen interest in the environment and was a keen birdwatcher. She was involved in several organisations associated with these interests.

As a member and keen supporter of the Melbourne Football Club she would attend several matches each year, driving her blue Morris Minor to Bittern Station to catch the train to Richmond to go to the MCG.

All stock work on the property was done on horseback and Lorraine was a skilled and competent horsewoman, her skills being most clearly demonstrated during the annual mustering of cattle. She rode a horse until quite late in her life.



*At Larnoo, on horseback.
Lorraine, far right. 1966*

The Coles often recounted stories of garden parties on the property when the girls were young. There was a tennis court in the garden and local friends and family would visit for tennis days and the latter would also come and stay in the house for holidays. Although I never heard Lorraine play the drums, I was told that she was a competent drummer and earlier in her life she had played in an orchestra at Mornington.

A combination of childhood health issue and her hard work on the farm meant that Lorraine began to experience poor health in the late 1970s. She maintained a slightly more passive role in managing the farm and following the death of Elsie in 1981 also assumed administrative responsibilities. Lorraine passed away on June 13th 1987 leaving Phyllis, supported by paid employees, to run the property. During her life Lorraine played a pivotal role in maintaining her family's commitment to keeping the family farm operating for as long as possible.



Lorraine with Phyllis 1981

PERSONAL MEMORIES OF MY COUSIN, LORRAINE COLE.

from Celia Sexton

Lorraine - so proud to host the Australian Ploughing Championships on paddocks at 'Larnoo' near the beach. The main thing I remember is the wonderful great draught horses that demonstrated the early ploughing methods. Very appropriate, as the Cole family, before the introduction of machinery, was much respected for the quality of their draught teams.

Ever interested in novel farming methods, she established an airstrip on a paddock down Merricks Beach Road.

Lorraine had a near incredible feel and understanding of the weather. She seemed to be able to predict not only when it would rain, but on which paddock.

The native grasses that grew on a different seasonal pattern she saw as a source of feed when the introduced grasses had little nutrition, an approach to farming that was considered somewhat strange, or even negligent. Even more than 30 years later, the land that I inherited has a very rich diversity of species.

Lorraine coming home from the Royal Melbourne Show with a miniature horse in the back of her Landrover, I think the first for the district.

Lorraine, beautifully dressed for a formal event, with dark brown arms, and a sharp line to white shoulders which very seldom saw the sun. The beach was for swimming, particularly with any children of family or friends or workers.

There was a family story that Merricks Beach traditionally had a men's end and a women's end. After a hard day's work, the custom was to ride the horses down to the beach for a swim, no thought of carrying bathers.

Another family story is about the dark days when invasion by Japan was considered imminent: One of the army officers camping on the land was being very condescending to Lorraine about how she needed protecting from the invaders. Lorraine responded that she knew what to do if the Japanese ships came into Westernport. She would shoot a bullock in each of the waterholes. The officer was so shocked that he never bothered her again.

SHEEP ON THE PENINSULA

*from a talk given by **Lorraine Cole** in 1985 (B.D.H.S. Archives)*

Apart from studs, of which there were many, sheep on the peninsula were mainly Crossbred or Corriedale ewes mated with Southdown, Ryland, Dorset or Border Leicester rams. They produce very good fat lambs and a valuable fleece of wool.

Merino sheep were rarely seen on the Peninsula – although king of wool sheep they do not produce good fat lambs and do not thrive in wet, cold conditions with heavy rich food.



Lorraine with her prize ram. 1958

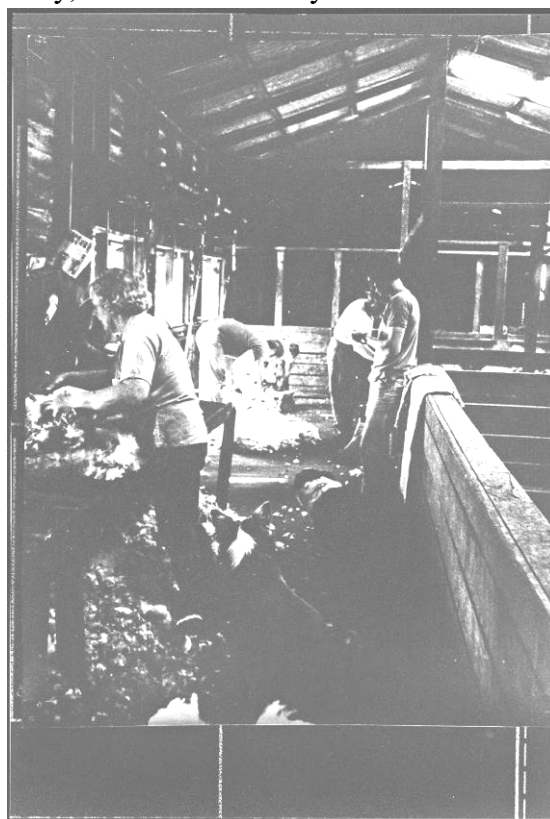
An old shearer told me that in the very early shearing days a man shorn five runs per day – one before breakfast. At present they shear four runs a day – each run is of two hours. In the early days of shearing the contractor inspected every man's pen of shorn sheep. If he considered that any sheep was not shorn up to standard, he marked that sheep with raddle and the shearer was not paid for it.

A shearer is paid double for any stud sheep that is shorn.

... Big shearing sheds installed their own machines. Small sheds engaged one or two shearers who would bring their own travelling plant. Sadly, now there are only about two sheds on the peninsula that would shear more than 1,000 sheep. The bigger properties all had their own sheep dips. Small flocks were brought to them. Dipping was compulsory. Travelling sheep on the roads were a very real danger to a 'clean' flock

as they might carry ticks and lice. These ruined the wool and were only eradicated by several dippings. In drought time big mobs of sheep (one or two thousand) would graze along the peninsula roads, coming from the north of Victoria and N.S.W. they lived comfortably on the roadsides for many months

In George Cole's day our wool clip of six bales went to Dromana by bullock team and thence by boat to Melbourne. Our bullock driver, Billy Gomm prided himself on driving his team down the main street at Dromana cracking his bullock whip to wake everyone up before breakfast.



c.1960 Lorraine at the sorting table,

My father's diary records on Nov.5th, 1917 Broughton and Taylor started shearing at £1/2/6 per 100. We still shear in November but at over \$100 per 100. Hand shears were used then and our average shearer would do 40 to 60 sheep a day. Now the average shearer may shear up to 200 per day. Our shearers Broughton and Connell shored for us for about 20 years. before that it was Taylor and Perrow. They drove a buggy from Mornington and stayed the week, sleeping in the men's quarters. They worked a five-and-a-half-day week. After their evening meal in Minto's old kitchen - it was a lovely old kitchen with smoked hams and flitches of bacon hanging from the ceiling - they went out and prepared their shears for the next day, first on the big grind stone (our George used to turn the handle for them) and then finished with an oil stone. We still have George who has been with us for over 50 years. He is in peaceful retirement now. Sometimes they would all play a game of cricket in Minto's big yard and sometimes Connell would bring his accordion with him, which was a delight to a very small girl. I was allowed to go to the shed every other afternoon. Connell was a very witty, entertaining and wild Irishman. His family were all pioneers of the Mornington district. He used to entertain one at smoko with tales of horse-breaking, pony rides, fights, washing for gold - stories of the early pioneers and of a wild and entertaining youth. He was very kind to a small girl and I loved him. We used machines in 1937. Many people had them earlier but Connell could not use them and my father waited until Connell's shearing days were over. Now shearing is a noisy, bustling business - do as many sheep as you can - and get away. Shearers travel long distances every day. I think the biggest difference is - Noise!! With hand shears only the click of the shears, a sheep bleating and an occasional dog bark, with general talk and gossip at smoko. Now, engine and machines drown out all else. Everyone rests at smoko after the feverish rush.

In 1917 we shored 836 sheep, in 10 days work, each man about 40 per day, sheep cut about 6lbs wool,

Now we shear 4,000 in 10 days in about 9 days' work; average about 150 per man, sheep cutting 12 lbs wool.

Until the advent of decimal currency all stud stock was sold in guineas - and part guineas – the extra shilling paid the agent's commission. In 1970 wool and sheep prices fell disastrously. There was a move to cattle. When prices recovered, people stayed with cattle as it was less work



It was always a busy life with sheep- shearing, dipping, lambing, culling and mating time, drenching, protecting the flocks from fly strike, attacks from dogs and always trying to provide good food and water no matter how dry the season. Growing crops for fattening and checking fences and sheep which often got cast on their backs when fat and with heavy fleeces.

Show award for the best fleece, non Merino. 1935

The work could not be done without our dogs – Border Collie or Kelpie – often crossbred. They work tirelessly, travelling many weary miles, sometimes becoming footsore with grass seeds or worn pads. In summer they needed constant attention as they would be heartbroken if left at home. I once had a wonderful little dog, “Sailor” who had very delicate feet. After taking a big mob of sheep to a far paddock Sailor liked to ride home perched on the horse's withers in front of me, held safe by one arm.

It is all much easier now with tractors, four-wheel drive vehicles and motor bikes. But it was a good life – and still is.

SCHOOL INSPECTOR'S REPORT

Conducted on a regular basis, the visit by the school inspector was often regarded with mixed feelings of trepidation and awe. It did not matter that the teacher might say to go about classwork as usual, the inspector's eye saw everything. The observations and assessment of the representative from the Education Department were noted in a special book – the Inspector's Register Book.

The Inspector's Register has the report written by William Hamilton when he visited Balnarring State School, #1698 in November, 1887. The teacher that year was Miss Amelia Hall who had taken over the role of head teacher at the beginning of the year.



The report, in copperplate writing, reads as follows :-

Number present 24.

Inspector's percentage 85.493

But for averages in the 3rd and 4th classes this would have been 90.740

Buildings, furniture and apparatus in a satisfactory state.

The time-table is satisfactory. I recommend that at least half an hour be taken from the time directed to writing in copybooks and given to the time directed to composition each week.

A school meeting should be at least two and a quarter hours in duration.

The classification is correct.

The programme is observed. Singing alone has not received attention.

Progress sufficient.

The school has passed a good examination. All the subjects have received careful attention.

The discipline is very good 24- 1 marks allotted.

The records are made up to date.

Teacher Miss Hall."

It is signed William. Hamilton

That year 29 pupils were enrolled at the school, ranging in age from two 6 -year- olds to two pupils who were 14 years of age. Six pupils were in the first grade, three in grade 2, eleven in grade 3, five in grade 4, two in grade 5 and the two in the sixth grade.

The subjects in which they were tested included arithmetic, reading, spelling, grammar, writing, rhyme (poetry), geography.

A different inspector visited the school in September, 1889.

He gave a percentage of 94.387. In a short report he commented that the school had done well considering the number in the upper classes, that it was the first examination in program and that the visit hadn't been expected until November.

The two upper classes to which the inspector referred, had eight pupils altogether that year whose ages ranged from 11 to 14 years. Two of them were in the sixth grade.

He gave 27/28 for discipline, noting that with the exception of the conduct of one boy, the children were well-behaved but that more attention should be paid to close drill.

*** A Reminder to those who have not yet re-joined:**

B.D.H.S. subscriptions are now due.

Thank you.

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