



Snippets

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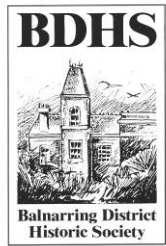
Balnarring and District Historical Society Inc.

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Editor: I. Hackett



LOST CHILD

"He's gone! I've lost my baby!"
A startled mother cries,
My pretty little baby
With laughing eyes."

Gus Hansen heard the crying,
Dozing in his chair,
He's searching for her baby
Everywhere.

The call's been sent to Somers,
They've heard it in the Camp -
Eighty Air-Force men come marching
Tramp, tramp, tramp.

They've lined along the creek bed
Ten paces each apart,
Old Gus, he watched then wading
With aching heart.

But see! They're through the rushes,
They're calling each to each,
They're in the tea-tree working
Toward the beach.

There's a-shouting round by Palmer's
Where reef breakers foam -
They've found the twelve-months baby
A mile from home.

Gus roars the happy tidings,
"They've got him, safe and sound."
The mother sinks a-swooning
On the ground.

They're bringing in her baby,
She hears his happy cries,
Her pretty little baby
With laughing eyes.

This poem, penned by E.B. Howells writing under his pen-name, *Holiday Maker*, appears in at least one of his many anthologies. Collections of his verse written throughout the 1940s, relate to incidents that happened at Tulum (Balnarring Beach). The child was Ian Ball, a three-year-old toddler who wandered off on his own adventure. When she realized he was missing his worried mother came to her friend, Gwen Butt, for help. Gwen owned the Cheero Tearooms and store and she promptly called the Air Force Base at Somers. A truck arrived soon after carrying a group of Air Force trainees who, with local helpers, carried out a thorough search of the area.

The houses that made up the village of Tulum were, at that time, clustered around the store and the beachfront near Hansen's Lane. The creek formed a natural boundary on the north side of the small community. There were stands of dense ti-tree along the foreshore and beyond MasonSmith Street, then called Government Road, was an area known as the Sand Paddocks. This was a flat area covered mostly with knee-high bracken that stretched as far as Palmer's Hill.

The men spread out to search, especially along the banks of the creek. Should someone find the child, he was instructed to notify the others with the call "Coo-ee!" An hour passed and darkness was approaching before the welcome cry "Coo-ee!" was heard and passed along. The small boy had been found in the bracken not far from the base of Palmer's Hill, a good mile from the store where his anxious parents were waiting.

Many years later, Ian Ball was browsing in a second-hand bookshop and came across a small book of verse about Balnarring. Riffing through the pages he noticed the poem, 'Lost Child,' read it and recognized the story of his boyhood escapade.

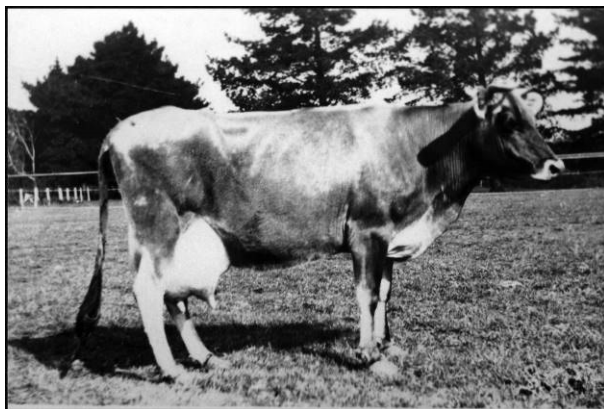
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A CREAMERY FOR BALNARRING?

(Information from contemporary local newspapers via Trove and from the Flinders District Historical Society)

In the 1890s creameries, where cream could be separated from whole milk for the production of butter, were being set up throughout Australia wherever dairy cattle were popular. It was believed that the butter trade could equal the wool trade as a major export.

A meeting was held at the school in Shoreham in October, 1893 to explore the possibility of setting up a creamery at Balnarring or Shoreham. The parent company was the newly-founded Mornington Butter Factory which was gauging interest from surrounding dairying communities before setting up a factory. Enthusiasm for the venture was high. The parent company sought two things. The first was enough people willing to purchase shares to cover the cost of setting up the building and machinery needed. The second was a guaranteed supply of milk. There were already a number of dairies in the area and it was thought the milk supply was assured. Milk



would be taken to the creamery, the cream separated and the skim milk returned to the supplier.

Many thought the factory could also embrace not only butter and cheese but also ham and bacon curing and the preservation of fish, rabbits, fruits and vegetables.

A committee was appointed with two representatives from each locality.

Discussions continued throughout 1894 and the following year Shoreham man, Mr. Riley, donated a ½ acre of land immediately adjoining Stony Creek for a creamery. The new creamery at Shoreham went ahead and was officially opened on 24th October, 1897. Mr Downward M.L.A. who opened the creamery praised the co-operation between the land owner and pastoralists. The surrounding land was

splendid pastoral land which should make the venture a successful and profitable one. Newspaper reports stated the creamery promised to be the best on the Peninsula.



photo: courtesy Flinders District Historical Society

Meantime a site for the Mornington Butter Factory was chosen and work began on its construction. The site was in Boundary Road, now Derrill Road in Moorooduc. The Boneo community also embraced the proposal, land was donated and 400 shares sold to guarantee the construction of a creamery in Boneo. Cream would be delivered from the creameries to the central butter factory twice a week and milk could also be received at the butter factory and separated there.

Balnarring was still hopeful of having its own creamery. In 1896 the directors of the Butter Factory informed the Balnarring community it would “gladly welcome any opportunity to extend the company’s business provided the residents could come up with the money to cover the cost of the creamery building and plant”. The butter being produced from the area was of excellent quality according to reports from the Melbourne market and from London.

However, the creamery in Balnarring was not to be.

In 1900 Balnarring was still pressing the Butter company. Dairy farmers promised a milk supply from at least 136 cows and a subscription in shares covered about two-thirds the cost of establishing a creamery. Again the Butter Company gave the proposal “full consideration”. It was noted that during that year there had been an increased output from the factory and that satisfactory prices had been obtained both in London and locally. But despite this it was felt Balnarring as a district could not guarantee a sufficient supply of milk to make a creamery profitable.

Shoreham had run into trouble in September 1898 when boiler failure caused 23 days of lost production. The boiler that had been installed was a second-hand one and had not been inspected before installation. Moreover, it was found that the water from Stony Creek which was used to supply power for the creamery's machinery, contained salt and other minerals "injurious to ironwork". A new boiler was needed. It was also decided to build a dam for future water supply. This additional cost cut into the profits of the company.

By 1902 the butter factory had a total output of 55,711 pounds of butter of which 6.5 tons was exported to London and 18.5 tons was sold locally. The milk suppliers were getting 3d (three pence) per gallon, a figure some thought unsatisfactory. They asked for an increase to 5d but this was turned down.

The creamery and the more central butter factory at Moorooduc did well for a number of seasons until a spell of dry weather affected the milk supply. In 1906 profit from the factory had dropped from £1,678 to £1,012. It was decided to close the Shoreham creamery for the months of April, May, June, July and August. The company hoped to restart in September.

At the annual meeting of the Mornington Butter factory in 1908 it was reported that the Factory would close. The dry season and subsequent scarcity of grass had had a paralyzing effect on the dairy industry. It would not re-open until supplies were guaranteed.

Unfortunately, dry seasons continued to make butter production unprofitable and the butter factory and creameries supplying it did not re-open.

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THREE SOLDIER SONS

(Information from "Three Names on an Honour Board" by Jack Cavanagh.)

At the Anzac Day service held at Balnarring a prize is given to a pupil from each of the two schools in the district for their winning essay on what Anzac Day means to them. It is known as the John Cavanagh Award in honour of the 22-year-old young soldier from Balnarring who died in France in 1916 during World War 1. (The story of John Cavanagh is told in volume 4 of Balnarring Byways and Memories.)

John wasn't the only son in the Cavanagh household who enlisted to fight in the Great War.

His brother, William (Bill) had enlisted one month before John signed up. After the war had broken out and the call had reached Australia for young men to fight for Britain, the two had discussed the issue with their parents and persuaded them to sign the necessary consent form as neither boy was yet twenty-one years of age. Bill enlisted in June, 1915 and became a member of the 22nd Infantry Battalion. He did basic training in Seymour before sailing for England where he was hospitalised firstly with measles, which had been rife on the troop ship, then jaundice.

After his recovery he was sent to France where he took part in frontline trench warfare. He was at Pozière in northern France when, in 1916, he was exposed to gas shelling by the German army. Shortly afterwards he received a gunshot wound to the thigh. After initial treatment Bill was sent back to a hospital in England and was finally repatriated in February, 1917. Although unfit for active duty, Bill joined the Australian Medical Corps in Melbourne and served with them until he requested discharge in December, 1918,

Younger brother James (Jim) the middle son in the family of five boys, was eager to join his older brothers and also fight for King and Country but his parents refused to sign his enlistment papers. He had been fifteen years old when his brothers enlisted and, like them, had left school when he turned fourteen to become a farm labourer. Jim turned sixteen in October and pleaded with his parents to let him sign up. He threatened to run off and enlist and eventually persuaded his parents to sign the necessary form. He enlisted on March 13, 1916, giving his age as 22 years and 6 months on the enlistment forms. Taller than either of his brothers, Jim must have looked older than his actual years for he was accepted without question and placed with the 2nd Pioneers, AIF. Basic training was done at Broadmeadows before he left Melbourne for England on 6th June, 1916. By September the lad was in France.

In April, 1917 Jim's unit was in Bouzincourt in Northern France taking part in salvage work when he accidentally injured his left foot and face which put him in hospital. An enquiry into the incident was held and found the "Soldier not to blame". After eight days he returned to duty. His unit was sent to the trenches at the front line where one of the tasks required was to lay duckboards so that provisions could be brought up to the trenches. This also helped to speed up the evacuation of wounded soldiers. Mud was everywhere. and they were continually under bombardment. Jim was hospitalised in June suffering from trench fever, a disease spread by lice in the close confines of the trenches but he was able to rejoin his unit at the end of July

Shortly after his 17th birthday Jim was hit by shrapnel when a shell exploded close by. One large piece of shrapnel almost completely severed his leg. Stretcher bearers passed him by, considering he would not live but when they found him still alive the next morning, he was taken to a field hospital and ultimately to the hospital in Boulogne where the doctors managed to save his leg. After almost four months at Boulogne Jim was sent back to a hospital in England and, as soon as he was fit enough, repatriated to Australia. The ship docked in Melbourne on 26th May, 1918 and Jim was transferred to the Caulfield Repatriation Hospital where he spent about six months before being discharged on 13th November as being medically unfit due to the gunshot wound to his leg.



Whilst at the Caulfield hospital Jim went AWOL. "He was getting around quite well with the aid of a walking stick. One day he felt so well and without caring caught a train to Bittern and managed to get taken to Balnarring to be with his family and friends to enjoy home cooked meals and to sleep on a soft bed." [Jack Cavanagh] Jim was riled when he was docked three days' pay and disappointed by what he thought was unfair treatment after all he had been through.

On discharge Jim was just one month past his 19th birthday.

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"MISERY FARM"

"Misery Farm" stood at the 'bottom' of the school yard.

It was a 'tree house' built about 1929 or 1930 by some of the pupils at the Balnarring State School.



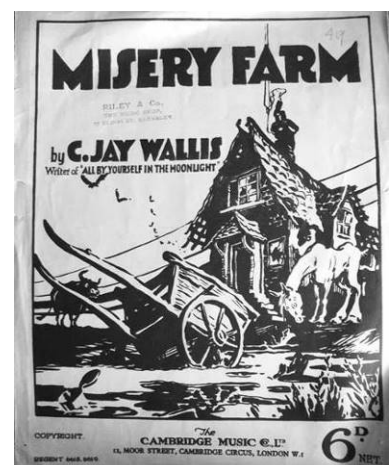
The tree-house had a floor, walls and a roof and may have been built around an existing tree.

Hec Waldron, who attended the school from 1925 until 1931, mentioned it whilst writing of his schooldays. He described how the boys used to cut tea-tree that grew along the roadside and haul it to school to make the walls and roof. The saplings for the floor were cut in the school yard itself.

The boys were obviously proud of their finished edifice and gave it the name "Misery Farm".

This name echoed the title of a song that was popular at the time. Its tune was a foxtrot, in the style of the music of the Dance Bands and American jazz. The lyrics of the song began:

*We've got a farm, a barn of a farm,
Right in the middle of a swamp.
There ain't any charm in our little farm
Right in the middle of the swamp.
Nothing's grown since the day we came
Misery Farm is our farm's name . . .*



Despite its name the curious structure must have given the children many hours of fun both while they were making it and later when acting out their adventures in its shelter.

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LAPSED CLAIM OVER 'TULUM LODGE'

(Information from several contemporary newspapers - 1954, -including the 'Adelaide News' and Perth's 'Daily News'.)

The guest-house, 'Tulum Lodge', was built c 1951 on the site of a previous store built in 1916 and run by the Stone family to cater for the summer holiday-makers at Balnarring Beach.

During the years of the Second World War business had declined whereas that of the nearby Cheero Café had increased under the ownership of Gwen Neville, later Mrs Gwen Butt. After the war Gwen bought the old store from the Stones, had it demolished and a guest-house was built there instead. It was anticipated that a guest-house would do well as the beach was a very popular area. A couple of cabins that could be rented had stood behind the Cheero Café and a number of holiday houses were available to rent but there was no guest-house where visitors could stay.



The guest house, 'Tulum Lodge'

After Gwen Butt moved to Warrandyte she needed someone to run 'Tulum Lodge' for her. An advertisement was placed in newspapers through the real estate firm H.W. Iverson whose agent was Jack Iverson. This was answered by Beryl Briginshaw who duly signed a three-year lease for £49/6/- (forty -nine pounds, six shillings) per

month, dating from 7th October, 1952. Mrs Briginshaw moved in and took charge of the guest-house, managing it over the summer holiday period for 1952-3.



However, in April 1953, dissatisfied and disillusioned after just one holiday season, she sued Jack Iverson and Gwen Butt, seeking £700 in damages. She had been led to believe, from the advertisement, that the Christmas takings would be in excess of £1,000. They had fallen well short of this amount.

She sought the rescission of the agreement, the repayment of £289/18/- rent and £700 damages.

Jack Iverson, the agent, was an Australian cricketer who had played five Test matches in the 1950 - 51 series against England. A spin bowler Jack had a unique 'bent finger' grip that baffled the batsmen. His average for the series was 21 wickets for 15 runs apiece but his cricket career was short-lived for a number of reasons. Iverson's family had a city real estate business, and Jack retired from sport to help his father with the business. Was it his involvement that made the case newsworthy interstate?

'Daily News', Perth. 11th March, 1954

The case did not come to court. Mrs Briginshaw withdrew her allegations and the matter was settled out of court.

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