

The Western Port Times

GRANTVILLE & DISTRICTS

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FREE

May 2019

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Road woes – 1916 version, and a few wobbly bridges.

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A Hero Of Our Seas

At the March meeting of the Bass Valley Historical Society, the new President, Dr Jane Hendtlass issued a challenge to those present: to consider

This magazine has been introduced as a rebirth of the original *Western Port Times*, published in Grantville from 1898 until 1908, by T. C. Monger, and from 1908 to August 1910 by the Sullivan Brothers, at which date the premise was destroyed in a fire and everything lost.

Publication never resumed and the land eventually became the site of the Grantville Primary School and today is the local council's Transaction Centre.

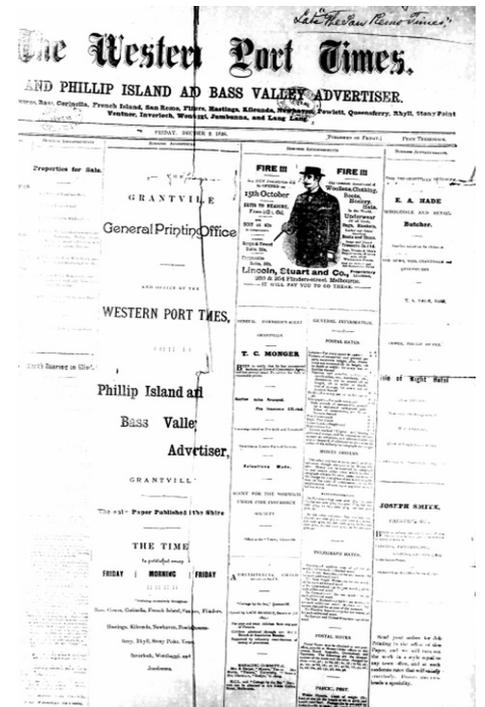
In its prime, the paper was distributed from Flinders and Hastings on the Mornington Peninsula, to San Remo and Phillip Island, Inverloch and the Powlett region, through to Jumbunna and Loch, and as far north as Lang Lang.

The modern *Western Port Times* is produced in association with *The Waterline News*, for the U3A Local History Group, based in Grantville.

The *Western Port Times* is a creative exercise to show-case the history of Grantville, in particular, and the surrounding area, in general, complementing the group's website.

the history behind the name of the street in which they dwell. Challenge accepted – and answered, albeit not easily given that I live along an obscure highway named after some nonentity called George Bass.

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www.grantvillehistory.com.au

U3A BASS VALLEY
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Local History Group

Email: leader@grantvillehistory.com.au

Check out the website and subscribe FREE – www.grantvillehistory.com.au

Links to other sites

Group member and Grantville local, Clive Budd, who is also the webmaster for the Bass Valley Historical Society website (www.bassvalleyhistoricalsociety.com.au) has started a list of links to other historical Associations which might interest you.

If you know of any we should add to the list, please do not hesitate to let us know:

Email: Geoff_Guilfoyle@aonet.com.au

Historical Group Links

Grantville History:
grantvillehistory.com.au

Inverloch Historical Society:
cv.vic.gov.au/organisations/inverloch-historical-society/
Also: <http://inverlochhistory.com/>

Koo-Wee-Rup Swamp Historical Society:
kooweerupswamphistory.blogspot.com.au/

Korumburra & District Historical Society:
Janet Wilson 5657 2267 or PO Bo 293
Korumburra 3950

Lang Lang and District Historical Society:
langlang.net/historical.html

Leongatha and district Historical society:
leongathahistory.org.au

National Library of Australia Trove:
trove.nla.gov.au/

Phillip Island & District Historical Society:
<http://pidhs.org.au/>

Phillip Island Nature Parks, Churchill Island Heritage Farm Collection.
<https://victoriancollections.net.au/organisations/churchill-island-heritage-farm#collection-records>

South Eastern Historical Association:
seha.org.au

State Library of Victoria:
slv.vic.gov.au/

Western Port Historical Society Inc.:
hwphs.org.au/

Wonthagi Historical Society:
wonthagihistoricalociety.org.au/



Grantville General Store, 1932.

Grantville 3984 & District History

Produced by the
U3A Local
History Group



WANTED

ANY INFORMATION , MEMORIES AND PHOTOS

Grantville (Points of historical interest)

Hotels - (Grantville Hotel & Prince Of Wales), Cemetery Pier (Old & New), Saw mills & tramways - (Brazier Mill etc.), Primary Schools (various iterations) Western Port Times (1896-1910) Mechanics Institute (local hall), Drive-in theatre General stores (esp. Wheatley's store) Anti-erosion barrier (1970's? rebuilt 1980s?) Cobb & Co coach service (terminated Grantville extended to Bass for a time), Grantville Racing Club Grantville Rifle Club, Racecourse (1896? To 1920s?) Site, date and type of 1880s to 1900s businesses Agricultural shows (various)

Queensferry (Points of historical interest)

The Victoria Hotel (where and when was it?), Piers Beach 'coolstore/wine cellar' Post Office and general store location Race track & agricultural shows The Great Victoria Colliery & tram line to Queensferry

The Gurdies (Points of historical interest)

Primary school (at St. Helliers). DonMix Quarry (Donohue Brothers, 1958).- Now 'puddling' station, Blackney's garage (1950s - 1960s?) Caravan Park (closed 1980s)

Kernot (Points of historical interest)

Kernot Railway Station & Shier Road trestle bridge General Store

Almurta (Points of historical interest)

Primary schools (3?), Candowie Reservoir John Paul's general store Butter Factory (1896-1910), Railway Station, Post Office (closed 1960s)

Glen Forbes (Points of historical interest)

General Store School Railway Station, Cheese Factory, Saw Mills, Church Hall

The Bass Valley U3A Local History Group are still looking for photos and information on places of significance to our local history.

If you have anything you would like to share with us, we have the facilities to scan or photograph your items so they do not have to leave your possession.

If you have something you would like to share:
Email: Geoff_Guilfoyle@aonet.com.au

THE WESTERN PORT TIMES

Editor: Geoff Guilfoyle

Publisher: Roger Clark

For the Bass Valley U3A Local History Group
PO Box 3 Grantville 3984

Phone 5997 6240 (Leave message if no answer)

Email: Geoff_Guilfoyle@aonet.com.au

Website: www.grantvillehistory.com.au

ABN 97 395 483 268

SUBSCRIBE FREE

Have the Western Port Times emailed direct to your inbox each month. Send your name and email address to:

Geoff_Guilfoyle@aonet.com.au

From the Original

From the *The Western Port Times* in May 1902

ALMURTA CONCERT & COFFEE SUPPER

On Friday last the Church of England held a Concert and Coffee Supper in the Almurta schoolroom. Mr Claude Anderson occupied the chair. The attendance was very good, although the weather was unfavorable. The principal singers were Misses Allen, Best and Worsley; Messrs Shanklin, Radford, Cofield and Lockington, the two last gentlemen were from Melbourne, and gave several comic songs and recitations.

The ladies of the Church provided the tea, coffee and a great variety of pastry etc., which was much appreciated.

Mr C. Anderson recorded a vote of thanks to the ladies who provided the tea and refreshments. Mr Goding moved a vote of thanks to the chairman.

The Concert closed with the whole of the audience and singers singing the National Anthem.

A MYSTERIOUS POISONING CASE.

A SMITHFIELD COLLIE DOG was poisoned on the premise at Myrtledean last Wednesday, the property of John J. R. RICHARDS.

Anybody who can give information with regards to the person or persons who committed the crime will be REWARDED the sum of £5.

JOHN J. R. RICHARDS,
Ryanston.

TENDERS are invited for erecting a 4 roomed Weather-board Cottage at Grantville. Tenders close Saturday 24th inst.

PLANS and SPECIFICATIONS may be seen at the "WESTERN PORT TIMES" office, Grantville, or Mr G. Chinn, Bass.

Labor and Material.

A. W. HARDINGHAM has again secured the contract for the carriage of the mails between Grantville and Lang Lang, leaving Grantville every day at 6.15 a.m. to meet the morning train from Melbourne.

A.W.H. Hopes to receive the patronage as hitherto.

Parcels coming by train specially attended to.

**COMMENCE RUNNING, MONDAY
JUNE THE 2nd.**

**A. W. HARDINGHAM,
Grantville.**

BACK FROM THE WAR WELCOME HOMES

On Friday evening last, a welcome home social was tendered to Private F. A. McFee of the Fifth Contingent, on his safe return from the South African War.

The President, Cr McIlwraith, occupied the chair, and stated the object of their meeting together, in the Cowes Mechanics' Institute, was to show their appreciation of Private McFee's services in the Transvaal.

After a number of songs and recitations were given by the Phillip Islanders, Dr McKay, on behalf of the residents, presented him with a handsome gold watch, suitably inscribed.

Refreshments were then handed round, after which the hall was cleared for dancing and was kept up until the small hours.

During the evening great interest was taken in a number of relics that he had brought back with him.

Private McFee is a son of Cr McFee, and saw about 15 months active service, taking part in a great many engagements.

A welcome social was tendered at Lang Lang, to Lance Corporal Samuel Esler, in the Mechanics' Institute. A large number of district residents were in attendance and a very enjoyable evening was put in.

Troopers R. Grimes and Freeman, of Yannathan, also members of the Fifth Contingent were present.

... A ... CONCERT & DANCE.

will be given in the

New Building near the
OZONE HOTEL, POWLETT RIVER.

on Friday next, May 30th.

EVERYONE INVITED.

Refreshments provided.
Hearty Welcome to all.

Vote For...

One of these fine candidates, as advertised in the *KooWeeRup and Lang Lang Guardian*. But whichever candidate you chose, don't pick THE SOCIALIST OCTOPUS!

LABOR'S RURAL PROGRAMME GUARANTEES



Full Consultation with the Primary Producer

ON ALL MAJOR MATTERS AFFECTING THE INTERESTS OF THE MAN-ON-THE-LAND

- Labor is the one political party which recognizes that primary industries cannot be directed through Canberra-minded bureaucrats.
- Labor's 10-year wheat stabilisation plan; long-term security programme for primary industries, rural housing, country development and lower interest rates will be carried out in full consultation with primary industries and with the State Government directly concerned.
- Labor will restore the 40 per cent initial depreciation allowance and allow reasonable depreciation rates on equipment.
- Alternatively, Labor will consider a special industry modernisation allowance in respect of the purchase of new plant and equipment.

LABOR'S RURAL POLICY IS ONE OF FULL CO-OPERATION WITH THE MAN-ON-THE-LAND

Vote **1** **DEVLIN** D. A.
endorsed **LABOR** candidate
for **McMILLAN**

How Menzies-Fadden are slugging the Man-on-the-land

One of the many promises made by the Menzies-Fadden combine when it first assumed office was: "We will assist the primary producer."
This is how Menzies-Fadden have "assisted" the grazier, the wheatgrower, the farmer and the primary industries generally:-

- They slugged primary producers for pre-payment of income tax so heavily that in many cases the producer's tax commitments exceeded his income.
- By dishonouring their promise to put value back into the £, they allowed prices of farm machinery and equipment to soar to highly inflated levels.
- Through their bungling economic "policy," they caused costs of production to multiply.
- By starving the States of funds, they halted or delayed vital developmental projects in the country.
- They repudiated their promise of £250,000,000 to be spent by shire and municipal councils on roads, aerodromes, bush nursing and other local government activities.
- They pondered to wealthy shipowners, bartered for the sake of the Commonwealth Shipping Line, brought about exorbitant freight rates then reduced them to a paltry extent as "war built" right on the eve of the Federal Election.

FEDERAL LABOR GOVERNMENT will mean positive, long-term security for primary industries; the speeding-up of country developmental works; adequate financial aid to the States for rural services and amenities. Labor's rural programme is realistic and constructive. It has been laid down by men who KNOW the needs of the man-on-the-land and have his interests at heart.



Vote **1** **LABOR**
ON MAY 29

MAKE IT THREE!



COMPLETE THE BULWARK AGAINST CANBERRA CONTROL

Western Australia voted LIBERAL for freedom
South Australia voted LIBERAL for freedom

MAKE VICTORIA A LIBERAL STATE!

YOU MUST CHOOSE NOW
PERSONAL FREEDOM or CANBERRA CONTROL
CHOOSE FREEDOM—VOTE LIBERAL

AUTHORISED BY — J. V. McCONNELL, 108 QUEEN STREET, MELBOURNE. L.P.F.3

Rising Prices? Inflation?

THESE QUESTIONS AND MANY OTHERS WILL BE WELCOMED BY YOUR MEMBER—



Geoff W. Brown

IF YOU BRING THEM TO THE R.S.L. MEMORIAL CLUB ROOM—
LANG LANG
on
Thursday, April 5th
at 8 p.m.

YOUR CHOICE ON OCTOBER 18th

THE MENZIES GOVT. OR THE SOCIALIST PARTY

WHICH HAS WHICH WILL

- LIFTED CONTROLS
- ABOLISHED LAND TAX
- INCREASED SOCIAL SERVICES
- INCREASED PRODUCTION



Choose Freedom! Enterprise! Progress!
Reject the Dead Hand of Socialism!

VOTE 1 ROSSITER, J. F.
The Endorsed Liberal and Country Party Candidate

(Authorised by J. V. McConnell, 108 Queen Street, Melbourne.)

THANKS to the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

You have your **ONLY** chance to vote **AGAINST** the real danger — **THE SOCIALIST OCTOPUS!**

Don't be fooled by Cain's "Red Herring" Cain's delay stopped the pay!

Cain made it a State matter. By Supporting Canberra's Bank Grab.

THAT'S why the Legislative Council said: LET THE PEOPLE SPEAK!

YOU MUST CHOOSE— PERSONAL FREEDOM or CANBERRA CONTROL CHOOSE FREEDOM—VOTE LIBERAL

AUTHORISED BY — J. V. McCONNELL, 108 QUEEN STREET, MELBOURNE. L.P.F.1

"Women For Canberra" Public Meetings

Cranbourne Shire Hall Wednesday, June 9, at 8 p.m.

Kooweerup Memorial Hall Thursday, June 10, at 8 p.m.

SPEAKER: LADY BROOKES.

BUSINESS:
To inaugurate District Branches of the "Women for Canberra" Movement.

OBJECT:
The encouragement of women to take an active part in the government of Australia, and to come out as candidates for election to Parliament.

Citizens, Your Country Needs Your Help. Come and see where your path lies in this Movement.
Mrs. D. E. Thompson, Secretary.

FEDERAL ELECTION NOTICES

Mabel BROOKES

Australian Woman Candidate for **FLINDERS**



BROADCASTS:

3DB: 4.25 p.m. Tuesdays; 12.5 p.m. Wednesdays.
3AK: 11.45 p.m. Wednesdays.
3UL, Warragul: 1.15 p.m. Mondays and Saturdays, 7.30 p.m. Thursdays.
3AW: 10.15 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Hear Mabel BROOKES in the Comfort of Your Own Home.
Vote BROOKES 1

(Authorised by E. Lorton Campbell, 205 Lonsdale street, Dandenong.)

No-No and Oh, No! Ads

Believe it or not, there was a time when the swastika (an ancient symbol sometimes known as the gammadion and fylfot) was considered benign and freely displayed. (See photos on right). There were Swastika Clubs throughout Victoria in the early 20th century, including Koo Wee Rup and Lang Lang, and more than one Swastika Cafe. They were purely social in orientation and not political. For some reason that will doubtless remain in the realm of the unfathomable, they lost popularity in the late 1930s and the last of them shut down, disbanded or change its name in September 1939. No one knows why.



Chilocco Indian Agricultural School basketball team, 1909.

W. J. COLWELL
(late W. BODEY)

SWASTIKA TEA ROOMS

Station Street, Kooweerup

Caterer, Fruiterer, Greengrocer, and Confectioner

LIGHT REFRESHMENTS & GRILLS AT ALL HOURS
AFTER THEATRE SUPPERS A SPECIALITY

Peter's Ice Cream. Kelvinator Installed

All Brands of Tobacco & Cigarettes.
Flower & Vegetable Seed & Seedlings
Phone 43.

Advertisement from the *KooWeeRup Sun and Lang Lang Guardian*, 16th May 1935. Note that the tea rooms boasts a refrigerator (Kelvinator).



Fernie Swastikas women's hockey team, 1922

From the *Dandenong Journal*, Thursday 1 June 1933.

LANG LANG

The Swastika Club held a euchre party on Saturday night at the Memorial Hall, when a good number of people were present. The ladies' prize was won by Mrs. Cunneen, and the gent's by Mr. E. Keighery. A special prize was won by Mrs. E. Keighery.

Women And Farm Work

From *The Australasian*, 11 March 1916, Page 54.

Owing to scarcity of man labour (nearly all the able-bodied men in the district having enlisted) the two daughters of Mr. H. H. Peck, of Yoorhooga, Corinella, Westernport, volunteered to harvest the hay crop on this farm. Assisted by four girl friends, they turned to, and harvested 36 acres by themselves, including the stooking, and helped considerably on the balance of 20 acres, which had been put in for the benefit of the Belgians and Serbians. It will be noticed that one young lady is suitably attired in rational riding dress. Thus the girls of Australia are doing their brothers' work while the latter are away at the war.



Big Coal Dreams...

(Little Coal Result)

The Argus, 5 August 1889: Discovery Of Brown Coal On The Bass River.

(By Telegraph From Our Correspondent.)
GRANTVILLE, Saturday.

A discovery of brown coal has been made on the Bass River, about three and a half miles south-east of Grantville. A meeting of residents was held today, when a company was formed, and it was decided to apply for a lease and sink a shaft to test the thickness and quality of the seam.

The Argus, 12 Sept. 1891: Mining Telegram.
SAN REMO, Friday.

The coal seam lately discovered in Mr. Hoddinott's land has been tested by a shaft sunk some distance from the outcrop. The seam was cut at 32ft. from the surface. It is over 3ft. in thickness, and of first-class quality. It dips northerly, and is quite distinct from the old Kilcunda seam.

The Argus, 2 May 1893: Coal At San Remo.
SAN REMO, Monday.

The coal seam discovered on the Government reserve between San Remo and Kilcunda, and reported in *The Argus* some time since, is being developed into successful industry. The seam, as far as it has been followed, continues solid and over 3ft. in thickness. It is easily cut, the holing underneath being soft. The coal is now delivered at the pit's mouth for 10s. per ton all told. The contract for bagging and carting to San Remo – 7½ miles – by bullock or horse teams is 5s. per ton. The coal is put at grass in large blocks, so that bagging is unnecessary unless ordered. The Minister of Mines has been written to asking him to have a trial made of this coal by the test board, and offering to send up five or ten tons if the board will pay the cost.

Great Southern Advocate, 26 April 1894: Grantville and Bass.

We have been informed that a four feet seam of coal has been discovered at the Bass, on Mr. J. Clarke's grazing selection, adjoining the property of Mr. J. B. O'Meara. Already searching claims have been taken out, and the immediate vicinity is all pegged out. The present discovery is within a short distance of the present timber tramway, and within three miles of the Bass Hotel.

The Age, 24 May 1894: Coal At San Remo.
SAN REMO, Wednesday.

Two new coal seams have just been found in Peter's selection, close to the road, leading from San Remo to Kilcunda. The outcrop of one measures 2 feet of good coal. The seams are being followed, and the correct thickness of both will be reported in a day or so. A coal mining lease is being applied for.

The Argus, 15 Oct. 1904: Discovery Of Coal GRANTVILLE, Friday.—A few months ago a small local syndicate obtained a coal prospecting lease, and commenced work about five miles south-east of Grantville, on two seams of coal which have been followed by a tunnel 6ft. x 6ft. The two seams have now made into one, showing about 3ft. of good black coal. The site is near Bass River, and only about a quarter of a mile from the proposed Bass Valley line. Several outcrops of coal occur in the vicinity, but have never been properly tested, either by boring or otherwise. Good coal has also been found on the old Victoria Co.'s lease, a few miles south of the above. This lease has lately been taken up by a new company.

Coolgardie Miner, 21 Nov. 1905: Victorian Coal CONCESSION AT SAN REMO.
MELBOURNE, Nov. 20.

Captain Evans, of Collie, has secured a big coal concession at San Remo. The government will probably assist its development.

The Age, 24 Jan. 1907: Coal Seams Discovered.
GRANTVILLE, Wednesday.

Mr. H. Bergemeir, while prospecting on his property at the Gurdies, found outcropping three small seams of black coal of 9 inches and 7 inches. The Gurdies are about eight miles from Lang Lang and four miles from Grantville.

The Age, 17 August 1908: Boring For Coal.
GRANTVILLE, Thursday.

The diamond drill, which is boring for coal in the Westernport district, has gone through two more small seams at Glen Forbes at a depth of about 300 feet.

The Argus, 25 June 1912: Coal At Kernot.
WONTHAGGI, Monday.—The discovery of coal in Mr. J. Campbell's paddock at Kernot, in the Bass Valley, at 52ft., has proved to be of a little value. The seam was only 2ft. thick, and of a friable nature. Sinking is continued, as all the indications point to other coal measures being disclosed at a greater depth.

The Enigmatic George McGowan

Part One

by Geoff Guilfoyle

The world is full of towns that have their moment in the sun then either diminish into irrelevance, are abandoned and become ghost towns, or vanish altogether. Usually they are built around the production of one commodity, often a precious metal such as gold, and when it runs out, the boom goes bust and with it the town.

Queensferry, the Bass Coast version of such a place, was built on Westernport Bay to act as a port for the timber transported from the hills of the interior, today grassy and bare, but 140 years ago covered with tall, straight trees. The townsfolk, aware of the limited supply of timber, did try to find alternative industries. That the town has now vanished from the map is a sign of their failure. By 1905, Queensferry was on life-support and in a coma. The last few inhabitants left after a flood two decades later and the land was given over to pasture for the fattening of cattle.

If the town died, the legend lived on, and like most legends, only grew with the retelling. The one hotel the town possessed, the *Victoria*, and that for only five or six years, multiplied into three or four, as did the number of people living there and the size of the place and its longevity.

The truth is that even at its peak, Queensferry lived in the shadow of Grantville, which in the 1880s and 1890s was the biggest kid on the block. Grantville, too, declined, but it never vanished and today has resumed some of its old dominance.

What it lacked in actual importance, Queensferry made up for in the quirkiness of its inhabitants. Whereas Grantville had the upright and industrious J. T. Paul and William Bates Lang, Queensferry produced the eccentric Edward Cracknell, the restless Alexander Stewart, the conman Peter Fleming, and the rambunctious D. B. Kennedy.

Cracknell achieved a dubious fame in the 1880s when he invented and patented a form of garbage destruction – the Cracknell Destructor – that was adopted by the Fitzroy Council to remove its mounting rubbish problem. It was built at a great expense, was a white elephant from the start, and the subject of a number of lawsuits that left Cracknell nearly bankrupt. He retired to Queensferry to raise chickens.

Alexander Stewart started as a mill owner, constructed his own jetty and ship, the *Tyro*, and was in the process of building a second when he died. He was also at various times Post-Master at Queensferry and a Shire Councillor and Shire President.

As a ‘water diviner,’ Peter Fleming didn’t know he was a con artist; the ideomotor effect not understood in those days (and ignored by today’s dowzers). He travelled throughout Victoria gaining a measure of fame for carefully surveying paddocks with a practised eye, suggesting the client dig here or there, then charging a fee for the advice whether they hit water or not. He, naturally, trumpeted his successes and was silent about his failures.

David Barclay Kennedy achieved notoriety as a Shire Councillor who, during a council meeting in 1877, assaulted a fellow councillor, was charged, convicted and sent to jail, and whom on his release, resumed his position as councillor and was re-elected. Although some might label him a foul-mouthed, foul-tempered drunk, he served four additional years on the Council from 1884 to 1887.

And then there is George Alexander McGowan, Queensferry’s most enigmatic resident.

Which brings us to Joseph White and his 1974 survey of the Shire of Bass and Phillip Island, in his book *100 Years of History*. A meticulous researcher, White spent months in the Titles and Public Records Office in Melbourne filling up notebook after notebook with information in handwriting apparently so bad that only he could decipher it. Thus when he says Mr X brought Lot Y at Bass in 1900 for Z amount you can rest assured that this is almost certainly true.

It is also rather dull, for it tells you nothing about Mr X and little about Bass in 1900. So what could Joseph White and other 1970s researchers such as Colin Skidmore do to supplement this bare-bones information. What about relevant newspaper archives?

Limited to physical copies, for the most part, and even then, not every edition and not every paper. Only with computers and digitalisation did access to newspapers become readily available. It is doubtful

(continues on Page 8)

The Enigmatic George ... (continued from Page 7)

that either White or Skidmore ever saw an edition of the *Western Port Times*, and even today (2019), you need to physically sit at a reader at the State Library of Victoria and wind through the reels page by page. Today major newspaper sources such as the *South Bourke and Morning Journal* and the *Great Southern Advocate* can be accessed from the home. Those like White and Skidmore had none of this.

There was, however, one source of information available to those researching the history of the Bass Valley region in the 1970s. They could talk to people who were alive, albeit very young, in the 1890s or 1900s. If they didn't personally remember Queensferry at its height, they reached adulthood amongst those who did. Of course, Joseph White was not a young man himself, and grew up in the Krowera area, and thus was likely aware of the many stories of early days floating around.

If choosing not to play the part himself, at some stage Joseph White would have sat down and talked with "Old Fred."

"Old Fred" is either male or female, somewhere between 70 and 100 years of age, has lived all their life in [insert name of town or region here] and their parents were likely born there as well, maybe even a grandparent. "Old Fred" will provide much factual information, as well as information that is distorted, misremembered, jumbled or run together and needs disentangling. If there is no evidence to contradict them and what they say seems reasonable – it fits the times, conditions, and characters – then you tend to give what they say credence, especially if it is all you have.

There are traces of "Old Fred" throughout *100 Years Of History*, and never more so than in the legend of George Alexander McGowan.

Here is the relevant paragraph from page 31:

At one time a large residence was built at Queensferry for a Mr. McGowan, who had a large interest in Broken Hill mines; he was known locally as "the Silver King". He certainly entertained royally, many well-known Melburnians attending his parties and staying for various periods. During the last of the big parties the house caught fire and was burnt down completely. Extravagance at the end bankrupted McGowan, who ended up eventually a pensioner, in Grantville.

"At one time" sounds a great deal like "Once upon a time." Perhaps appropriately so, for this paragraph is simply a retelling of *The Grasshopper and The Ant* morality tale, with George McGowan playing the part of the frivolous grasshopper. A variation on this story, from Noelene Lyons in *The Waterline News*, Volume 2, October 2015 goes:

Paddocks of hearth stones and weather-beaten pear trees which marks the spot of Mr. George McGowan's large two storey residence on the road called Esplanade. Large extravagant parties were held at his residence and were very well attended. At one of his parties his house caught fire and was totally destroyed. Mr McGowan built a small cottage and lived there for the remainder of his days.

You'll notice the difference in the fate of Mr. McGowan in both stories. Oddly enough, neither account mentions his wife, Susan, or his son and three (later four) daughters. One hopes it was a big 'small' cottage.

So what truth is there in the Joseph White story? Not much. There is, however, hints of something going on that Joseph White missed, mostly because it isn't something you can glean at the Titles Office or in Council ratepayer books.

- - - -

George Alexander McGowan was born on May 3 1835, at Kingston, Ontario, Canada, to Samuel and Eliza McGowan (nee Walker). His mother died in 1840. It is likely that this was in childbirth. The baby, a girl, survived and was named Eliza after her late mother, only to die six months later on May 8 1841.

In 1847, Samuel McGowan died, leaving the 12-year-old George in the care of his older brother Samuel W. McGowan.

The Victoria Inward Passenger List records a G. A. McGowan arriving at Port Phillip from New York in 1853. This is the 18-year-old George accompanying his brother, who went on to be Deputy Post-Master General and a pioneer of the telegraph in Victoria. Although his story is fascinating in its own right, it is a different story and he won't be mentioned again except in passing.

What did George McGowan do after his arrival at Port Phillip?

Ben Teasdale knew. Who was Ben Teasdale? He was a veteran Cobb & Co. driver and his obituary in the *Riverine Grazier* of 12 April 1901 has the following line:

Ben Teasdale piloted Mr. G. A. McGowan,
(continues on Page 9)

The Enigmatic George... (continued from Page 8)

his brother, Mr. S. W. McGowan (afterwards Deputy-Postmaster General of Victoria) and 27 others to Bendigo on their arrival in this country from Canada in 1853.

Bendigo, a goldfields town. Keep that in mind. It's important.

In *The Ghosts of Queensferry*, a paper presented to the Bass Valley Historical Society in 1977, Colin Skidmore also tracks McGowan's early years in Australia.

In 1855, he went to New Zealand where he was engaged in coaching for thirteen years in the North Island. Then, in 1868, he was employed by Messrs Robertson, Wagner and Co. as driver, agent and manager in all the colonies. He was to stay with the company for 17 years, including a period when the company ran a coach line between the towns of Wilcannia, Terowie, and Silverton (near Broken Hill).

He retired on the dividends of some Broken Hill Silver Mine shares.

According to this account he finished with Robertson, Wagner and Co. in 1885. The part about the Broken Hill Silver Mines is interesting (and will be looked at later). This is also almost certainly the origin of the "Silver King" part of the legend.

The *Riverina Grazier* of 22 June 1903 offers its own version:

When the railway came to Hay in 1882, Mr. McGowan gave up the position of coach-agent at Hay to Mr. Frank A. Byrne, and went into business for himself in the Broken Hill district, where he earned a competency, and retired from business for a few years.

The two accounts almost fit. One difference is when McGowan finished with Robertson, Wager & Co. (1882 vs 1885). The more important one, however, is "the Broken Hill district" versus Skidmore's more specific "Broken Hill Silver Mine shares." Also, the *Riverina Grazier's* line that he *went into business for himself in the Broken Hill district, where he earned a competency, and retired from business for a few years* is awfully vague, almost as if they don't really know what he did after leaving Hay, or they received a third-hand account.

If the problem with the *Riverine Grazier* account is one of vagueness and timing, the *Collie Mail's* 17 November 1917 version is even more nebulous:

When the railway reached Hay, he went further west, to Broken Hill, where he speculated in mining and experienced the ups and downs of

most mining speculators.

In other words...they have no idea either what he did.

These are just knit-picks compared to the major problem: the timeline.

According to the Victorian *Births Deaths and Marriages Register*, George McGowan married Susan Skinner from Dorset, England, on 17 April 1871 at Eaglehawk, Bendigo. He is aged 35 and she 17, which, even today, is a sure sign that he had either status or money – or both, and she likely had neither.

Their first child, Ada Annie Elizabeth, was born in 1872 in Victoria. The birth certificate lists the place as MARO – all capitals. Ada Annie died in 1874 at this same MARO place. Maro is likely short for Maroona or Marong, both of which are on the Bendigo goldfields and were not the obscure locations in the 1870s that they are today. No town in Victoria starts with Maro except these two. But isn't George McGowan supposed to be in Hay, N.S.W. at this time?

This raises the intriguing question: Are there two George Alexander McGowans?

The simple and correct answer is no. It is quite clear that the Bendigo and Queensferry McGowan is the same as the New Zealand and Hay N.S.W. McGowan.

Is it possible to reconcile the two timelines? Yes, quite easily.

After arriving at Port Phillip in 1853 the two McGowan brothers travelled by coach to Bendigo, a not uncommon destination in those days. One, trained in telegraphy, went in one direction; the other ended up coaching (in the transport sense) in New Zealand. In 1968 he started work for Robertson, Wagner & Co., only not necessarily in Hay. There is no reason why he could not have initially been based in Bendigo and travelling about, driving, organising, and doing whatever else the position required.

He and Susan marry in Bendigo and are there until at least 1874, after which they moved to Hay, using that as a base, with George travelling about, driving, organising, and doing whatever else the position required.

And there is solid evidence for this. George Alexander Junior is born at Hay in 1880 and his sister Daisy in 1885 at Canterbury, then a town on the outskirts of Sydney and today a suburb.

Two years later, in 1887, Samuel Walker McGowan is born – in Melbourne. A sure sign that the now ex-coach master is Queensferry bound, with the move just months away.

Part Two next month

Better Times Quickly Follow Better Roads

Shire Council Urges Road Works.

Country Roads Board Again Asked To Link Up Main Road Sections.

First published in the *Powlett Express and Victorian State Coalfields Advertiser*, Friday 22 December 1916.

All who have the cause of good roads at heart will be gratified by two or three motions carried by the Shire Council of Phillip Island and Woolamaion Monday.

The Wonthaggi-Inverloch, Wonthaggi-Loch, Wonthaggi-Korumburra and main coast roads to Grantville and Melbourne were the subject matters of discussion, and progressive steps were taken in regard to each.

The Country Roads Board forwarded a letter from Mr M. D. Cock, Dalyston, drawing attention to several badly maintained spots on the main coast road between Lang Lang and Bass, and requesting that the necessary repairs be put in hand at once and the cost thereof to be charged against the amount provided for maintenance of the road for the current financial year. The letter was as follows:—

“I respectfully beg to draw your attention to several badly maintained spots on the main road between Lang Lang and Bass, that a few pounds would put in order. Travelling from Bass the first bad spot is in front of Bergemier’s, the next an abrupt crossing 300 or 400 yards before the Queensferry turn off. There is another dangerous crossing or rut 200 or 300 yards the Grantville side of the school, at Deep Creek there is about 30 yards in very bad order and several places in the sand have been washed out. After crossing the hill near the cemetery, there is a very ugly crossing about 200 yards before the next bridge is crossed.”

Cr Hollins : I can bear out the statements, the road is in a very bad state. We were told on a deputation that £350 was available and it’s time the money was spent. It should be taken in hand at once.

Mr H. Bonwick, Shire Engineer, said that the road machine and men were at present engaged on the work. They could not go before.

Cr Bowman inquired regarding the bridges, and Mr Bonwick said they were receiving attention. The Country Roads Board had been informed of the necessity for repairs. The board had voted so much, but if the bridges required attention the amount would not be enough. They would then have to approach the Board to see what

more could be got.

Cr Hollins: The Board told us if we wanted more money we could get it.

The President: No doubt the road is a disgrace.

Mr H. Bonwick, said he was having repairs done and sending the cost to the Board. The amount voted was not enough for all the flood damages, it was booked for maintenance burnt clay and forming.

It was agreed on the motion of Crs Bowman and Steenholdt, to bring under notice of the Board that more money was required to put the road and bridges in order.

Relative to the Council’s request for culvert at Atkinson’s in lieu of completion by day labor of the embankment at Lloyd’s on the Kornmburra Wonthaggi road, the Board wrote that owing to the existing financial conditions it could not authorise the carrying out of any permanent works on the roads at the present time.

The President, Cr Walker: The job was only a small one and it was cutting it fine to refuse. However, it could stand for awhile now as the weather was improving and water receding.

Cr Hollins drew attention to the ruts on Hayes road where an upset had taken place, and also to the bad state of Kennedy’s mill road. Repairs were authorised on the motion of Crs Hollins and Daly.

Cr Lloyd, said a man should be sent out at once to repair the dangerous spot on Inverloch road. There was money available from the Country Roads Board. Cr Daly seconded, stating that it was at the junction of the two roads and very dangerous.

On the motion of Crs Daly and Lloyd, it was decided to again write to the Country Roads Board relative to the urgent necessity for works on Wonthaggi-Korumburra road, pointing out the desirability of obtaining land and fencing deviation through O’Halloran’s, Pinkerton’s and other places.

Cr Lloyd drew attention to the fact that a contract had been let by the State Mine

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Better Times... (continued from Page 10)

for timber, which had to be carted over the road to Wonthaggi from St. Clair. There was about four years supply of timber and the carting would damage the road. They should get a grant from the Government to keep the road in repair, some places were very bad now.

President, Cr Walker, agreed with Cr Lloyd. It was necessary that the road leading to Wonthaggi should be put in order, because in winter time they would be impassable with timber carting.

Cr Daly said that representations should be made to the Government in regard to this matter.

It was decided, on the motion of Crs Daly and Lloyd, that a deputation should wait on the Public Works department to ask for a grant, and that the Wonthaggi Borough Council be asked to co-operate in the matter.

Cr Daly and the President were appointed on the deputation.

On the motion of Crs Bowman and Daly, it was agreed that the Secretary should write to the Country Roads Board, asking that tenders be called for work on No.4 section of the Wonthaggi Loch road.

Cr Bowman remarked that a chain was no stronger than its weakest link, and so a road was no better than its worst part.

There was a vast amount of traffic over the road, and the made sections on both sides of it should be linked up. It was a good time now to get it going.

Cr Bowman said that the ruts [in] Biggar's, Sheepway's and Wade's roads were very bad on account of summer rains. On the Almurta road water was running alongside the metal and carters were getting dray wheels into it. These matters should all be attended to.

A motion to this effect was agreed to.

On the motion of Crs Walker and Hade it was decided to write to the Country Roads Board to fence the dangerous cuttings on the Almurta-Glen Alvie road.

The old road through Bowman's and Biggar's will be closed, on the motion of Crs Walker and Lloyd.

Cr Dixon mentioned that the Bass bridge was in a bad state of repair. When the bridge was closed it would be wise to send word to

the tourist bureau, so that tourists would know of it.

Cr Steenholdt said that Cr. McGrath was on his way to the meeting that day in a motor car, but was blocked at the Bass bridge, which was being repaired.

Messrs. Cameron and Wilkinson waited on the council, relative to a new road near Almurta, and submitted their terms for road. They were prepared to do the fencing and contribute £80 and £20 respectively for the road. Mr Cameron offered to exchange land for sectional roads and Mr Wilkinson would give his land at cost price.

Councillors considered their offer a very fair one.

On the motion of Crs Bowman and Hollins, it was agreed to ask them to put the proposals in writing, and to write offering Mr Armstrong, without prejudice, £10 per acre for land required.

By Crs Mclrwaith and Bowman, that a rate of 1s 6d in the pound be struck.

Cr Walker : It ought to be 1s 9d.

On a related note...

Road woes – 2019 version. Not something the Shire Council of 1916 needed to worry about. 1pm on Good Friday, 19 April 2019.



Grantville Heights (Bonney Road entrance/exit) looking towards The Gurdies.



Grantville Heights (Bonney Road entrance/exit) looking towards Grantville.

A Hero Of Our Seas

Bass's Whaleboat Journey

The Mystery of his End

by Reliquay

First published in the *Argus*, Saturday 26 June 1909

(Re-paragraphed for the sake of clarity. Spelling and grammar as per original.)

Authority, as personified in Governor John Hunter, spoke on March 1, 1708, with urbane and patronising benevolence of "Mr. George Bass, surgeon of H.M.S. *Reliance*, a young man of a well-informed mind and active disposition."

Now that a century and more has passed since Bass took his cockle-shell of a boat through a thousand miles of unexplored and stormy ocean, all except the historians are beginning to forget what manner of man was Governor John Hunter, or that Duke of Portland to whom he wrote the judicious words of praise; but the light of romantic heroism has grown brighter and brighter round the too-obscure figure of Bass – handsome six-foot giant, born to be a navigator and an explorer, turned by accident and his mother's wishes into surgeon and apothecary, but inevitably finding his way to the sea, and to lands and waters unheard of, and at last plunging altogether and for ever into the unknown.

Bass figured into Australian history for a very few years. In September, 1795, the *Reliance* arrived in Sydney, carrying not only Governor John Hunter, but two of the most intrepid men in all Australian history – Matthew Flinders, the midshipman, and George Bass, the surgeon – two who made immediate friendship, and before the journey was over had planned extraordinary voyages, afterwards to be courageously performed. In January, 1799, Flinders and Bass came back from their voyage round Tasmania.

They parted company; Flinders to continue his career as an explorer, Bass to sail the seas as part owner of a trading vessel, into the mystery which still surrounds the end of his life. During those three years and four months no man who met the gallant Bass failed to speak admiringly of his bold and unconquerable energy.

"All the feeling and spirit of an explorer," Colonel Collins says of him in his "Account of New South Wales."

"My worthy friend and companion," says Flinders, who insisted that the name of Bass should be given to the strait of which Bass

was the real discoverer; and in his "Terra Australis."

Flinders speaks thus of the famous whaleboat journey by which Bass will be forever remembered:– "A voyage expressly undertaken for discovery in an open boat, and in which six hundred miles of coast was explored, has not, perhaps, its equal in the annals of maritime history. The public will award to its high spirited and able conductor – alas! now no more – an honorable place in the list of those whose order stands most conspicuous for the promotion of useful knowledge."

The *Reliance* had not been a month in harbour when these two adventurous comrades prepared for their exciting, though restricted, voyages in the "Tom Thumb," an unforgettable little craft, enshrined also in French narratives as the "Tomtumb," and in Germany as the "Daumling." They bought her for themselves; an eight-foot boat, carrying Flinders and Bass as crew, plus a small boy, whose one duty was to bale the water she shipped.

The "Tom Thumb" made two voyages, separated by some months of duty on the *Reliance* in a voyage to Norfolk Island. In the first she ran to Botany bay, and ascended the George River. In the second – a voyage southward – she tried to the point of exhaustion the two who manned her.

The quaintest part of her story is Flinders' account of how they pacified and amused the natives who seemed hostile. Bass had a pair of scissors. With these scissors the beard of each dusky chieftain was clipped short, and their delight in the strange process was such that they forgot to be rancorous. Flinders was harsher; "I was tempted to try the effect of a ship," he records.

The most perilous part was the homeward voyage in a fierce storm. Bass held the sheet of the sail; Flinders steered with an oar; and the boy bailed desperately. When they reached a bay of refuge, Flinders thought of calling it Providential Cove; but it kept a modification of its native name of Watta-Mowless.

(continues on Page 13)

A Hero... (continued from Page 12)

When this bold fellow Bass lacked a mate for the Tom Thumb navigation, he left his lancets and medicine bottles for solitary journeys by land or water. It was he, as a matter of course, who was sent to report on an alleged discovery of coal in the cliff faces. He observed several strata – “a strata,” says Governor Hunter, whom we note, from the evidence of the “Historical Records,” to have been a gentleman weak in such trifles as English spelling and Latin plurals.

During this little essay, an unimportant sentence from Bass’s official report seems to contain a key to his inquisitive and adventurous character. He perceived a strange plant, hairy or woolly, on the leaves and the smaller branches of it covered most thickly with long sharp prickles.

“Well I remember them,” he says ruefully, ‘for in the blindness of my eyes I seized one of the branches, and was handsomely repaid for my hasty curiosity by a handful of them.’ Unlucky investigator! Later in life he seized, with equal boldness and blindness, worse thorns than these, and received worse hurt.

Official duties still keep him and Flinders apart. Flinders has to go south-ward, surveying Furneaux’s Islands, and hunting for the wreck of the Sydney Cove. So Bass drums up two fresh comrades, and is off to the Blue

Mountains.

Here it is good that he is such a big, strong fellow. The precipices are enough to frighten anyone less dauntless than he. Those iron hills defied the colonists in Sydney for many years; convicts perished in them; exhausted explorers returned with confessions of failure.

Bass climbed the cliffs with grappling-hooks, was lowered into chasms with ropes. He struggled to the top of a huge hill, and saw another impassable range 40 miles beyond it. So he too returned, and nearly 20 years passed before anyone found the pass he could not discover.

At the end of 1797 the *Reliance* was laid up for “tedious repairs.” Bass might have remained in Sydney and shared in the rough dissipations which were very much the fashion; but his was not a character that could lie inactive. He formed the most daring project of his life – one of the most daring in sea history. Give him a whaleboat, and a crew of King’s men whom he could pick, and he would make a six-weeks’ voyage down the South coast. Governor Hunter (weak in spelling once more) granted him the “oportunity.” Nobody seems to have feared disaster; the confidence in Bass’s skill and courage was too great.

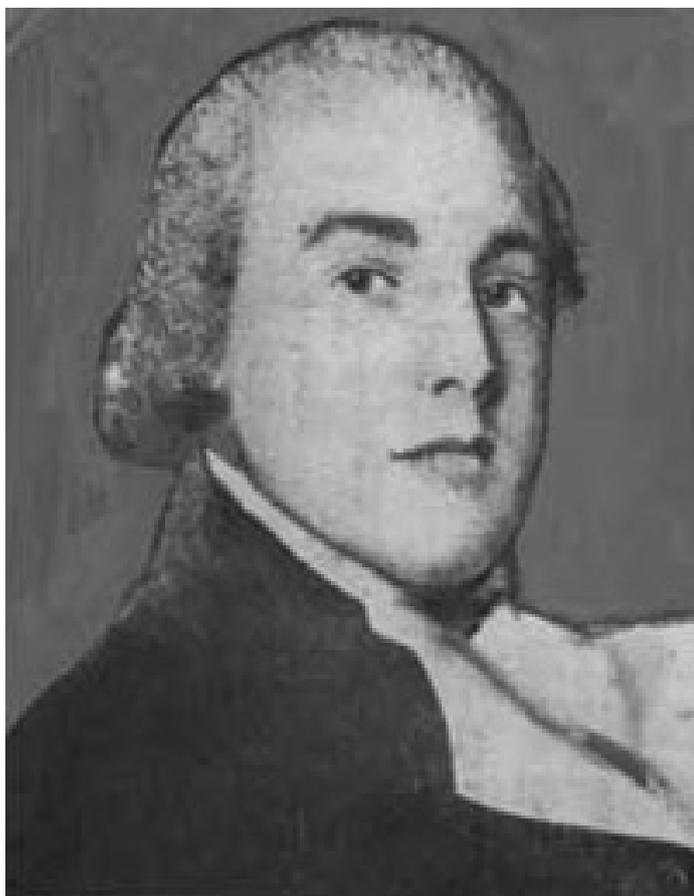
We guess that he had not much trouble in finding his crew of six – one of whom we know by name. Mr. Thistle, whom Flinders mentions afterwards as drowned, with Midshipman Taylor and six others, from the Investigator’s cutter at Cape Catastrophe.

Bass was furnished with his vessel, “an excellent whale boat, well-fitted, victualled, and manned to his wish” – for this young man, then 34 years of age, could be trusted to state in plain terms exactly what things and what men he wanted.

The whaleboat (pieces of which were said to survive as curios long years afterwards in Sydney) went out through Sydney heads on the evening of December 3, 1797. She was provisioned for six weeks, but it was 12 weeks before her oars dipped into the water of Sydney Harbour again. Bass demonstrated, a century or so before Lieutenant Shackleton, that in default of another food, seals’ flesh is wholesome and nutritious.

A journal of the voyage, found in the King manuscripts, is extant, but probably does not represent the whole of Bass’s written record of his great achievement in exploration; for Flinder’s narrative, the letters of Governor Hunter, and the “account” of Collins contain

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George Bass

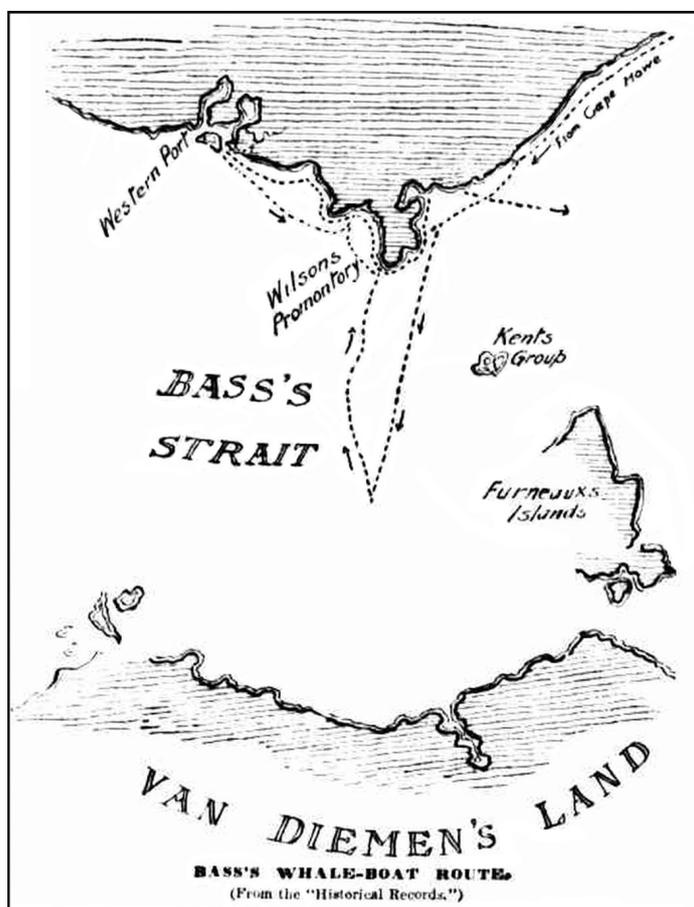
A Hero... (continued from Page 13)

matters not mentioned in the diary – notably the romantic story of the convicts rescued from the islands south of Victoria. But the journal itself, though written with matter-of-fact terseness, is a photographic record of an indomitable battle against danger and hardship.

As everybody knows, Bass found his way right round Cape Howe and Wilson's Promontory to Westernport, and proved the existence of a strait which had only been dimly surmised before. He had to steal round the coast, awaiting favourable winds, and ducking into a bay or behind a point for shelter when the "southerly buster" arose.

Fourteen times on his outward voyage he landed or anchored in some doubtful refuge without being able to land. At Wangan Inlet, near Cape Howe, he was held up for ten days by a furious gale. When he reached Wilson's Promontory (so named afterwards in honour of a friend of Flinders) the wind sent him southward; he determined to stand for Van Dieman's Land, or the islands near it.

This was on January 3; but that afternoon the boat leaked so badly – "there appeared to be some risque of a plank starting" – that he stood back northward again, and, after



The Victorian coast, as here shown, was drawn by Bass from an eye-survey.

a night of storm and incessant anxiety, anchored his buffeted boat in one of the Promontory's bights.

Two days later he had a relatively easy run to a spacious harbour, named Western Port, "from its relative situation to every other known harbour on the coast." At high tide he sailed into this harbour through the narrow and rocky passage now dividing Newhaven from San Remo, and set himself two tasks – to repair his boat and to explore.

Western Port did not encourage the navigators in the hope that they had discovered such a country as was afterwards to be called Australia Felix. The land (which after some days they discovered to be an island) appeared capable of carrying little population; they saw only four natives – these on the first day, and the natives were so shy that the white men could not come near them.

To Bass the end of the voyage was as disappointing as what he had seen on the way – it showed him unpromising country, poorly supplied with water, and deficient in harbours.

His never-satisfied spirit impelled him to go further westward. Had he done so, he would almost immediately have run into Port Phillip, and no doubt he would have explored the coast of this inland sea more thoroughly than it was explored a few years later. The accuracy and completeness of his observation is amazing, when one reflects that he was by profession, not a navigator, but a surgeon, and that often he made his reckoning only by an estimate of the number of miles his little boat had travelled.

In the chart of Flinders, which is printed with this article, the Victorian coast-line to Westernport is reproduced as Bass drew it from eye-observation, and, though its latitude and longitude are imperfect, yet how remarkably free from error it still appears!

Had Bass kept travelling westward, Port Phillip Bay would have been similarly charted in the beginning of 1798. But the rest of the whale-boat's crew wished to return. Provisions were short; they had already been more than six weeks away from Sydney.

On January 18, 1798, they sailed out of Westernport again, and immediately became weatherbound for a week on the west side of the Promontory.

In such a settlement as Barren Island, the inhabitants still live half the year on salted mutton-birds. Bass (and probably castaway convicts before him) found similar subsistence.

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A Hero... (continued from Page 14)

He tells how he visited the islands to collect a store of "petrels" for homeward provisions. These "petrels" were probably mutton-birds, whose flight astonished Flinders in the voyage on the Norfolk. Says Flinders:—

"There was a stream (of birds in flight) of from 60 to 80 yards in depth, and of 300 yards or more in breadth; the birds were not scattered, but flying as compactly as a free movement of their wings seemed to allow; and during a full hour and a half this stream of petrels continued to pass without interruption, at a rate little inferior to the swiftness of the pigeon. On the lowest computation, I think the number could not have been less than a hundred million."

After rounding the Promontory, Bass also examined the Seal Island, and augmented his store of food with seals' flesh – bolting from the island in a hurry on the approach of a storm. He was on the look-out for chances of commercial speculation (for had he not, himself, imported "1 cow and 19 sheep" on the Reliance from the Cape of Good Hope?), and he thought that some slight profit might reward a sealing expedition hither. He ran back from the island to shelter in a little bay. "This cove," says he, "from the use it may be of to anyone coming here to seal, will bear the name of Sealers' Cove." It bears the name still, but its industry has been sawmilling, not sealing.

Then Bass went home to Sydney, examining Corner Inlet, "little else than a large flat," and at Twofold Bay, giving the one touch of his humour in the journal, "This bay may be known by a red point on the south side, of the peculiar bluish hue of a drunkard's nose"; a very familiar colour in Sydney just then.

Sydney Harbour was reached on the night of February 24, after a final two days of fatiguing rowing in a calm. Home was too near to let them wait for a breeze.

The story of the seven castaway convicts is not to be found in this journal; but it is authenticated by Flinders, Collins, and Hunter.

It is told succinctly, and probably accurately, in the history bearing Barrington's name. In those days, convicts sometimes attempted to find their way across the mountains, in the illusion that they would reach China, or a land inhabited by "friendly brown men;" others stole settlers' boats, and vanished – undertaking voyages as perilous as those

of Bass himself.

One party of 11 stole a boat, and so escaped. Through unrelated hardships they found their way southward, to an island which Bass passed on January 3. There was treachery among them. While seven slept, the other seven stole the boat, leaving their mates marooned. The seven traitors found their way back to Port Jackson, where they stole another boat but one of them, staying behind, related this story.

The marooned men were left to be discovered by Bass, who found them in a pitiable condition. He could not carry them all. Two who were sick he took into his boat, and brought back to Sydney; the rest, says Governor Hunter, he placed on the mainland giving them food, clothing, fishhooks, and a musket out of his own scanty store, and a pocket-compass to guide them over their 500 miles of journey back to the region of settlement.

But on the day when they left Bass, "with tears on both sides" they went into oblivion. "Poor distressed wretches, chiefly Irish," and willing to throw themselves on His Majesty's mercy – so Governor Hunter speaks of them. They are one of those dark and piteous tales into which history's eye can rarely pierce thoroughly.

Bass made no announcement that he had discovered a strait. Flinders and he, in comradeship on the Norfolk, established this geographical fact very soon. But tides and winds and currents, as observed by Bass in his whaleboat, made the knowledge fairly positive.

"Whenever it shall be decided," he writes in his journal on January 30, 1798, "that he opening between this and Van Dieman's Land is a strait, that rapidity of tide, and that long south-west swell that seems to be continually rolling in upon the coast to the westward, will then be accounted for."

The voyage of Bass and Flinders in the Norfolk cannot here be touched upon.

We come to the heroic surgeon's last appearance in history – or history guessed at.

He is in England; finds his beloved wife, Bess; helps to buy the teak brig Venus, load her with cargo "full as an egg," and take her to Port Jackson. Next we find him in Otaheite, trying to buy pork for Sydney, and like a wise husband refraining from teasing Bess with stories of the charms of Otaheitian females – "she must think me attracted in good earnest; however, she has

(continues on Page 16)

A Hero... (continued from Page 15)

nought to fear here.”

At last, on February 5, 1803, the Venus leaves again for Otakeite – nominally; but really for Chile carrying a certificate of Governor King’s “full belief that Mr. Bass’s sole object will be to procure animal food.”

They heard from him no more in New South Wales. His quarrel with the Governor at Valparaiso, his threat to bombard, his subsequent arrest, and his supposed imprisonment in the mines have been often retold lately. But uncertainty surrounds all that followed.

Lieutenant William Fitzmaurice “heard of a person of the name of Bass being in Lima.” Mr. Thomas Moore, of New South Wales, heard – at secondhand from a ship’s captain – that “such a person” as seemed to be Mr. Bass was alive in South America in 1817. “The captain of a vessel out of this port knowing Mr. Bass well, he is of the belief, the description the master of the whaler gives of him, it’s certainly Mr. Bass – being a doctor, too – which is still a stronger reason.”

Such a flash out of the dark is like Browning’s idea of the greatness of the vanished Waring–

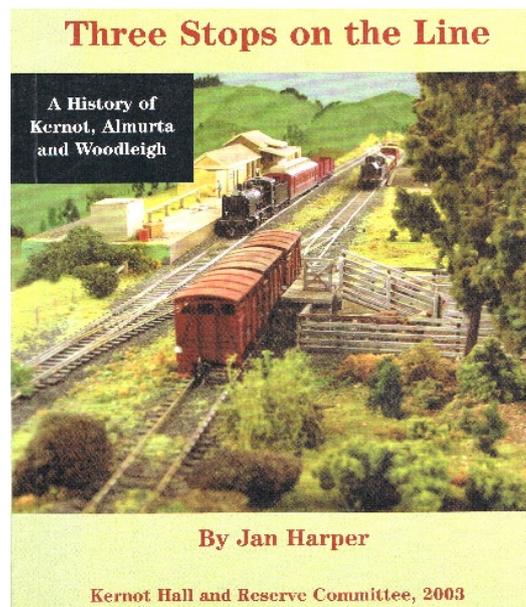
*“So I saw the last
Of Waring!!” - You? Oh, never star
Was lost here but it rose afar!
Look East, where whole new thousands are!
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?”*

Somehow one wants, whether justified or not, to think of Bass living and doing in South America after his release from the mines; grasping thorns heroically in the old familiar way. But it is an unlikely belief; his partners and friends in London, and, most of all, “my beloved Bess,” would have drawn him into the known world again.

A treasure has been missed – the letters of Bass to his mother, the widow who was never forgotten by her only son in his most strenuous days. He wrote to her, it is said, long accounts of his discoveries. The letters came into the possession of the Calder family with whom she lived.

“A short time ago,” Dr. Blair quotes from a letter written in 1852 by a relative of Bass, “Miss Calder thought to take a peep at the letters, and went to the old box, but they were gone. The last time his mother heard of Bass he was in the straits of China.”

Did she ever realise, that mother, poring [*sic*] over the wondrous tales from the Antipodes what a great and heroic name her adored son was giving to history?



Written by Jan Harper for the Kernot Hall and Reserve Committee in 2003 the book is still relevant, perhaps even more so given the recent surge in interest in local history.

Kernot, Woodleigh and Almurta came into their own during the railway era, from 1910 to 1978. Settled from 1886 onwards, life changed as milk from the dairy farms and stock raised on properties were linked with markets through the silver thread of the new railway line. Communities expanded as railway personnel, and the infrastructure they attracted, boosted the settlements.

While this history reflects that of Gippsland as a whole, it is unique to the area in drawing our personal lives and juxtaposing them with larger social and economic trends.

Copies are available from The Western Port Times. \$30.00 plus postage, or free local delivery.

Email: Geoff_Guilfoyle@aanet.com.au

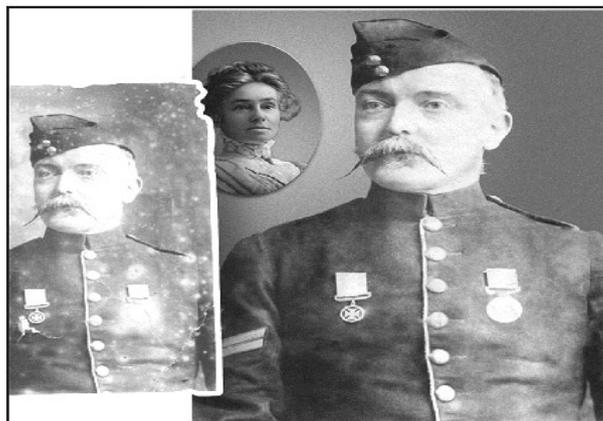


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