



Snippets

from our collection

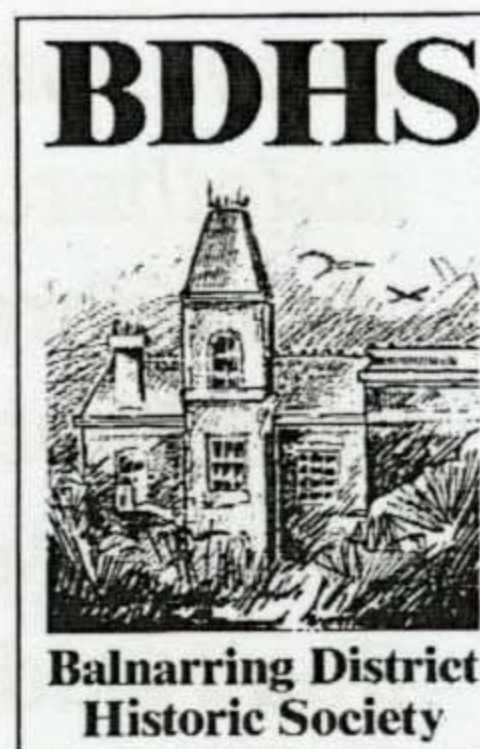
Balnarring and District Historical Society Inc.

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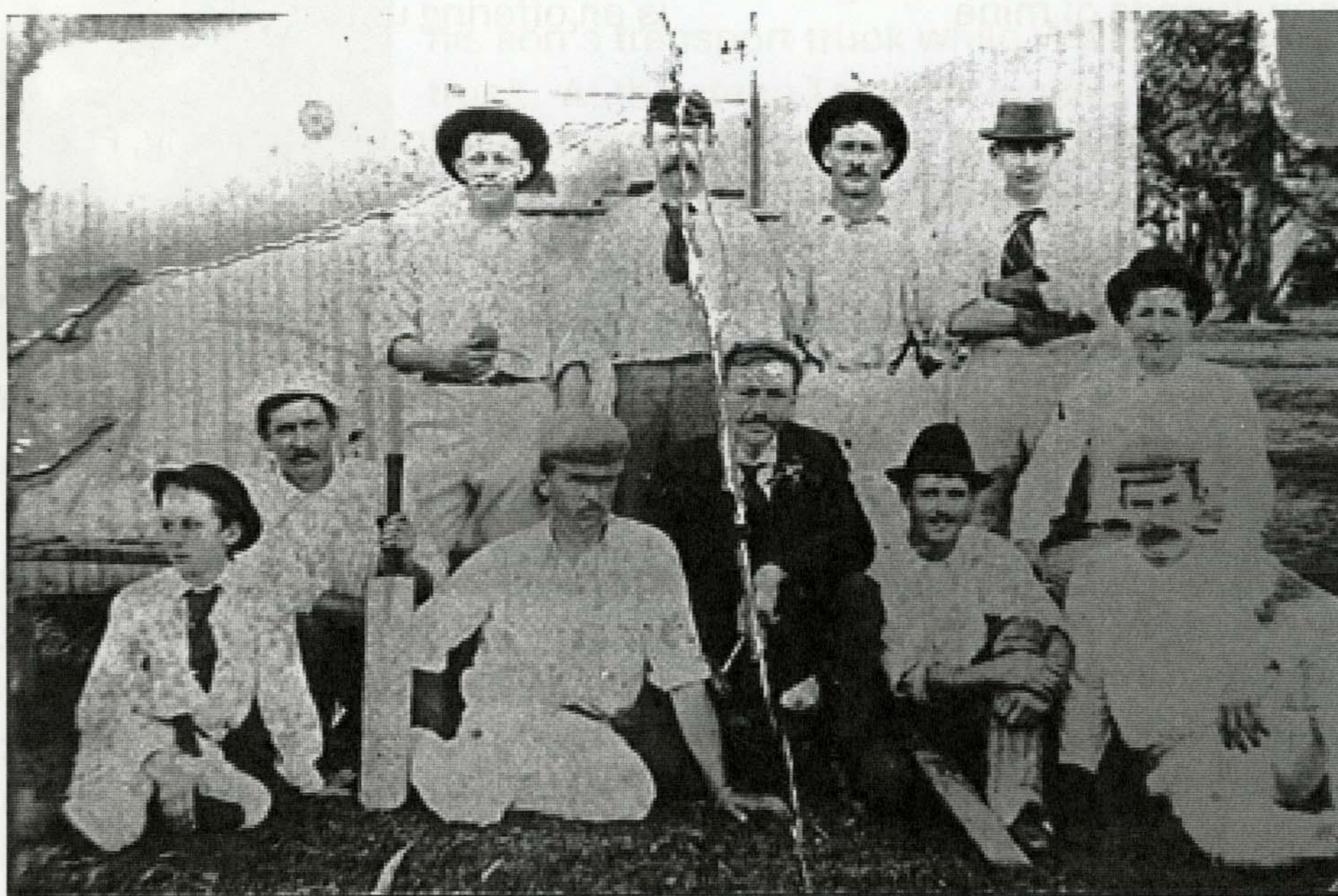
Editor: I. Hackett



Fair play

In March, 1890 a report from Flinders indicated that, over the weekend of March 15th and 16th, a number of fires had broken out in the district. Balnarring was the scene of the most serious outbreak. Fanned by a hot north wind, fire had taken hold in the undergrowth bordering Merricks Creek and had destroyed outbuildings and a haystack on the Downward property through which the creek flowed. The fire had then crossed the main road, destroying the bridge and continued to burn as far as the seashore at Tulum (Balnarring Beach). The day was a Saturday and a number of the Balnarring men were away playing cricket against the Flinders team. There was no fire brigade at the time just the local men who turned out with beaters, rakes, wet bags, shovels, whatever they could find to fight the fire.

It must have been reported in the newspaper that the game had been won by Balnarring. This drew a letter of protest to the editor of the Mornington Standard that was published on 29th March. The writer described the events of the match.



The game had *not* been won by Balnarring but had unfolded in the following way:

'Balnarring did not win; neither did Flinders. While the game was progressing the Balnarring men kept going away to the bushfires to which, of course, Flinders made no objection.'

When Flinders in their 2nd innings compiled 42 runs for 3 wickets, several of the Balnarring team expressed a wish to leave for the fires. After the captains had consulted together it was then decided that the game be discontinued and that the match be considered a draw. On this mutual understanding Flinders left the ground. Had Flinders strictly carried on the game they must have won because Balnarring then only had about five men left. They would have defeated the club in a very hollow fashion'

The letter was signed 'Fair Play'.

CHARLES CROW

*(from BDHS archives, Poems of a Peninsula Pioneer – Henry Tuck 1845 – 1930) F D H S
and contemporary newspapers)*

A Christmas Tribute

Health to you Friend Crow
I wish that you were here.
To you a Happy Christmas
And a prosperous New Year.
I knew your sterling worth
In days of Auld Lang Syne
By your kindness to an aged pair
Who were bosom friends of mine

I am glad I told my friend
What I thought that you were then:
Long years have proved you are
The whitest of white men.
They say at times you preach
But you practice what is good.
That is the sermon which we want,
By all well understood

Perhaps more kindness would be shown
By mortals here below
If man but only knew the balm
Which doth from kindness flow
I fain would tread the path
Thus far you've nobly trod.
Each generous act to others done
Is an offering unto God.

I have long time been ailing, Friend,
And I feel I soon may go
But ere I cross the mystic range
I greet you, Charlie Crow,
For kindness past and present
The privilege now I claim
To render thanks to you and yours
In Lockwoods, Tucks and Cleeves
name.

Peninsula pioneer and 'bush poet', Henry Tuck penned these lines and sent the verse to his friend, Charlie Crow. The poem is undated but Henry mentions that he is ailing and 'may soon' go. His death occurred in 1930.

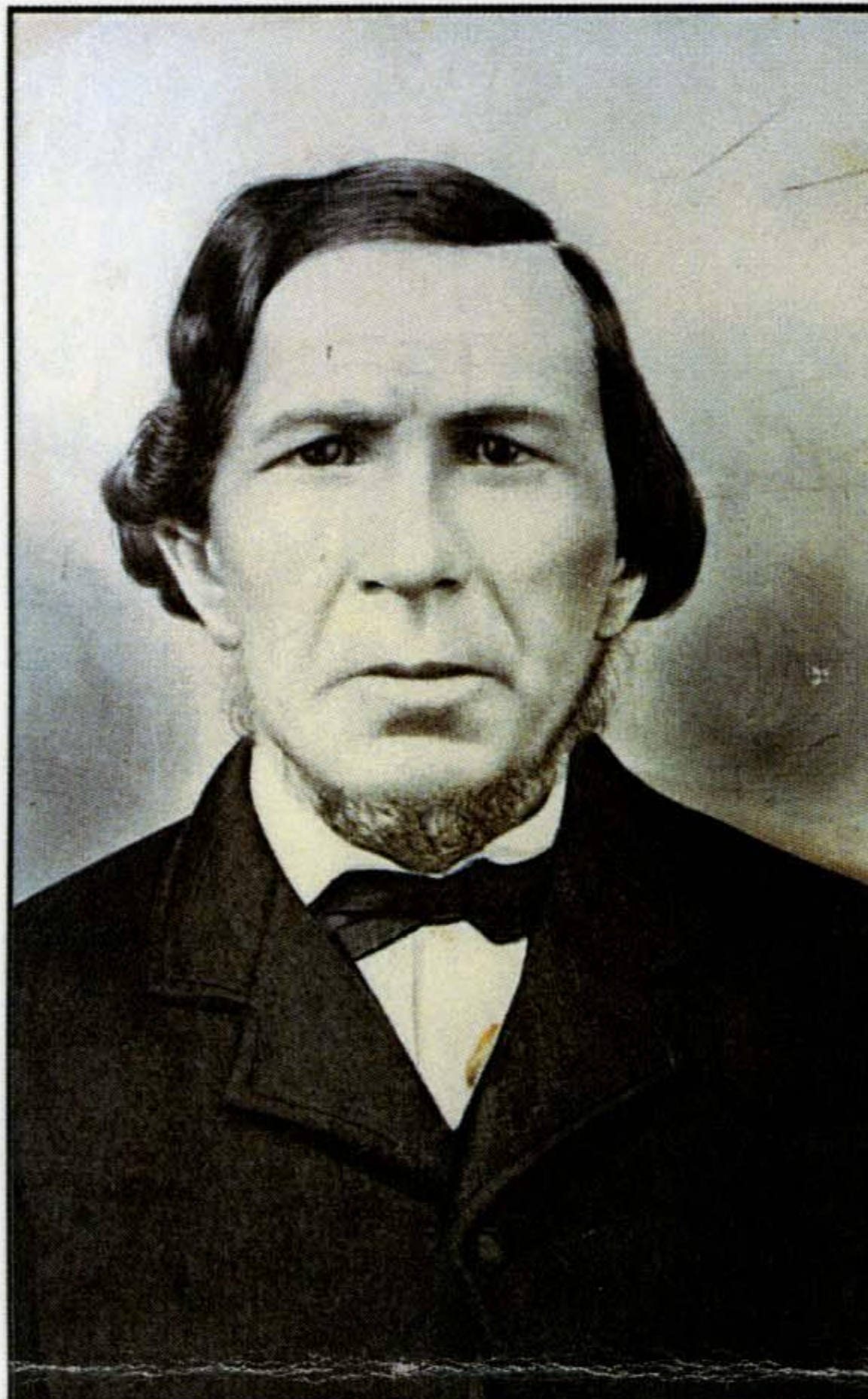
Henry Tuck's father, also Henry, had first squatted at Manton's Creek Run before purchasing some of the land of his pre-emptive right and gradually increasing his holding. His sons built their own homes on different sections of this land. Henry, the fifth son had married in 1877 and established his home, 'Mantonville' in Flinders.

Charles Crow farmed 100 acres at Merricks on the north east corner of the main road to Flinders and what was known locally as the old Blazed Track (now Point Leo Road). The Crows kept a small dairy herd. He was also contracted as a road worker for the shire.

Crow's parents, William and Mary, had met on board the ship that was bringing them to Australia and had married in their new country. Charles, their second son, had been born at Yandoit. He married Alice Bogers in Bendigo and in the early years of the 20th century he brought his family to Merricks

Charlie was a devout man which led him to become a lay preacher for the Methodist church on the Mornington circuit. It has been recorded that he would walk from his farm on Flinders Road to Red Hill where he took the morning service then, after dinner, he would walk to Dromana and take the 7.00 p.m. service there before walking home again to Merricks.

Not only did he preach of good deeds and a righteous way of living but, according to Henry Tuck, he practiced his convictions, the 'whitest of white men'. In other words, he was loyal, steadfast and reliable; virtues Tuck admired.



Charles Crow

Crow died in 1938 at the age of sixty-nine or seventy. He was involved in a horrific road accident on Point Nepean Road, just to the north of Mornington. Crow's son, William was a carrier and the two men were returning in William's transport truck after having picked up a heavy load. The truck had broken down near Gardenvale and a tow truck from Mornington had been engaged to tow the broken-down truck back to Mornington. Charlie was behind the wheel of his son's transport truck while William was riding in the tow truck. At the steep Tanti Hill incline, the brakes on the truck being towed failed to grip. The vehicle ran into the tow truck and the tow chain wrapped itself around the wheel of the towed vehicle. Both trucks slewed across the road and the truck being towed hit the kerbing twice and overturned.

Crow died from the injuries received in the accident.

Newspaper reports differ as to what actually occurred. One report states he jumped from the truck when he saw an accident was inevitable and hit his head on the concrete kerb, dying instantly. Another paper reports that he was crushed by the weight of the overturned truck.

At the coroner's inquest the reason given for his death was 'misadventure'.

Charlie Crowe was buried at the cemetery in Crib Point.

SHEARING – MY FIRST JOB AFTER THE NAVY

by **Wes Wade**

(from Wes' "Memoirs", held in the BDHS archives)

After my demob. from the navy in early September, 1948, my first job was with Ken Boadle to help with the shearing at 'Korbanui'. It was only for about a month but it was full of surprises about life in a shearing shed. Everything about the running of a shed in its most important part of the year is TRADITIONAL – everything runs by a system.

The outside staff need to keep the CATCHING PEN full of dry sheep. Shearers will not shear wet sheep – they would rather go on strike – so the weather plays a big part with sheep kept under temporary shelter for days at a time – and sheep don't like that.

Korbanui had four stands, so it had four catching pens for the four shearers. A PICKER-UP was in constant attendance and his job was to THROW a fleece onto the table for the PIECE-PICKERS to remove undue burrs and foreign bodies from the fleece. I was a piece-picker – two pickers to the table.

The SWEEPER UP quickly swept around the shearer with the straw broom.

THE CLASSER inspected the wool on the table at the same time looping it into loose folds to place in its specified bin. Every fleece has a particular grade or characteristic which determines its selling price. When a bin of a certain fleece was full, it was pressed into a large hessian bale and marked accordingly.

SMOKO times were welcome periods of silent machinery, loads of billy tea and homemade food and much banter. It was there I first met Norm Richardson – the layer of stone walls. He was clothed in an old oily gear and was wearing the latest in footwear - sugar bags wrapped around his feet and tied with hay-band.

(Wes Wade and his wife, Jean, were residents of Somers for a number of years. Wes, a builder by trade, tried his hand at many jobs, as did Jean. Both were very involved in community activities. He wrote his Memoirs of Somers, from which this description of his first job as a civilian has been taken.)

TEA-TREE or TI-TREE

In 1929 an article appeared in the Queenslander, a Brisbane newspaper, posing a question about spelling. What was the correct spelling for the common name of a number of trees belonging to the genera *Melaleuca* and *Leptospermum*. Should it be Tea-Tree or Ti-tree? The writer states it is a controversy that comes up from time to time in the press and had recently reared up again when a full page photo had appeared in the paper with the caption, "Tea-trees", that had been questioned from several quarters.

The writer quotes an 1896, dictionary edited by Mr Edward Morris (M.A. Oxon), who was professor of English, French and German at the University of Melbourne. Morris had devoted six columns in his reference to the question.

The entry opens *"The tea-tree. (very frequently but erroneously spelt ti-tree, and occasionally more ridiculously still, "ti-tri (q.v)" . . . A name given to several species of trees whose leaves were used by Captain Cook's sailors, by escaped convicts and by early settlers as a ready substitute for the leaves of the Chinese Tea- Plant. . . .*

The spelling used in the earliest references was invariably Tea-tree.

The alternate spelling Ti-Tree, he pointed out, did not appear until 1881. That spelling occurred in a publication "Bush Life in Queensland" by A.C. Grant and two years later in a poem by C. Harpur: *'Why roar the bull-frogs in the ti-tree marsh?'*

When the dictionary was written, the two spellings were both in use, with botanists using the former while the second form, which was growing in popularity, appeared in newspapers and other popular reading matter.

The writer laments that the popular form will *'become grafted on the language and find its way into dictionaries with the original and correct spelling losing ground'*.

Almost one hundred years on and the pendulum has swung back. The spelling 'Tea-tree' has preference over 'Ti-tree' although both forms are still in use and both are listed in the Macquarie dictionary. As was the usage when the older dictionary was written, botanical books and those with a science leaning prefer the 'correct' spelling Tea-tree.

MEMORIES OF COOLART

by **Peter Roffey**

Thomas and Getrude Luxton bought the Coolart property in 1937 and it remained in Luxton ownership until 1977. Tom was a remarkable man with a remarkable vision. An ardent naturalist, he wanted to create a bird sanctuary at Coolart, turning the small lagoon and wetlands area into a world class refuge for waterfowl. He was a businessman of repute, a director of the McEwans hardware chain that had a number of stores throughout Victoria...

But Tom was also a family man with children and grandchildren. Coolart would become home to his younger daughter, Margaret and her family. Margaret and John Roffey had two young children, Peter and Jocelyn, who share many memories of their grandparents. Peter writes:

Our grandparents were known to family members as Mamma and Babba, They called each other Gurty and Tom.

They owned black Scottish Terriers referred to as 'Scotties'. The dogs' names were Connie, Bonnie and Scotty. They also had a dachshund named Michael. Michael unfortunately took a fancy to attacking Mamma's hens.

(Gertrude Luxton kept two hundred laying hens whose eggs were sent to Melbourne.)

Jocelyn and I had a corgi named Twinkies which met with an untimely end. We were collecting tadpoles at the drain at the front gate on Sandy Point Road and she was hit by a car.

Mamma's hens were let out around midday to free range and the slide on the door was closed off in the evening. She also had a glasshouse for plants and a large aviary for my Mum's budgerigars to nest in. (Sorry for letting your white one out, Joss)

The dining table was brought from their home, 'Chilterns' in Malvern when Babba and Mamma moved to Coolart. It was a large table that Mamma had cut in half and converted to an extension table. It had three leaves which could be inserted to give the original size. It was placed in the dining room with a magnificent leadlight lamp positioned over the centre. The lamp had shapes of fruit on it that were made of concave glass. Mamma sat at the pantry end and Babba sat opposite as head of the table. Both sat on carver chairs (i.e. a dining chair with arms). The seats of the all the chairs were tapestry which had been crafted by Mamma.

I remember the table as a very important piece of furniture. It was in fact the heart of the family. It was the place where we connected, talked and shared our lives with the people that mattered most to us. I remember as a child, when children were seen and not heard, when if you didn't sit up straight Babba would lovingly assist you by running his knuckles down your back so you would grow up straight and tall.

Breakfast was at a set time (I think 7.00 a.m.) and the ABC news music would play 'Majestic Fanfare on the radio. Towards the end of breakfast, he would get an apple and take his pocket knife out of his trousers and cut a thin slice off. Then as we watched in anticipation, he would ask us what shape of animal we wanted him to carve out of the slice of apple. Once informed he would carve out an animal and give us his masterpiece to eat. They all looked similar but my sister and I would have a slight concern as to what the pocket knife may have been used for around the farm on the previous day. Sometimes at the end of breakfast he would tell us he was saving his bread for Tony. We wondered who Tony was. Then one day he said he would introduce me to Tony. We walked down to the lagoon and went down to his favourite resting place, a bench chair at the end of the walkway that goes out to the lagoon from the road leading up to the shearing shed. We sat and watched the ducks and waited; then Tony appeared. Babba threw the bread out to him. It was his pet eel. It was great to have a grandad with a pet eel!

As far as being called for lunch, I do recall the cow bell, which I still have, being rung if we were being called in from some part of the garden. If we were inside, the dinner bell would be rung.

Black and white television was introduced in the 50s with cricket, tennis and VFL if Melbourne was beating Collingwood.

We can only remember the phonograph being played when our grandparents had people around for a party. (*The phonograph was recently donated to Coolart and is again part of the furnishings to be seen in the homestead.*)

Jocelyn and I would peak down from upstairs through the bannisters, running for bed if we thought someone was coming. Sir Arthur Sims (N.Z.) sometimes stayed and we called him the Grrrr man as he would creep up the stairs and make a sound like a bear to scare us to bed. It worked.

Other memories. Oh yes, I remember having to crawl under the shearing shed to rake out sheep manure and going to Balnarring Beach to collect seaweed all to put around the fruit trees in the orchard.

Babba would drive around the paddocks and ask me to hop out and cut off random Scotch thistles using his pocket knife. As I grew older, he paid me money for every 100 thistles I hoed out.

Joss and I would climb up in the middle of the cypress hedge (no longer there) and sit up top. Then try to run along the top of the cypress hedge which was no small task.

Joss loved horses. At one stage she couldn't ride them so she put a saddle on the drive hedge and practiced on that. I swear 60 years later you can still see the dip in the hedge.



'Babba'

*Jocelyn, with her parents,
John and Margaret Roffey*



*'Mamma' in the garden
with Carlos, the Amazon
parrot*

(Photos from the Luxton family collection)

BALNARRING LADIES PROBUS CLUB

2012⁷

(from the B.D.H.S. archives)

In April 1922, twenty-four women met together in the Balnarring Hall for what was to be the final meeting of the Balnarring Ladies' Probus Club. The meeting was described as a happy meeting, with lots of talk, a lovely morning tea and shared gifts. Promises were made among friends to continue to meet up regularly and maintain the friendships formed over the years.

The women at that final meeting were:

Dawn Barclay	Margaret Johnson	Melva Patterson
Evelyne Cumming	Eileen Keith	Adele Piper
Beverley Fiske	Kaye Kennedy	Barbara Rice
Jean Gibbs	Renata Lusnasts	Joan Row
Joan Goode	Winn McLoughlin	Rosalind Snelling
Margaret Hindson	Mary Mitcham	Joan Williams
Roberta Hyams	Margaret O'Donnell	Norma MC Pherson
Judy Jeeves	Suzanne Okane	Alexia Martyn

The club had first formed twenty-five years earlier. The Probus movement, gatherings of retired people of similar circumstances and interests who wished to make new friends, expand their knowledge and maintain mental stimulus during retirement, had first formed in the United Kingdom in the 1960s and had spread to New Zealand and Australia by the mid to late 1970s. The clubs were local to a town or district and were quite often sponsored by Rotary. The various clubs that formed usually met once a month to listen to a guest speaker or participate in a shared and stimulating activity.

Some of the clubs were all-men's groups, some were all women's and some were mixed with men and women meeting together to share activities. Probus clubs in this district were quick to be established. Membership was by nomination and numbers had to be capped such were the clubs' popularity. Balnarring had a men's group and a mixed group while Somers had a very active Ladies Probus Club with a long waiting list of women who wanted to join.

In 1997 the Rotary Club of Hastings became aware of the situation and wrote individual letters to each of the women on the waiting list, asking if they would like to form another Probus Club in Balnarring. The Rotary Convenor of the Hastings Club, Dennis Aylward, invited 'interested ladies' to come along to a meeting on Wednesday, February 26th in the Balnarring Hall. Dennis Aylward chaired that meeting and outlined what Probus was and the service these groups provided to a community. He was followed by speakers from other nearby Probus clubs who told of their club's activities and promised support for this new Club.

Twenty-one women were present at that meeting and, after a standard constitution was read aloud, it was moved and seconded that a new club be formed. Meetings were to take place on the fourth Wednesday of each month from 10.00 a.m. until noon in the Senior Citizens Room in the Balnarring Hall. A Management Committee was duly elected with President - Ada Inch; Vice-president - Elsa Boyes; Secretary - Betty Broadbent and Treasurer - Marjorie Merrick. Two additional Committee members were nominated - Mary Hart-Davies and Margaret Hindson. Annual dues were set at \$15 per

year. The name had been selected to be the Ladies Probus Club of Balnarring but this was changed to Balnarring Ladies Probus Club on advice from the rotary authority. The new club was granted incorporation on 19th September, 1997.

The new Probus Club enjoyed success and numbers increased. The range of activities and interests offered also increased. The group reached out to women in the community by advertising their presence in the community newsletter, The Bridge and a newsletter was circulated to keep members up-to-date with events. The activities offered expanded over the years to include film, shopping trips, cards, scrabble, books. The guest speakers covered a wide range of topics, opening up new horizons and providing stimulating discussion among the women present.

Then came Covid. The few years of fear, uncertainty and lockdowns at the beginning of 2020 and into 2021 saw a drop in the number of people attending the meetings and outings. Finally a decision had to be made and a vote was taken to wind up the club.

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