

Western Historian

December
2021
No. 233

Newsletter of the

Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies Inc.

A0020504K

Societies cost — [Print or PDF, included in annual fee] \$30.00

Individual Subscribers \$15.00

Editor: Robin Schlichting Parker
robinparker81@hotmail.com



December 2021 W.V.A.H.S. Newsletter

- Page 2. President's Report.
Page 3. History comes to life at Stawell.
Page 4-5. Family history — two views.
Page 6. From high treason to settler.
Page 7. Minyip & District Historical Society Inc.
— History books for sale.
Page 7. Mrs Jane Frances Robinson
— Dimboola swimming instructor
Page 8. Africans arrived on the First Fleet in 1788.
Page 9-10. Ercildoune Homestead and the Learmonth brothers
family history.
Page 11. Thomas Banks: (1867-1919)
— Maryborough born football champion.
Page 12. Carisbrook Historical Society Bluestone Exhibition
March 12-13, 2022.

**Southern, Wimmera,
Midlands &
Executive
zone meetings
postponed until
2022 AGM
due to Covid-19**

**Due to recent surgery this will be my last newsletter.
I would like to welcome on board Craig Proctor
of Mortlake and wish him all the best with future
newsletters.**

regards Robin S. Parker

**Please address all
enquiries for W.V.A.H.S.
to the secretary:
Helen Curkpatrick**

**273 Old Hamilton Road,
Haven, Vic. 3401**

Telephone: 03 5382 7227

Email: haven273@outlook.com

**AGM in 2022 to be held at Warrnambool
Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd April.**

W.V.A.H.S. Executive Committee for 2021-2022

President: Michael Menzies, Geelong. (S.)	0419 546 251	railexp@bigpond.com
Secretary/Treasurer: Helen Curkpatrick, Horsham. (W.)	0413 382 567	haven273@outlook.com
Past President: Bob McIntosh, Terang (S.)	(03) 5592 1354	macmarbob@hotmail.com
Members:		
Judith Healey, Carisbrook. (M.)	(03) 5464 2601	heraudj@bigpond.com
Carolyn Olive, Charlton. (M.)	0418 361 971	c.olive@bigpond.com
Robin Parker, Maryborough. (M.)	0459 032 068	robinparker81@hotmail.com
Katie van Dyck, Stawell. (W.)	0428 840 1011	katiejvd@iprimus.com.au
Gerry Bolt, Ararat. (W.)	0497 562 721	geradusbolt@gmail.com
Diane Connolly, Minyip. (W.)	0417 642 410	task@aussiebbroadband.com.au
Brett Leslie, Landsborough. (W.)	0404 813 997	bleslie@bigpond.net.au
Craig Proctor, Mortlake. (S.)	0408 311 302	craige@iprimus.com.au

Our potential member groups are:-

Arapiles (Natimuk)	Ararat	Balmoral	Barham/Koondrook
Birchip	Boort	Camperdown	Carisbrook
Casterton	Charlton	Cohuna	Colac
Coleraine	Dimboola	Donald	Derrinallum/Lismore
Dunkeld	East Loddon (Mitiamo)	Edenhope	Geelong S/W/Rail
Glenthompson	Goldfields (Dunolly)	Halls Gap	Harrow
Heytesbury	Hawkesdale	Horsham	Hopetoun
Inglewood	Kerang	Koroit	Landsborough
Maryborough	Minyip	Mortlake	Murtoa
Nullawil	Ouyen	Port Fairy	Penshurst
Portland	Pyramid Hill	Rainbow	Rupanyup
St. Arnaud	Stawell	Swan Hill	Terang
Warracknabeal	Warrnambool	Wedderburn	Woolsthorpe

Note: Send me your report [to fit half page ONLY] Word documents only, photographs .jpg (Straight emails can't be edited into the Western Historian either becomes unco-ordinated paragraphs)

For the couple of societies who don't have email — send a hard copy to the Secretary, Western Historian, 273 Old Hamilton Road, Haven, Victoria 3401.

Long reports have to be edited to fit the space and may not contain what you consider to be relevant to your society.

WVAHS President's report December 2021

Covid-19 impacted WVAHS and its members throughout 2020 and 2021. The Executive took a positive attitude and proceeded with the AGM at Stawell in April 2021. Sadly, the Southern Zone Meeting at Warrnambool on Saturday 16 October 2021, Wimmera Zone Meeting at Dimboola on Saturday 23 October 2021 and Midland Zone & WVAHS Executive Meetings at Donald on 30 October 2021 all had to be cancelled.

Many local societies have struggled to maintain their normal activities while complying with restrictions imposed by all levels of government to restrict the spread and impact of Covid-19. It has not been easy to do so, but most have adapted and adopted procedures that have permitted some events and ongoing routine tasks to be accomplished.

Being ever optimistic, I hope that we are all able to

undertake much of what we would normally do during 2022. The Executive will review how we proceed with the AGM and advise you of plans as we approach the date, currently tentatively to be held at Warrnambool on 2nd & 3rd April.

To finish on a more positive note, congratulations to Judith Kershaw for being presented with an Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMGA) excellence award. Judith has been a member of Port Fairy Historical Society for almost three decades, spent 25 years as a committee member and served for many years on the WVAHS Committee and as President.

I look forward to catching up with many of you during 2022.

Michael Menzies, President.

New editor for WVAHS newsletter

Having spent his childhood in a variety of Victorian places including Elmore, Ouyen, Armadale, South Melbourne, Rushworth, Kaniva and Queenscliff (and being a descendant of families who settled at Mortlake, Warrnambool, St Arnaud, Donald, Warracknabeal,

Nhill, Dimboola, Daylesford and Bendigo) Craige has a strong sense of 'place' and what it means to those who live in geographically diverse regions. His involvement with the Mortlake and District Historical Society goes back to the 1980s and for twelve years he served that Society as Secretary, Research Officer and Newsletter Editor. He has also maintained the group's Facebook page for ten years and is the current President of MDHS. Craige has run a number of cemetery tours and has written or co-written five books relating to Mortlake's heritage including one on the district's pioneer women, the schools and the fire brigade. Now entering retirement from his professional life as an English teacher but more recently university program manager. Craige has acquired a new home at Jeparit in addition to maintaining his homes at Mortlake and Leopold and is looking forward to becoming more actively involved with heritage groups in the Wimmera region.

The next
WVAHS AGM
is scheduled to be held at
Warrnambool on
Sat. 2 & Sun. 3 April 2022
Watch WVAHS website and
March newsletter for details.

History comes to life at Stawell



Stawell Historical Society's Jim Melbourne, purple Wiggle Jeff Fatt, Dorothy Brumby, Greg Robson and Kate Van Dyck had a great time looking through Mr Fatt's history. — Picture contributed.

Searching through family history there are so many twist and turns where people can end up — but never did the Stawell Historical Society think that the Australian child entertainer who appeared for many years on the Wiggles' program, Jeff Fatt (also known as the purple Wiggle) would have a long family connection with Stawell.

During the filming for an episode of the SBS television show "Who Do You Think You Are"? Mr Fatt visited the Pleasant Creek Court House Museum to take part in the TV programme. Several months before the show went to air staff from SBS TV and Warner Brothers contacted Stawell Historical Society seeking information about Mr Fatt's great great grandfather. The Historical Society's records were a great help in supplying information to producers of the programme.

Mr Lee Young (Yung) was born in 1827, arrived in Australia from Canton, China around 1852 and settled in Ballarat. He was a Chinese interpreter for the Law Courts and the goldfields community of Pleasant Creek (Stawell.)

He was appointed Government Interpreter in the early 1860s and commenced in Ballarat in 1862 and

then moved to Ararat in 1863. He resigned from there in 1873 and moved to the Illawarra (Stawell) goldfields where he continued as a government interpreter until 1890 when he retired and moved back to Ballarat.

The witnesses who he translated for court usually gave their oath by blowing out a lighted match. He was often asked by judges for an explanation about this for of oath taking. "If he no swear the truth he go out into fire all a same as a match" he said. This explanation generally satisfied the sitting judge.

An 1870's case at which Lee Young officiate involved a Great Western miner named An You who accused a man named Millar of stealing his gold mining cradle. On reporting the loss to Constable Ford of Great Western Police he was told go and look for it himself.

Mr Young lived in both Illawarra and Deep Lead in the Chinese camps when working at the Pleasant Creek Court House.

Mr Young died in Ballarat aged 72 years.

Mr Young was the first Chinese national to be naturalised in Victoria. He was sworn in and took the oath before Sir Redmond Barry on February 18, 1890.

Article contributed by Stawell Historical Society.

Have you a story
you would like to share
with WVAHS members

Family history — two views

D Wong on February 15, 2014 wrote:

John Burkinshaw was slightly pockpitted, a small scar just above his right wrist, dark brown hair and eyes, 5'4" tall and born at Dodsworth, Yorkshire.

John was baptized on August 13, 1792 at Silkstone a son of William Burkinshaw and Mary Darwent. On February 15, 1814 he married Margaret Ashton. John was a weaver by trade and, due to the fact that work conditions were bad at that time, he became involved in a political movement and, with his brother George, took part in an unlawful assembly in Grange Moor on April 11, 1820.

He and several others were arrested and, on September 9, 1820, were tried for High Treason and transported for life. They were imprisoned on the hulk York before joining the 'Lady Ridley' which left London on January 4, 1821 arriving in Hobart Town, Van Diemens Land on June 27 that same year. His wife Margaret and two small daughters, Mary and Ann, followed him out to Australia. They were living in the Pittwater area when Sarah was born in 1823, followed by four more children. In 1830 John received a ticket-of-leave and applied for an allotment in Hobart Town on which he built a house. He then worked as a carpenter and his wife and children helped him conduct a market garden.

After 1860 when Margaret died and John moved to live at Bung Bong, Victoria to be near his two sons and two daughters. He died in 1876 and is buried in the Wareek cemetery.

Greg Petersen on February 19, 2017 wrote:

John Burkinshaw (born August 13, 1792) was a 28 year old weaver. Unlike most of his work colleagues he could read and write. This skill was to have a major influence on his life's path. His family name came from their home village of Birkinshaw, near Leeds in Yorkshire. Birkinshaw signifies a grove of young Birch trees and was derived from the Saxon.

He worked as a weaver at a time when working conditions were poor and the pay was poorer. He had a family comprising a wife and four children to raise and, like most found it almost impossible to survive with the pittance he earned. John Burkinshaw spoke up when weavers gathered — agitating for a better deal for workers. He was often at meetings which opposed the government and the manufacturers despite the Act of December 1819 which forbade such gatherings. His literacy skills automatically made John Burkinshaw a leader in this time of the Industrial Revolution when major developments in manufacturing had a profound effect on the country's socio-economic and cultural con-

ditions.

About the time John Burkinshaw was born manual labour-based practices in Great Britain were being replaced with manufacture by machinery with mechanisation having a particular impact in the textiles industry. In the first 10 years of John's life cotton mills were being established throughout the country. Inventors were developing machines which increased the efficiency of spinning and led to a dramatic increase in the output of individual labourers. This was seen as a threat to employment in the weaving trade.

Large numbers of the working class died due to diseases spreading through cramped living conditions and accidents in factories happened regularly. Many weavers suddenly found themselves unemployed as they could no longer compete with machines which required relatively unskilled labour.

Others faced reductions in their wages and saw their work increasingly being undertaken by unapprenticed workmen and children. Wheat prices had soared and workers unable to feed their families were becoming desperate. At the same time Great Britain was at war with France and the cost to the British Government was astronomical. It wanted the economic growth fuelled by the Industrial Revolution to continue to ensure continued growth in the taxation being generated.

The size of the British Army from 1789 to 1815 was increased sixfold to about 250,000 men and the Navy employed a further 140,000. The difficulties faced by the weavers and the families were probably considered by the Government to be an unnecessary distraction.

It came as no surprise that there was an uprising brewing in the working class. This came about with the establishment in 1811 of the Luddite movement led by the fictitious Ned Ludd. The Luddites protested against the changes produced by the Industrial Revolution which threatened their livelihood. They objected to textile manufacturing using cheap and unskilled labour which led to job losses for many textile workers.

Children had become the labour of choice for manufacturing. Laws were not passed to protect children until many years later and, until then, they were forced to work in terrible conditions for much lower pay than adult workers. Although governments tried to limit the use of child labour the factory owners resisted claiming they were helping the poor by giving their children money to buy food and avoid starvation. (This continued until 1833 when the general law against child labour was passed in England.)

An activity of the Luddites was industrial sabotage.

**It's your newsletter
— have your say**

They broke into cotton mills and attacked the machinery which they saw as being the root of the problem. Factories employed armed guards and, in February 1812, the government of Spencer Percival made machine breaking a capital crime. The government backed the manufacturing industry by strongly opposing the Luddites. It executed the rebel group's members (seventeen after one trial in 1813) and many others were transported to Australia. In fact the Government was so determined to wipe them out that, at one stage there were more British troops fighting the Luddites than the famous battles against Napoleon 1 on the Iberian Peninsula.

When John Burkinshaw became associated with the Luddite movement his life (and those who were to continue the family line) took a massive turn.

John was arrested along with his brother George. There are slight variations recorded to the circumstances which led to his transportation but the basis of his involvement with the Luddites and his brush with capital punishment is the same.

According to the book 'Gold To Dust — A History of Frank and Percival Burkinshaw and their Descendants' John and George Burkinshaw were among 23 men who were imprisoned.

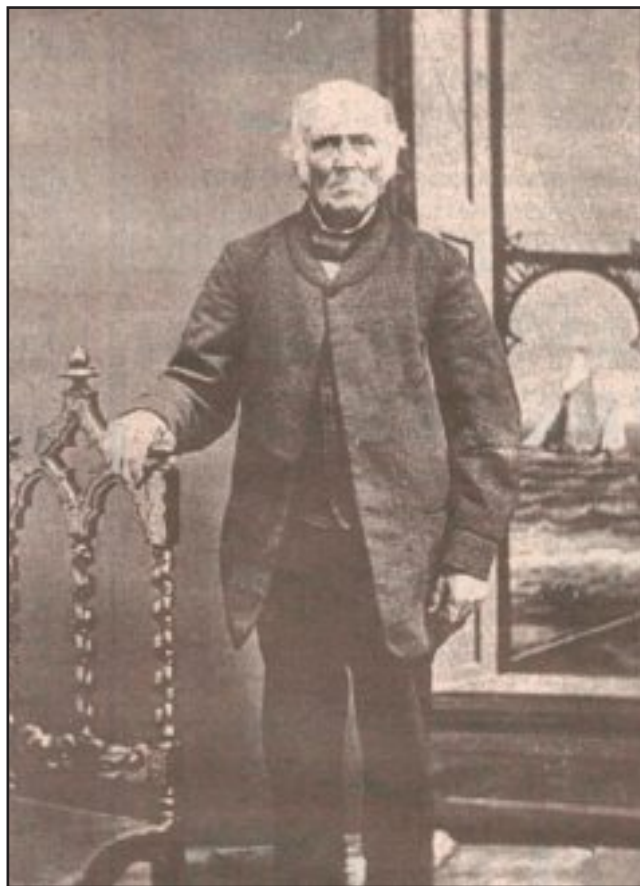
They were charged with High Treason — namely the levying of war against the King.

One pleaded guilty — the rest, including John and George — pleaded not guilty.

The penalty (if the charge was proved) was death however they were told if they changed their plea to guilty they would be spared. One suspects it was not a difficult decision. The guilty plea was subsequently entered and the death sentence was replaced with transportation — 11 of them — including John for life and the remainder (including George) for 14 years. The 'lifers' were sent to Van Dieman's Land.

A slightly different different story is recalled by John's descendants. John's reading skills were a god-send in prison. He had found an old newspaper and was reading it in his cell when a warden came by and asked what he was doing.

"Reading the newspaper" he replied. The warden believed a person with such skills should not be hanged and expressed his view to the prison supervisor who agreed that John could be of more use in Van Dieman's Land where few of the transported convicts could read and write. They thought he could be an important link between the convicts and the Government.



John Burkinshaw.

So John Burkinshaw was subsequently pardoned of High Treason and sent as a convict to Tasmania.

Because of his skills he was not treated like most other convicts. He worked for the Government without pay for two years and his dedication was rewarded when he asked if his family could join him. The request was approved and his wife Margaret and their two daughters, Mary and Anne, were soon aboard a ship to Tasmania. They joined their husband and father in Hobart in 1822.

Their first born son died when just a few days old and a fourth child Sarah was born in Tasmania in 1823. Anne was unfortunately killed when she fell from a dray and was run over aged just 10 years old.

This record was discovered and printed on
Convict Records.com.au
by D. Wong and Greg Petersen

Have you an interesting story to tell.

**Contact our new editor Craig Proctor
on craige@primus.com.au**

From high treason to settler

A memorial plaque will be unveiled at the Wareek cemetery on Easter Sunday to commemorate the graves of several members of the Burkinshaw family.

John Burkinshaw arrived in Hobart from England on June 27, 1821 after being tried and sentenced in 1820 for high treason.

He was 29 at the time and married with a wife and two children who remained at Dodworth, Yorkshire.

He was charged after attending a prohibited political meeting and was sent with many others to Tasmania as a convict.

His wife Margaret and two children joined him after a long voyage of eight months.

Five more children were born to the couple while in Australia.

When John was given a pardon the family were allotted a small area of land. John built a small stone, wattle and daub cottage and worked as a market gardener.

Margaret and two of the children, William and George, hawked the vegetables around the settlement by wheelbarrow.

These two children later travelled to the Victorian goldfields — taking up land at Bung Bong on the Bet Bet Creek west of Maryborough.

Margaret died while the family lived in Hobart and she was buried there. John then joined the two children in Victoria and lived until he was 93. He was buried at Wareek in 1876.

His son George Burkinshaw married Rebecca Emma Rowland and, in 1862, and the couple took up residence in Homebush.

They had nine children: Richard George (1862), Bertram Frederick (1864-1872), Bertha Louise (1867-1912), Rose Elizabeth (1869-1950), Florence Amy (1872-1944), Bertram Arthur (1877-1881), Walter William (1880-1943), Evaleana May (1882-1961) and Marion Lucy (Minnie) (1884-1895).

Marion or Minnie (as she was more commonly known) is one of three children buried at Wareek with George and Rebecca.

Sylvia Greenwood of Homebush is a relative of the family through her husband William who was Rose Elizabeth's son.

Sylvia is one of the organisers of the memorial plaque unveiling and over the years has collected quite a selection of history on the Burkinshaw family.

Among the memorabilia is a letter written by Rose at the time when Minnie was dying from an unknown disorder.

The letter written in 1894 describes the illness which befell Minnie in her tender years.



Memorial plaque to the Burkinshaw family at the Wareek cemetery.

Rose wrote that Minnie had acquired a fever in December 1893 for which both the English and Chinese doctors could not find a cure.

Rose described a severe swelling to Minnie's stomach area that was regularly eased with the removal of "thick matter."

Minnie's condition deteriorated despite efforts by doctors who were baffled at the illness.

Rose wrote that the swelling to Minnie's stomach kept rising "till the 10th of June at 10 minutes past six in the morning, she went to be with Jesus.

Poor little dear lost all sense and use and feeling on Wednesday and lingered on until Sunday. She just breathed away and never struggled" Rose wrote.

Bertram Frederick and Bertram Arthur (who also died young) are buried with Minnie and their parents.

John Burkinshaw is buried nearby.

Rose walked out to the cemetery every week with her dog to visit the grave.

According to Sylvia never a kinder woman lived than her mother-in-law Rose.

"She looked after her little sister Minnie while she was so sick for over six months and then her father died in her home on February 11, 1916.

It is with pride that we have put a memorial plaque on the grave at Wareek cemetery," Sylvia said.

from Maryborough Advertiser March 5, 1993.

Have you a story
you would like
to share

Minyip & District Historical Society Inc.

– History Books for Sale

The Society's 'Minyip – Towards 150' publication on the last thirty years is now completed and ready for printing. Together with the revised edition of 'Minyip-100 Years Young' currently being reprinted and 'Minyip – 20 Years On' there will be 150 years of history of Minyip and District contained within three volumes.

The original print of 'Minyip – 20 Years On' is available now for \$10.00 plus postage of \$10.00, 'Minyip – 100 Years Young' 2nd Edition will be available probably by the end of November when received from the printer for \$25.00 plus \$15.00 postage. The 2nd Edition contains many new photos relating to the histories and a full index. 'Minyip – Towards 150' will be available for \$35.00 after the official launch on 14 March, 2022 at the official welcome to the 150th celebrations. Postage again will be \$15.00.

The Society is now taking prepaid orders for any or all of the three books. Any of books can be prepaid for

collection at the celebrations and will be held for you or posted as they become available. Unpaid reservations are not accepted although a number of books will be available at the 150th celebration weekend.

In addition to the three history books the Society also has for sale a number of other local history books on single subjects some with limited availability so first in best served.

The Minyip Heritage Plaques Book is \$30.00 with postage at \$15.00. The following books are \$10.00: A Country Paper; The Story of the Minyip Hospital; That's My Block; Minyip On With the Show; Mechanics Institute to Memorial Hall and Don't Dare Say Dinkledoodledum. Postage to be advised. The following are available at \$5.00: Minyip Primary School Centenary 1979; Boolite Primary School Centenary; Boolite Cricket Club Centenary and St Mary's Parish Centenary. Again postage to be advised.

Mrs Jane Frances Robinson Dimboola swimming instructor

On a recent break at Dimboola staying at the Dimboola Caravan Park (which is a real credit to the town) and while walking the dogs I came across a sign on the path along the Wimmera River of Mrs Jane Robinson and the Swimming Crate.

Jane Frances Robinson nee Hetherington was born in 1882 and became widely known and respected for her role as local swim instructress from 1910. She was awarded life membership of the Swimming Club in 1938 for her outstanding contribution to the club and community.

The 1930s swimming crate was a simple raft of slat timber deck and chicken wire — supported by 44 gallon drums — firmly anchored to the riverbank providing a safe pool for those not yet able to swim. In the crate the children would wear a calico harness around their chest with a rope attached (held firmly by Mrs Robinson). They first learnt to kick and float then dog paddle around the three deeper sides of the crate. After proving they could stay afloat (and still under Mrs Robinson's care) they then swam around the crate without the rope. The final achievement was when they safely swam across the river (according to one pupil "they were waterproof.")

Dimboola summer days were hot and long — the end of the school day brought the greater



**An old photo of the Dimboola swimming crate
on the Wimmera River.**

pleasure of learning to swim. Eager youngsters headed to the river where Mrs Robinson had a smile for everyone. (Edna Paech 1966.) I have fond memories of Mrs Robinson and wondered if she ever received due recognition for the wonderful service she did for Dimboola. (Bess Roberts.) Mrs Robbie wore an old cream panama hat, long dress and sandals . . . she was a legend. (Kneller Lehmann.) I am forever grateful to this kind lady for her loving attention and still enjoy swimming. (Claire Robertson.) When we finally got permission to swim across the river — it was a really great moment!

**Thank You, Mrs Robbie . . .
(Bim Reid nee Hawker.)**

Africans arrived on the First Fleet in 1788

African Blood part of Australia's settlement history.

By Patricia Attard Daniels

More than 20,000 Australians are descendants from African men transported to Sydney on the first fleet. John Randall and John Martin were part of a group of 11 who were sent to the penal colony in 1788. Not many Australians know that Africans were part of the first invader society to land in Sydney Cove. Amongst the group were two other men known as John Caesar and Black Jemmy.

A review of a book called *Black Founders* by Professor Cassandra Pybus writes — Next time you hear of Ned Kelly and his gang spare a thought for a man called Caesar whose much earlier career of banditry differs from the standard outlaw narrative in one intriguing aspect. As Cassandra Pybus bluntly explains: "Australia's first bushranger was black as pitch."

Black Founders provides very different views of the birth of a nation. As Pybus explains — "the settlement of Australia was a multi-racial process that took place at a time when the notion of 'race' was a highly malleable construct — understood in ways very different from the modern sense of innate nature."

How these African men found their way on board convict ships to Sydney is a story of struggle, war, slavery and crime. Scant records available have never the less revealed accounts of the lives of some of these men. History records even some individuals who certainly stood out in early settlement days and in fact obtained rapid notoriety. Of noted mention is a man commonly known as Black Caesar — he was a 14 year old boy around 2 metres tall and extremely strong. Accounts record that Black Caesar could have been bought on board the ship *Alexander* in Mauritius after stealing 4lbs of bread. He was sentenced to 7 years and arrived in Sydney, 1788. Caesar quickly took to stealing whenever possible to satisfy his ravenous appetite and escaped many times. On one occasion, when sentenced to Garden Island, he found a native canoe and made his escape. Reports had Caesar living and stealing in the bush and he was even involved in battles with Indigenous people including Pemulwuy. Some reports have Caesar befriended by Pemulwuy and yet it was also reported that Caesar was found once with several spears sticking out of his body. Unfortunately a reward was finally posted for his capture dead or alive and Caesar was killed in 1796.

John Randall's journey to Australia started with his crime for stealing a chain whilst living in Manchester. He had arrived in Manchester as part of the British withdrawal from America during the Civil War. Life in Britain was equally miserable and Randall soon turned to crime. On his arrival in Sydney he was given the trustworthy position of hunting for food for the settlement. Records report of his trustworthiness and his ability to be a good shot. This ability could mean he had some weapons training during the Civil War. John Randall

soon became a vital part of survival for the settlements and more so in the famine of 1790 when crops failed and starvation and disease prevailed.

John Randall was soon granted land at Rose Hill and farmed alongside another African man called John Martin. The men were of different natures — Randall being the more adventurous and Martin happy to stay and work his farm. Randall married a woman called Mary Butler who arrived on the second fleet and they were the first recorded marriage at St John's Church Parramatta. 'The ceremony was held under a gum tree as the church had not yet been built'.

In early to mid 1900's many of the black community had located to areas around Parramatta including Pennington Hills. For many years that area was referred to as 'Dixie Land'. From all accounts many were happy to work their land grants and marry free convicts.

Billy Blue, transported in 1801 for stealing sugar, cemented a relationship with Governor Macquarie based upon their shared experiences in the Revolutionary War. (He ran a ferry service (and smuggling racket), lent his name to Blues Point and other landmarks and became such a well-known (albeit disreputable) character of early Sydney that some 20th-century historians tried, rather preposterously, to claim him as white – or, at least, "not predominantly Negro".)

Another arrival, Thomas Alford (known as Orford,) was sentenced to 7 years and arrived on the *Alexander*. He did his time and was granted land at Farm Cove and later petitioned the Governor to have his family sent from England on the first available convict ship.

In essence all of these stories reveal a part of Australian history that few know about. Perhaps questions have been raised in the past in many families throughout Australia and it is interesting that records show, without doubt, that African's lived and raised very large families throughout early Australian history and contributed in many ways to its progress. Some reports put levels of African people from 2-4% of early settlement population.

We can only speculate as to the possibility that African men may have produced children with indigenous women.

As Australia establishes its position firmly in the world as a true multi-cultural society another layer is revealed to exhibit just how far back the mix began. Today hundreds of thousands Africans call Australia home — many of these people do not know this part of Australia's history. Untold to mainstream Australia this story is worthy of being told of being presented as an integral part of the birth of a nation.

Footnote: Currently I am preparing a story line and screen play in preparation for a forthcoming film about the story of African men whose blood is mingled into the fabric of Australian history.

Ercildoune Homestead and the Learmonth brothers family history

John and Christine Dever purchased Ercildoune in June, 1999 and undertook the huge restoration of the homestead and gardens with much trepidation. "We had lived in country areas before including Panton Hill and Main Ridge on the Mornington Peninsula but never in our wildest dreams ever thought of living near Ballarat and undertaking such a task. We weren't even looking for a property but rather stumbled across an advertisement in the Weekly Times when travelling up to see a horse that had been badly injured in a freak accident.

Probably horses were the catalyst for our wanting some land around us as well as the fresh air and rolling green hills. We are still breeding some horses, cattle and sheep. Since buying Ercildoune we have had to meet the many challenges of occasional snow, frosts and one of the worst droughts on record, of insect plagues — and all of the other critters that love to nibble and slither their way throughout the property including the flies and snakes that often make life very uncomfortable. We never expected to be surrounded by wind farms though and my family motto should be "Expect the Unexpected".

The homestead and outbuildings are constructed of massive granite blocks and some brickwork — the brickwork being in more recent additions 1870 and 1920's - all found and made onsite from our own quarry and brick kilns (long gone). There is some bluestone — not in any buildings but found in the foundations of the many roads on the place.

John managed most of the early restoration project and, with his amazing eye for detail, drove most of us mad! Christine then began the garden work with John having the odd input and now had endless ideas and changes she wanted completed.

Di Gow was instrumental in the restoration along with Kelvin Reid and Charlie and Jim and Cindy Hems who painted it. Many other people were involved. Robin Hill (and more recently Neil Paterson) have both spent many hours restoring the amazing gardens along with John and Christine who have spent many an hour planting, spraying, weeding, pruning, fertilizing and mowing. 2009 has been a massive year of drought management and restoring-and/or rebuilding brickwork including almost all the outbuildings brick chimneys and drains. The servants quarters restoration is underway and underpinning of walls the first job. Old drains have been discovered as well as old water pipes etc... very interesting discoveries! "

Learmonth Family History

The name Learmonth arises from lands in Berwickshire and the Learmonth of Ercildoune in the Merse (a flat area in the east of the region that borders the River Tweed) were the earliest family of note. The Learmonth family motto is 'Dum Spiro Spero' — uncovered during restoration on the arch in the entrance

hall — 'While I Breathe I Hope'.

Thomas the Rhymer is described as a Scottish prophet who is also known as Thomas of Ercildoune, Lord Learmonth and True Thomas. In 1286 he is said to have predicted the death of Alexander III and the battle of Bannockburn thereby becoming known as 'True Thomas'. Ercildoune has a copy of the tower or keep situated in the Borders region of Scotland in Earliston to the west of the homestead — albeit on a reduced scale. They apparently brought back to Ercildoune a stone from this keep and it was inscribed and placed in to the smaller replica built here: 'Stone from Rhymer's Tower at Earliston, Scotland, occupied in the 13th century by Thomas the Rhymer whose direct line is Mary Livingstone a favourite maid of Mary Queen of Scots and the great African explorer. Thomas Livingstone-Learmonth (1783-1869), a strict Presbyterian, was a merchant in Edinburgh, Scotland then a comptroller of customs at Grangemouth before heading off to the West Indies making a great deal of money in the service of the British East India Company as a merchant in Calcutta. In 1835 he was a merchant in Hobart Town, Tasmania and, at the time, his four sons were John aged 23, Thomas Jnr. aged 17, Somerville aged 16 and Andrew aged 10. Thomas and Somerville were still in their teens when they were sent by their father to Victoria to find suitable farming land for sheep. They were leaders in the pastoral settlement of what was then known as Port Phillip — first settling at the head of the Barwon River, Geelong — and then at Buninyong followed by Burrumbeet in 1838 passing over the site of present day Ballarat. Settlers were afraid to penetrate into the interior in order to take up runs as aborigines were committing depredations within 15 miles of Geelong. Early maps show that the 'Run' extended in 1848 to Mount Beckworth in the north east, the head of Mount Emu Creek in the west and below Lake Burrumbeet in the south. There were drought conditions in the 1830's and 1840's and that surely influenced their decision to acquire the Ercildoune Run — now over 73,000 acres in size with its excellent flowing springs at the foot of Mount Ercildoune. They erected a home and woolshed at Buninyong but the discovery of gold at Buninyong may have influenced them to shift farther out to Ercildoune as they were men of strong character and principle. They even moved the exceptional shearing shed by wagon to Ercildoune having painted numbers on every joint. In 1849 Ercildoune was licensed as 45,000 acres in size in the names of John, Thomas Junior and Somerville. Sir Alan Currie in his notes states that the house was started in 1840 and additions added until finally completed in 1858.

Andrew served as a Lieutenant in Bombay with the East India Company's army before joining his brothers and is mentioned at Position No. 43 in 'The All Time

Australian 200 Rich List in the Second Era: 1850-99: John built 'Laurence Park' at Batesford, Geelong and had two sons who were very successful as well.

In the 1850's the Learmonth's paid £75,000 for 20,000 acres and Ercildoune became one of the more famous stately properties in rural Victoria with the Learmonth brothers noted for their hospitality and charitable work. The homestead developed into something of a village with its own school and gaol. Boundaries between the 'runs' existed only as natural features or as ploughed furrows. In 1852, in a letter from Andrew Learmonth to Lieut. Governor Latrobe, he states that the buildings upon the 'run' at Burrumbeet are dispersed over 3 overseen stations. In

around 1859 major building works took place and the brothers completed their Scottish baronial homestead with gabled wings and crow stepped and castellated parapets, built out of granite hewn from the slopes of Mount Ercildoune and bricks that were handmade in a kiln on the property. It is believed that they brought with them 64 men and their families and before the homestead was started and 22 houses were built on the property for them. Only a couple of these buildings remain today with a few chimneys as evidence where some of the houses once stood.

An amazing and illuminating Journal kept by Thomas and Somerville (written in 1851 when they sailed from Melbourne to London) gives a strong indication of their amazing depth of character. It attributes their prosperity by mentioning two specific things being that so many of the other members of their family were there with them and that they had more than the usual share of difficulty to contend with. It mentions also that during their last 16 years that they had seen many vicissitudes including the depth of adversity in 1843-1845 and now unlooked for prosperity. He goes on to say: "We began to push our own fortune in 1837 at Port Phillip with a flock of 3,000 sheep when the country had been settled by a few enterprising men from Van Diemen's Land and the stations not extending more than 30 miles from the coast and that in only two or three instances and now we leave it in a prosperous colony about to be separated from the elder colony of New South Wales with upwards of 6,000,000 sheep, 1,200,000 horned cattle and a revenue of £200,000 a year."

They also mention the good hand of God upon them — guiding and directing them and causing all things to work together for their good plus how important it is for a young man to know that a father and mother's eye is upon him — warning and encouraging him. It is incredible that he says he was wholly unable to cope with the superior talent and energy of his co-evals in the Old Country. But he was able to prosper in



Ercildoune Homestead near Learmonth.

Australia as a field is opened up even for inferior talent, common industry and perseverance being sufficient to raise anyone (even the illiterate) to a competency or even affluence. Ercildoune Station became one of the greatest sheep studs in Australia as they went about purchasing and selectively breeding sheep in a way that has been instrumental in shaping the Australian merino. It was also formed on the famous Furlonge blood, pure Saxony merinos that were driven by an absolutely amazing woman Mrs. Eliza Furlonge and her sons — across Europe, brought to England and then to Tasmania in about 1829. Thomas Shaw, a famous wool classer, also played a major role in giving advice that influenced their sheep breeding program. The Learmonth's even built and designed their own sheep washing apparatus and their washed merino fleece was described in the London Universal Wool Exhibition as 'absolute perfection, the handsomest bale of wool we ever saw'.

They chartered a ship and brought the first herd of short-horned cattle to these shores. They also established fish hatcheries on the property and played a large part in the successful introduction of Murray Cod into Lake Burrumbeet in 1858 and, from 1870-73 raised trout on behalf of the Ballarat Fish Acclimatization Society. They were also outstanding gardeners and created an amazing network of paths and highly cultivated garden beds having brought out trees in pots from Scotland including oaks, elms, poplars, chestnuts and plane trees.

They were leaders in the use of machinery with threshing and winnowing machines and a flour mill where water was used to power the mill which ground their wheat into flour.

They met the many challenges head on including the lack of suitable employees, droughts, attacks by aborigines and bushrangers with Ercildoune having been held up by Gowrie in 1872. Thomas eventually married. Sadly in 1858 a daughter died at only a few weeks of age and is buried in the Learmonth cemetery.

Thomas Banks: (1867-1919)

Maryborough born football champion

There died at Melbourne Hospital on Wednesday one of the most popular men in sporting circles in the person of Mr Thomas Banks. A native of Maryborough he will be remembered by many as one of the truest sports and athletes the town has produced. He was the son of Sara (sic) and the late Jordan (sic) Banks and served his apprenticeship as a blacksmith with Messrs Harting and Sons. Imbued with laudable ambition he sought to improve his position and attended Mr Lacey's night school. Eventually he passed the Civil Service and Matriculation examinations and 34 years ago entered the Lands office — gradually rising in the service.

He was, at one time, the acknowledged champion footballer of Australia and his first experience at the game was gained under Mr George Casey (who was then captain of the Maryborough Football Club). He subsequently joined the Fitzroy Club (of which he was captain for many years) earning the reputation of a true and clean sport.

As a tribute of respect to their former skipper the players and supporters will hold a service at the Fitzroy cricket ground pavilion this afternoon. The late Mr Banks was about 53 years of age and had hardly been married twelve months. The remains will be brought to Maryborough for interment and the funeral will leave the railway station on the arrival of the mid-day train tomorrow.

**Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser,
Friday November 28, 1919**

Obituary of Thomas Banks. By J. W.

All admirers of a champion and manly footballer will regret to hear of the death of Mr. Tom Banks which took place at the Melbourne Hospital on November 26. During the winter he contracted a severe attack of influenza from which he never thoroughly recovered. He underwent an operation for an internal complaint on the 20th inst.

Banks, who was comparatively a young man being 52 year of age, was born in Maryborough. He began his metropolitan football career as a follower, but made his great name as a defender, his glorious dashes from the half-back line electrifying the crowd. As a centre halfback he never had a superior — combining wonderful marking ability with great pace and power. He was a splendid physical specimen of humanity with an immense chest and thighs — and many an opponent stepped sideways when Banks was coming through — the personification of strength, determination and grace. And no man ever played fairer. He first stripped for Fitzroy in 1888 — retiring in 1897 after an honourable record of 10 years' brilliant and honest service. He captained the side for five years (from 1891 to 1895) and had the extreme satisfaction of leading the team to victory (for the first time in the history of the

club)" in his last year of leadership.

As a captain he exercised excellent judgment, thought the game out well acted promptly when necessary and knew when to take a risk.

He had the honour conferred upon him of being made a life member of the League and he was as good a legislator as he was a player.

Mr. Banks was a keen racing man, an ardent lover of cricket and of a most retiring disposition.

Mr. Banks father, a giant of about 6ft. 3in., and built proportionately and who commanded the respect and good will of all sections in Maryborough was a slave before the Civil war. Such was his great strength that the log cabins, in which runaways were confined on the plantations, were not strong enough to hold him. He was chased and run down by hounds — but ultimately made his escape to freedom via Canada to Australia and settling in Maryborough where all the family were born. "Tom" Banks had been married eleven months — his widow being a sister of Geoff Moriarty also a great footballer in the old days. The body is to be taken to Maryborough and interred.

The Australasian, Sat Nov 29 1919

Tom Banks was the second of Sarah and Jourdan Banks' ten children (three of whom died in infancy). His family was very active in the local Church of Christ congregation where they were held in high regard.

Jourdan Henry Banks, Tom's father, was a Deacon, Treasurer and Sunday School Superintendent. The whole family were gifted in elocution and singing.

As the obituary above indicates J.H. Banks, a former slave, escaped to Canada, then England where his story was published as A Narrative of Events of the Life of J. H. Banks, an Escaped Slave from the Cotton State, Alabama, in America by James W. C. Pennington, 1807-1870. Banks subsequently travelled to Australia and to Maryborough where he worked as a miner.

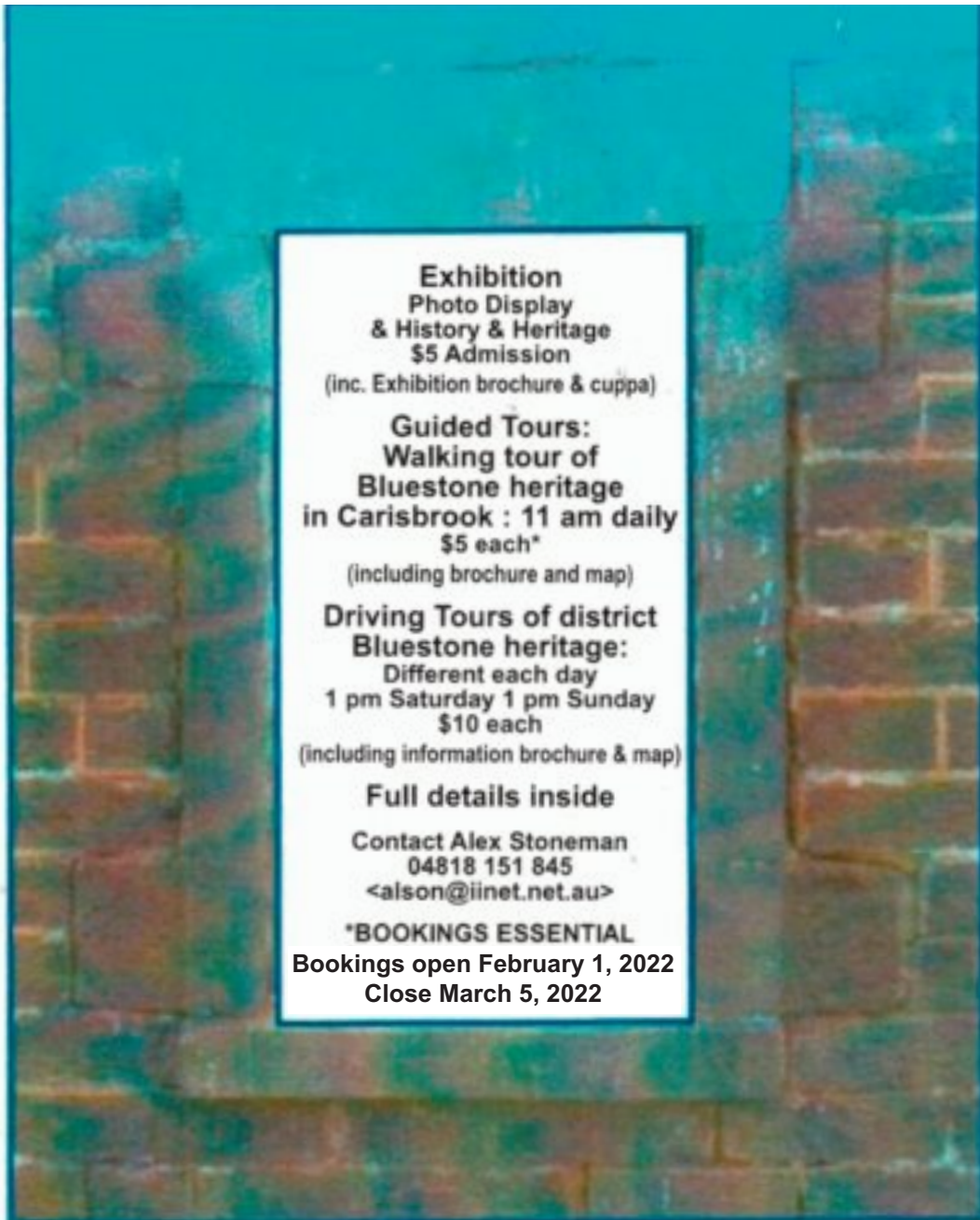
**Maryborough Diggings
August 2021**



Tom Banks
Wills Cigarette Cards series 1905
Image courtesy of Wikipedia

Have you a story
you would like to share

**EXHIBITION & TOURS
CARISBROOK & DISTRICT'S BLUESTONE HERITAGE
SATURDAY 12TH AND SUNDAY 13TH MARCH, 2022
10 AM TO 3.30 PM DAILY**



Exhibition
Photo Display
& History & Heritage
\$5 Admission
(inc. Exhibition brochure & cuppa)

Guided Tours:
Walking tour of
Bluestone heritage
in Carisbrook : 11 am daily
\$5 each*
(including brochure and map)

Driving Tours of district
Bluestone heritage:
Different each day
1 pm Saturday 1 pm Sunday
\$10 each
(including information brochure & map)

Full details inside

Contact Alex Stoneman
04818 151 845
<alson@iinet.net.au>

***BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL**
Bookings open February 1, 2022
Close March 5, 2022

**CARISBROOK SENIOR CITIZENS' CLUB HALL
cnr. Urquhart & Powlett Streets, Carisbrook.**

*Wanted: Articles of interest from your
local area for future newsletters*