

# The Western Port Times

GRANTVILLE & DISTRICTS

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Volume 1 Number 1

May 2018

## WELCOME

Welcome to the first edition of The Western Port Times.

This magazine has been introduced as a rebirth of the original Western Port Times, which was published in Grantville from 1898 until 1910.

The current site of the Transaction Centre was, in 1888 the site of the Coffee Palace and the Colonial Bank of Australasia, also later became the site where Grantville's first newspaper, The Westernport Times was printed and published, from 1898 until 1910. Formerly The San Remo Times and Phillip Island and Bass Advertiser (1896-1898), The Western Port Times was published by Thomas Cox Monger.

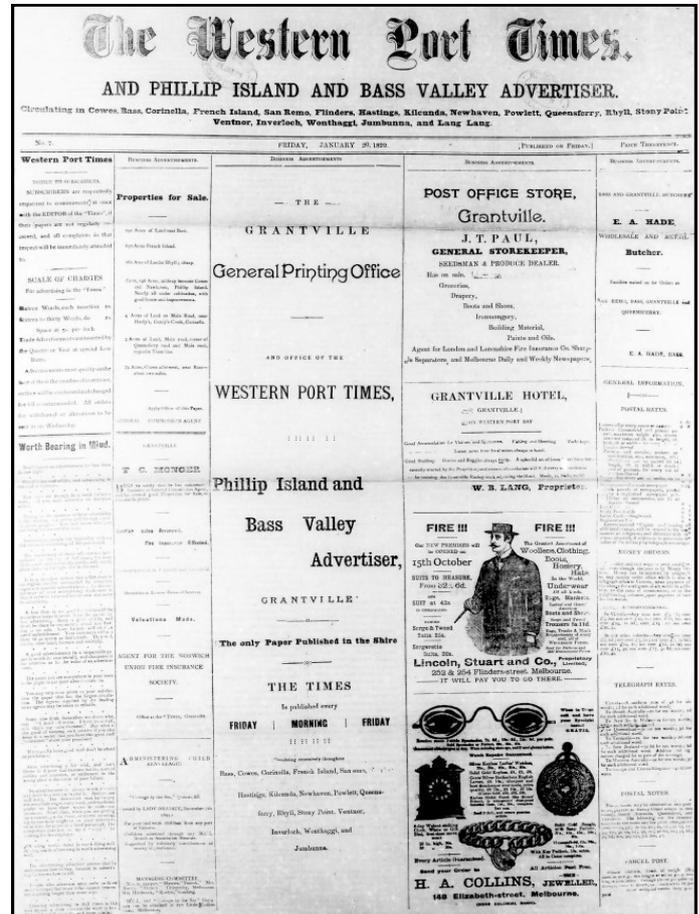
Thomas Monger went on to establish a general printing business, then Estate Agency in the same building.

The Western Port Times magazine, has been developed to act as a medium for news from the Grantville history website:  
[www.grantvillehistory.com.au](http://www.grantvillehistory.com.au)

The Grantville History website was developed after the start of the U3A Local History group in February this year.

The Group's points of interest include:

- Grantville:
- Hotels (Grantville Hotel & Prince Of Wales)
- Cemetery
- Pier (Old & New)
- Saw mills & tramways (Brazier Mill etc.)
- Primary Schools (various iterations)
- Western Port Times (1898-1910)
- 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)
- The Group's interpretation of Grantville & Districts, covers an area along the



Bass Highway, starting at The Gurdies, down to Corinella Road, then south through Glen Forbes, Almurta, Glen Alvie, Kernot and Woodleigh.

There a couple of vacancies in the group, which meets if you are interested in joining. Go to the Bass Valley U3A website, to register your interest:  
[www.u3abassvalley.com](http://www.u3abassvalley.com)  
or Email the Secretary:  
[bassvalleyu3aoffice@gmail.com](mailto:bassvalleyu3aoffice@gmail.com)

We hope you enjoy the journey with us, back through what is now 148 years of history of the town of Grantville.

The township was gazetted on September, 16, 1872.

Read the official proclamation in our special report on page 2 Of this first edition.

Want to make a contribution, feel free to contact us.

Editor

Check out the website and subscribe FREE - [www.grantvillehistory.com.au](http://www.grantvillehistory.com.au)

## Grantville Proclaimed.

This article, sent to us by Grantville part time local and Cemetery Trust member, Jane Hendtlass, details the original Proclamation of the town of Grantville, on Friday, 20 September, 1872, almost 146 years ago.

This of course means that Grantville will celebrate its 150th birthday in 2022.

Phillip Island is celebrating its 150th this year, with an amazing line up of events, and an impressive series of historical recollections and photos being published each week in the Phillip Island advertiser.

## PHILLIP ISLAND & SAN REMO ADVERTISER

If you have trouble getting a copy of the Advertiser, you can subscribe by visiting their website:

[www.pisra.com.au](http://www.pisra.com.au)

### In this edition

Our feature this month is a paper delivered to the Bass Valley Historical Society, September 2nd 1977, by Colin Skidmore, titled The Ghosts of Queensferry.

We believe this is a significant historical document on this area and would like to thank Colin for giving us permission to publish it here.

In the coming months we will be publishing documents, stories and photos from our collection, which is building up nicely as the group grows in popularity.

You can also follow the local history segments that have been published for the last 4 years by The Waterline on its website: [www.waterlinenews.com.au](http://www.waterlinenews.com.au)

As The Western Port Times is an online publication only, it was decided by the group to publish articles in single format columns, for easier reading in electronic formats.

THE WESTERN PORT TIMES  
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## VICTORIA GOVERNMENT GAZETTE

Published by Authority.

No. 64.]

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20.

[1872.

### TOWN OF GRANTVILLE.

#### PROCLAMATION

By His Excellency the Right Honorable JOHN HENRY THOMAS VISCOUNT CANTERBURY, of the City of Canterbury in the County of Kent, and BARON BOTSFORD, of Botesford in the County of Leicester, in the Peerage of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Knight Commander of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Colony of Victoria, &c., &c., &c.

WHEREAS by *The Land Act 1869* it is amongst other things enacted, that the Governor may divide into counties the territory not already included in any county, and may also subdivide any county into parishes and towns, and may divide into parishes and towns any territory not included in any county, and by proclamation to be published in the *Government Gazette* may define the boundaries of such counties, parishes, or towns, and may distinguish each by a name; and after such proclamation the territory comprised within the boundaries of any of the said divisions shall thenceforward be recognised as a county, parish, or town by the name so given as aforesaid: The Governor may from time to time at the request of the council of any shire or borough alter by proclamation to be published in the *Government Gazette* the name of any such shire or borough, and may also from time to time by proclamation as aforesaid alter the name of any county, parish, town, township, land, area, goldfield, river, harbor, lake, bay, lagoon, swamp, mountain, glen, or other place or locality whatsoever within Victoria: Provided that it shall be lawful for the Governor by proclamation in the *Government Gazette* to diminish or extend the area of any county or to alter the boundaries or name of any county, and to add the territory taken away from one county to any other adjacent county, and to divide any county into two or more counties and to give to each a distinguishing name: Now therefore I, the Governor of Victoria, with the advice of the Executive Council, do by this my Proclamation, in exercise of the power vested in me by the said Act, define the boundaries of a Town in the county of Mornington, and do distinguish such Town by the name prefixed to the description thereof, that is to say:

#### TOWN OF GRANTVILLE,

county of Mornington, situate on the eastern shore of Western Port Bay: Commencing at the mouth of Colbert Creek; thence by that creek to the road from Corinella to Melbourne; thence by that road bearing north-easterly to a point thereon fifteen chains north-easterly from the intersection thereof by the Hurdy-gurdy Creek; thence by a line bearing N. 70° 31' W. eleven chains, more or less, to Western Port Bay; and thence by that bay southerly to the commencing point.—(72.H.15906.)

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the Colony, at Melbourne, this sixteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and seventy-two, and in the thirty-sixth year of Her Majesty's reign.

L.S.)

CANTERBURY.

By His Excellency's Command,

J. J. CASEY,

Commissioner of Crown Lands and Survey.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

### SUBSCRIBE FREE

Have The Western Port Times emailed direct to your inbox each month.

Send your name and email address to:

[leader@grantvillehistory.com.au](mailto:leader@grantvillehistory.com.au)

## Railways history

One of our local history group members, Jan Walker, who has made a significant contribution to local history in The Waterline News over the last year, recently uncovered an old VCR recording of Railmotor Journeys on disused Victorian rail lines.



Included in this fantastic recording, which we showed on a big screen at our recent group meeting, was film footage of a railmotor journey from Wonthaggi to Nyora, highlighting all of the stations as they were then, including, Wonthaggi, Kilcunda, Anderson, Glen Forbes, Woolamai, Almurta, Kernot, Woodleigh and Nyora.



Since then we have also uncovered a fabulous 7 minute video on Youtube featuring footage of trains on the Wonthaggi-Nyora line, which is well worth a look.

Simply cut and paste the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POVGLCheLq4>

## Wanted

Group member, Geoff Guilfoyle, who is very interested in all things, trains and historical, is looking for photos relating to the long-gone Nyora to Wonthaggi railways, particularly Almurta Station, which we have no photographs of at all. Not that I wouldn't welcome photos of the Nyora to Leongatha/Yarram/Barry's Beach/Woodside lines/s or the Koo-Wee-Rup to Bayles Branch Line.

To a station of a different nature, we are also looking for any information, photos, details etc of the Bass Station restaurant, which operated on the Bass Highway, at Bass, many years ago.



**Send all inquiries, photos, stories etc for  
The Western Port Times to:  
leader@grantvillehistory.com.au**

Your input is welcome

Tell us what you would like to see and read about in  
The Western Port Times  
and on our local history group website.

If you are interested in joining our group, go to the website,  
log on to the local history group and register your interest:

[www.u3abassvalley.com](http://www.u3abassvalley.com)



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(PO Box 142 Grantville 3984)

The 2018 committee is:

Chairperson : Mark Dunbar

Deputy Chair : Geoff Guilfoyle

Secretary : Christine Holmes

Treasurer : Beverly Walsh

General Committee Members:

Vicki Clark and Sue Dunbar.

## U3A BASS VALLEY - 2018 ENROLMENT

If you are interested in joining your local U3A community, Bass Valley is now offering the following activities for 2018:

**Art for Pleasure**

**Book Club**

**Creative Writing**

**Gardening,**

**Get Creative**

**Local History (new)**

**Movie & Theatre Appreciation,**

**Tai Chi for Arthritis,**

**Travel & History**

**Welding**

An Annual Subscription of \$30 per person will cover as many U3A Bass Valley classes as you may wish to attend, subject to availability.

Current members of other U3A groups may join U3A Bass Valley for \$15 per annum as an associate member, which will cover as many classes that you may wish to attend, subject to availability.



## TAI CHI FOR ARTHRITIS

Hosted by Vicki Clark

Held at Coronet Bay Community Hall

Gellibrand Street

Every Tuesday 9:30 am - 10:30 am

**Other U3A Groups in the Waterline**

**News area are at:**

**Cowes (Pical)**

**Phone 5952 1131**

**and**

**Wonthaggi**

<http://www.u3awonthaggi.org.au>

**Ph: 03 5672 3951**



**Special Feature: The Ghosts of Queensferry, by Colin Skidmore.**

A paper delivered to the Bass Valley Historical Society, September 2nd 1977

*Re-typed and paragraphed from the original notes.*

Today, if a traveller allows his curiosity to get the better of him, and drives down the road labelled "Old Queensferry Road. No Through Road", he may well be disappointed. There is very little to be seen at first glance. A row of rotting posts reach out into Western Port towards the Red Bluff, a narrow sand beach, and a vast expanse of grey mud.



As likely as not, our curious traveller will turn straight round and leave, without ever finding out any more about the little town that is now so meagrely represented, and never knowing what he has missed by not giving Queensferry a closer examination.

If he had taken a closer look, our motorist would have found THE GHOSTS OF QUEENSFERRY. For Queensferry is a ghost town in the truest sense of the words. The atmosphere is still alive with the ghosts of the early settlers, the farmers and fishermen, the sawyers, the shopkeepers, the publicans and the sailors who made Queensferry their home.

This is by no means a final paper on a small stretch of almost empty beach. If someone wishes to read such a paper, they will have to look elsewhere. This paper seeks to explore a very personal feeling, a feeling which a now extinct town can still evoke if one has the time and the sensitivity to become aware of it. To believe in ghosts, we must first believe that there is some life-force able to exist outside the body.

Queensferry exudes such a life-force, in spite of the fact that the town is dead and will, in all probability, never revive. The ghosts of Queensferry are not only of the "normal" human type. Queensferry has a feeling of its own, all its own and quite unique. (As Louis Armstrong once explained about Jazz: "If you gotta ask, Lady, you'll never know.") During the period of my research, the ghosts have become flesh-and-blood.

One of the most interesting of the early settlers in the area of Queensferry was Alexander Stewart. Born in 1831, he was the second son of Mr John Stewart of Morayshire in Scotland. Having been brought up on a farm, Stewart worked at farming after having been employed in a solicitor's office for two years. He then decided to emigrate to Australia in 1852. Presumably, he was lured by the tales of the fortunes to be made on the goldfields.

He arrived at Melbourne on board the ship "Black Friar" on September 8th, 1852 with his brother. His first job in Australia was as a labourer at St. Kilda. After he had made enough money there, he proceeded to the Ballarat goldfields in 1855. He must have done reasonably well because for a time he kept the John O'Groats Hotel in partnership with Mr John Cruikshank. In 1855, he married Miss Elizabeth Mackay, also a native of Scotland. In 1857, he sold his share of the hotel to commence an agency business in Ballarat. This undertaking did not succeed, so he turned his hand to market gardening in Ararat.

After that, Stewart seems to have taken many strange and varied bush jobs, which gave him a vast experience of the rough bush way of life, and an ambition to succeed. In 1860, he found himself in the Mornington District. Since the Mornington District extended from Dandenong to Wonthaggi, it is reasonable to suppose that Stewart lived at or near Queensferry from this time. When he arrived, he had no money, no job, and a wife and five children to support.

Intending to become an apiarist, he collected wild honey and captured wild bees. Unfortunately, the bees died because they were collected too late in the season. He next made some sort of living by snaring wild animals for their skins which he tanned daily, his wife making clothes from them. It is interesting to wonder if he knew Leadbeater, the naturalist, who collected in the area.

It was then that Alexander Stewart began what was to be a long association with the timber industry. His first job was hauling logs of blackwood timber from the area of the Bass River. At this time, the whole area was densely covered in timber, amazing though that might seem now.

The type of timber growth is clearly shown. The trees were ideal for commercial exploitation, being large of girth, mostly over 250' in height and "clean sticks" up to the high branches.

They could be easily sawn into high quality building timber, which must have been a high premium for meeting the suddenly increased demand caused by the Gold Rushes.

Stewart rapidly progressed from labourer to manager of the company, then branched out and began working for himself, sometime in the 1870s. He built himself a sawmill in a valley near Glen Forbes, tapping a large hinterland of blue gum, messmate and blackwood.

One of the major problems for the timber cutters was transport of the cut timber. The steep terrain was frequently very wet and this made the use of bullock teams difficult. Experiments were made with the use of steam traction engines, but although they were enormously powerful, the engines could not operate in the steep and difficult terrain.

Stewart solved the problem by making himself a tramway out of timber.

This tramway connected the mill at Glen Forbes with Queensferry. The route followed the "Old Queensferry Road" to the present site of the Bass Highway. The tramway crossed to the Bass River, and crossed the Glen Forbes Road about two miles from the Highway. The necessary earth works are still visible along the side of the road.

As the various areas of timber ran out, the tramway was extended into new stands of timber. Stewart expanded northwards along the Bass River.

On the 20th February 1878, Stewart selected an area of 298 acres, Crown Allotment 162. Later, when it came to paying, he bought Crown Allotment 162A, an area of only 10 acres.

The construction of the tramway began in 1874, and was completed in two years. The first timber was then transported down the tramway in carts pulled by horses.

There are some doubts as to whether timber was ever shipped from the pier at Queensferry. One story goes that Stewart carefully off-loaded his first load of timber into the boat he had made himself on the beach of Queensferry. The additional weight of the timber caused the schooner, called "Tyro" to sit firmly and solidly on the bottom, and it didn't budge until all the timber was removed. For this reason, it is said that the facilities at Bass Landing were used instead.

Stewart was not the only sawyer to use the tramway, but he was one of the first to start milling, and his mill was one of the last to close down, as it did soon after Stewart's death in 1888. The mills were one of the major employers in the district, paying wages to 25 men, and cutting an average of 620,000 super feet of timber per year.

Stewart was by no means a man of few talents. In addition to his obvious talent as a farmer, miner, hotel-keeper and sawyer, he was also a trapper, a blacksmith, storekeeper, postmaster and boat builder. The "Tyro" was built on the beach at Queensferry, probably just to the east of the present road, on the frontage of Stewart's block. Stewart built his own boat because he did not have enough money to buy one. The ship was a schooner, a small, swift sailing two-mastered vessel, 75 feet long, 18 feet wide, 6 feet 6 inches deep, and 53 tons in weight. The boat sailed around Western Port and Port Phillip until 30th January 1906. On that date, the Master, Captain Henderson, lost the vessel in Cat Bay. She was carrying 20,000 super feet of timber, and the remains were sold for the quite magnificent sum of £1!

One rather suspects that Stewart was a rather strong character, both from his exploits in the Australian bush, and from reports of his behaviour. For some time, Stewart was a local councillor, but possibly not too popular with the other councillors. At one stage of his tenure of office, sometime in 1885, he was invited to inspect the forests of Borneo.

During his absence, he neglected to obtain official leave of absence. When he returned, he found that his seat had been declared vacant and Mr Isaac Delaney elected to replace him. Councillor Stewart attended the meeting at which Delaney first took his seat, and after informing the Council of his opinion of them he stalked out of the meeting. One can imagine the sorts of comments an ex-timber cutter would come out with when angry!

Whether Alexander Stewart was a popular man or not, he was certainly one of the very strong characters of Queensferry, and his is one of the strongest ghosts of Queensferry.



Of course, Alexander Stewart's is not the only ghost to continue to haunt Queensferry. There were so many other people whose characters were strong enough to survive the test of time. Possibly one of the best known of these ghosts is that of George A. McGowan.

George was a native of Canada, who arrived in Victoria in 1853, with his brother, who subsequently became Deputy Post-Master General. George went to Bendigo and tried his hand at mining.

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. For some reason, George chose to live in Queensferry. His interest in mining continued at least until 1896, when he bought shares in the newly-formed Glen Alvie Coal Mining Company.

McGowan had a large two-storey residence built on the fore-shore at Queensferry, on the Esplanade. Here, he gained quite a reputation by entertaining royally. Many well-known Melbourne personalities attended his extravagant parties and stayed in Queensferry. At one of these large parties, the house caught fire and was totally destroyed, probably due to negligence on the part of the occupants, who had obviously been enjoying themselves!

The fire did not end McGowan's association with the town. He built a one-roomed shack on the same site, and lived out his days, impoverished by his own extravagance, and possibly by the Depression of the 1890s. All that remains to remind us of Mr George A. McGowan today is a time-gnarled and weather-beaten pear tree, standing near the site of his two houses.

James Cuthbert was another Scot who settled in Queensferry. He was an engineer by trade, but he took up 35 square miles of land as a squatter in 1840, building his homestead on Temby Point just about where the Westaway and Hurdy Gurdy leases must have met. On retirement, Cuthbert moved into Queensferry and lived on a small freehold at the western end of the town along the foreshore.

Lyson Howell Williams was born in England and trained as a mill-wright and pattern maker. He came to Australia in 1857 on the "Morning Star." In 1874, he settled in Queensferry, after having carried on a pattern-making business for many years. He built a hotel on the western corner of the Queensferry turn-off, sometime before 1881. The whole area near the corner became known as The Victoria, after this hotel. Indeed, it is possible that at one time or another, there were hotels on each of the four corners of the intersection.

Of course, we have only looked at a few of the people who now occupy Queensferry in ghostly form. We have not looked at John Thom, who arrived in the area from Tasmania as long ago as 1838, nor Billy Hunt, the grave-digger, who lived in the last house on the east end of the Esplanade in Queensferry.

There are so many ghosts. Even the town itself enjoys a reputation for having a few ghosts of its own, as we shall see as we trace the outlines of its history. In common with most of the little towns which seemed to quietly appear, and as quietly disappear, accurate dates are almost impossible to find.

Queensferry was originally settled as a shipping point for the obviously vast reserves of timber to be found in the nearby hills, and so badly needed in the rapidly expanding colony. The scale of timber in Melbourne depended on a quick and inexpensive means of transport.

The road to Melbourne was difficult to transverse, and rather a long way since a diversion was needed around the Koo-wee-rup swamp. Therefore, it was necessary to have several ports in Western Port to serve the newly developing area of West Gippsland.

As to why that particular site was chosen, we have no way of knowing, but the areas of mangrove could not have been any more appealing than they are now. Perhaps the tramline direct to sea influenced the location of Mrs Stewart's store, and timber-cutters wives eager for the company of other women, did the rest.

Life in Queensferry during its heyday must have been rather fun. There were several hotels and one licensed Colonial Wine Saloon, and church services were only conducted in private homes by visiting clergymen. One scene of many of the extravagant balls held by Mr and Mrs McGowan was the Queensferry Athenaeum, or Mechanics Institute.

From 1881 to 1884, money was collected with a view to constructing a Public Hall in Queensferry. The hall was eventually built on a block of land on the Queensferry Road donated by Alexander Stewart, and officially opened on October 10th, 1884. The building and the land were sold on May 23rd 1902, but the hall was still used for public purposes until it was destroyed by fire.

Another source of amusement was the Artesian Wells Reserve in Corinella Road. Regular sports meetings were held there, and some were reported upon in the South Bourke and Mornington Journal. For example: Annual Sports at Artesian Well, Queensferry, Boxing Day 1877

First set of Quadrilles on Horseback at Artesian Well 31st December 1878

In 1879, we read of how Mr Stewart's little horse Dirk dropped dead at the winning post after a gamely run race at the Artesian Well Reserve. It is gratifying to note the total absence of any rowdyism.

In 1880, we can read the advertisement for the Queensferry Annual Sports Boxing Day. Some of the events were running, jumping, vaulting and archery, as well as flat, hurdle and trotting races. You will be pleased to know the seats and shade were provided for ladies and children.

Also for the children, there was the school. Due to the difficulties of getting children to school at Grantville, a school was opened at Queensferry under Mr George Driver on March 17th, 1876. In 1879, Mr Read was appointed to the school, and he was, in fact, the last teacher at Queensferry State School, No. 1707. Mr Read lived at the eastern end of Queensferry, and the site is still distinguished by a stand of cypresses and eucalypts.

In 1879, the school was destroyed completely by fire, but this did not mean a reprieve for the children. Another building was loaned until a new school was built. As it transpired, no new school was built in Queensferry.

The schools at Grantville and Queensferry were both replaced by a single school built between the two towns, near the present site of the Municipal Tip. This new school was opened by Mr Read on March 1st, 1883.

Of course, timber was not the only industry which took place in the town. We could safely assume that fishing took place, and we have the record of Mr Stewart's efforts at boat-building. In addition, Queensferry was also a stopping place for a coach of the Cobb and Co. type.

One of the less obvious industries in the town was coal mining. In fact, there were three coal mining companies associated in some way with the history of Queensferry; the Westernport Coal Company; the Glen Alvie Coal Company, and the Great Victoria Colliery. None enjoyed a great deal of success.

The Westernport Coal Company was based at Kilcunda, but the first load of coal was transported from Kilcunda to Melbourne by our old friend "Tyro." This company continued until 1888 when financial problems forced its closure.

The Glen Alvie Coal Mining Company was registered on May 21st 1896. The company was formed with shares owned by G. A. McGowan, E. Bowman, J. F. Kurre of Jumbunna, A. and E. H. Godding, J. R. Stevenson and Edward Cracknell who was another of the very interesting gentlemen of Queensferry. He was the manager of the company, with an office on the Esplanade. In addition, Edward Cracknell was an architect and engineer of great skill. He submitted a plan for the national Capital, Canberra, which received an Honourable mention. The Glen Alvie Coal Mining Company was disbanded after the initial seams were found to have been faulty.

The Great Victoria Colliery planned to construct a railway from the Bass Range to the Queensferry Jetty, a distance of about 6 miles. Although there was a lot of fuss and bother involved in the construction of the rail line, the costs were obviously not warranted as the company became bankrupt in 1898.

Finally, in connection with industry in Queensferry, it is interesting to note that Stewart's sawmill was re-opened by Shacklefords in 1911. The entire output of the mill was bought by the State Coal Mine for pit props and other coal mining purposes.

As an indication of the size of the timber in the early days, Shacklefords received, and filled, an order for a yacht keel to be cut from one log 60 feet long and 12" by 14" in width and depth. The photographs available indicate the size of the trees, and the sorts of conditions encountered by the early sawyers. There is nothing to indicate that these pictures were of Stewart's mill, but I like to think that they could have been.

Possibly the most intriguing aspect of the history of Queensferry is the causes of its demise. There are several factors involved of course. Clearly, when timber reserves run down the days of a timber town are numbered. This depletion was probably accelerated by the influx of farmer to the area. They were, naturally, not interested in waiting for the timber-cutter to remove the timber from their properties.

They were in too much of a hurry to get on with the business of farming, so they cut the timber out and burned it. This is probably the main factor, in my opinion, in the death of Queensferry.

Another contributing factor was the location of the railway.

It was claimed at the time of planning that a coastal rail line would have ensured that the settlements of Grantville, Corinella and Queensferry would continue to thrive. However, the rail line followed the other side of the Bass River valley and received much of the blame for the death of Queensferry.

In spite of this, I rather doubt that there would have been any need for three settlements so close together if the railway line had gone along the coast. Corinella had the advantage of the sheltered and accessible harbour, and Grantville was built around the fresh water supply of Deep Creek. Even if the railway had gone the right side of the range, I think the resultant cheap and fast rail transport would have spelt the end of the port of Queensferry.

Perhaps the most sensational theory deals with the rumoured earthquake or tidal wave which is said to have destroyed the town. In fact, it was this story that first sparked my interest in the history of Queensferry. I would dearly love to be able to say that the stories are true, but I cannot. There are no reports of tidal waves destroying towns on Westernport. Certainly, some sort of tidal wave did flood the town but it seems to have done relatively little damage.

Sometime in the late 1920s there was a King tide, which many of the older local residents still recall. According to Mr Angus McNabb, the whole thing took place one afternoon about two o'clock. The tide had gone out, when there was a large uproar from underground and the water rushed back into the shore. The tide was enough, he recalls, to strand several people. He remembers that Mrs Reid had to be rescued by horse and wagon. She was standing on the kitchen table to avoid the water.

In terms of the history of the town, the flood did relatively little damage, and the town was dying long before that time. However, it seems probable that the contours of the land would mean that any sea-water that was able to cross the fore-dune would be unable to readily find a way back to the sea. With a thorough saturation of sea-water, the land would be virtually useless for many years. The only remains of the tidal wave today are the numerous pieces of china that litter the beach at low tide.

To close this paper, I would like to retell a story told to me by Mr McNabb – a “real” ghost story. It seems that the whole thing took place on Tenby, the McNabb family property. The history of the McNabb family would make a full paper on its own, so I won't go into that now.

It appears that there was an old shack on the property that was for some time occupied by a rather poor family. During this time, a tinker regularly visited the property to mend, buy and sell pots and pans. He visited the shack and was never seen again. Shortly after this, the poor family left the area, and the daughters were said to have been seen in Melbourne in rather better clothes than one would expect. Sometime afterward, Mr McNabb decided to explore the truth of the tales that the shack was haunted. The tinker was said to have been buried under the hearth of the shack, so he resolved to dig up the hearth to find out. He took some friends and they made a picnic of the occasion. After some time digging they decided to have lunch. During their break, Mr McNabb surreptitiously buried some bones in the hole for his friends to uncover.

The discovery cannot have been too pleasant, and the subsequent laughter hilarious. Mr McNabb assures me that they also uncovered some shirt studs too, so there may be some real ghosts at Queensferry after all. I, for one, would like to hope so.

Queensferry has a great past, but I doubt that it has much hope of a great future. However, I do think that towns like Queensferry are important to us as members of the Historical Society. It must be our main task to preserve those features of our history that are still within the memories of our older citizens, because if the memories are lost now they can never be found again.

**Colin Skidmore, 1977**



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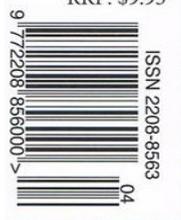
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