



DONALD HISTORY
& NATURAL HISTORY GROUP



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There was nothing at all in the early part of May, which facilitated the review and consolidation of the Donald Times index. But then, as often happens, the requests all came at once.

Most interesting was Rostron, the ancestor of Mandy Brooks, who had found that John Reid Rostron had a child registered in Donald in 1875. That took us back beyond our usual written sources of the newspapers. John Reid's father, Lawrence, was manager or owner of Tottington Station for a while, and John Reid set to and spent their money –he bought mines, a hotel (which later became the Farmer's Arms) in St. Arnaud, and went on his merry way until he became insolvent. Then apparently he must have drifted up this way. The birth certificate (one of those we hold) names him as an “overseer”, and Ron's valuations of the east and west ridings of the shire find Mrs Rostron has a house worth 7 pounds. St. Arnaud's “Track of the Years” and Ron's minutes of the St. Arnaud Shire, were invaluable.

Diane Mountney wanted information about the Mitchells and McMahons, which has been supplied; she also turns out to be a relative of the Bayles family, as her g-grandma was May Bayles, and she will be at Emu (as will Brian) for the launch of a book about the family. Now Diane want to know about the Federation drought, as it affected the selectors here – another interesting one.

Jill Barclay is related to the Scilleys, but was unable to find anything at all about them; but she said that as Donald had “Scilley islands” we might know something. She is now much more knowledgeable, and as she lives in Castlemaine, has been invited up to see Donald's one Scilley's Island.

Kerrie Brailsford (Borden) was glad to find that we have copies of Lance Basset's “Trelawny” book and also copies of the photographs on its cover, as the Mrs Basset is her g.grandmother. They were given to us by Marj Rye, and Mary is now working out how to send them to her digitally. Lynette Borden is to pick up the book, but has not come yet.

Items of Interest from the “Donald Times” 100 Years Ago”:

June 2, 1916: W.J. Murray wishes to inform the public that he has taken over the Royal George Hotel and will endeavour with personal attention to please all. Commercial and Farmers Dining Rooms; Electric Light Throughout; Hot and Cold Baths; Careful Yardsman always in attendance; Alcock Billiard /table; Only best of Wines and Spirits stocked; Special line of Good Wine for Xmas; Cabs meet all Trains. Phone 7, Donald.

June 6: The closing of hotels at 6 o'clock in Adelaide has not been responsible for any decrease in the number of cases of drunkenness dealt with at the police court. A comparison of the two months before early closing show there has been an increase of 26 cases of drunkenness; 27th January to 26th March, 192 cases; 27th March to 26th May, 218 cases.

June 9: Lord Kitchener Missing. A London telegram says that the cruiser Hampshire (10,859 tons) with Field Marshall Lord Kitchener, Minister for War, and his staff aboard, was mined or torpedoed on Monday night at 8 o'clock west of the Orkneys. Patrol vessels and destroyers immediately went to the spot, but only some bodies and a capsized boat have been found to the present.

June 13: A most enjoyable afternoon, given by Mrs J. Hodgson in aid of the Red Cross, was spent in the Cope Cope Hall on Wednesday. A prize was given for the most useful gift made from a shilling's worth of material, or failing a gift, a 1/- donation. The prize was awarded to Mrs E. Reseigh, jnr. of Rich Avon West for her useful little "huswife". There were many useful and pretty gifts, but the judge, Miss Meyer, pointed out that in the "huswife" there was something useful for man, woman or child, and it could be carried with them anywhere. After a delicious afternoon tea the gifts were sold, Mrs E. Reseigh making an excellent auctioneer. Great fun was cause by a few men who had joined the gathering bidding for most of the gifts and running them up—one of the shilling gifts going for 8 /-. The branch of the Red Cross will benefit to the extent of about £7. Merry ending to a happy afternoon.

June 16: On Wednesday night at St. George's Hall residents will have an opportunity of hearing the true account of the landing at the Dardanelles by one of our own Australian boys who actually took part in the landing and in all the battles in the first fierce fortnight, eventually being blinded by a high explosive shell. He is Signaller Tom Skeyhill, who thrilled the audience for 8 nights at the Athenaeum in Melbourne by his vivid and eloquent accounts.

June 20: A letter from Egypt by Victor Willey, 7/5/16, states that the heat was "just about 120 in the water-bag and flies were unbearable. I suppose the cold weather is beginning to set in in Australia, so I would not mind if I was there again, instead of at this outlandish place. I will be just like a kid with a new toy when I get back and hear a good orchestra and some Australian girls' voices again."

June 23: The first welcome to returned soldiers took place at the Donald Shire Hall on Tuesday, when Privates Allen and Cameron were awarded a public welcome, the hall being packed to the doors, the fair sex being in the majority. Cr. Sproat said, "You have helped to make the name of Australia imperishable in the records of history and fame. You were at Cape Helles, which was even worse than the landing at Gallipoli. Your comrades have also upheld the name of Australia at Lonesome Pine, and we congratulate you on being safe home again."

June 27: Sensational Bolt. At about 3 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, as Mr J. Adams and Miss Adams were driving in a gig from Laen to Donald, the horses became frightened through the breaking of a trace whilst crossing the Richardson bridge. After safely negotiating Woods Street and continuing on towards the cemetery the driver g\brought the pair to a standstill, fortunately without further mishap.

June 30: The following letter has been received from Private A. Pickering on active service in France, by Mr G.L. Pickering of Watchem: "By what I see of farming here, we would call it gardening in Australia. They hoe the wheat with a little machine pushed by hand between the drills. The old men and women are at that caper now, working away at their farms within five miles of the front line of trenches as if nothing was happening, and they never know when a shell will knock them out. It is much better here than at Gallipoli. After we come out of the trenches we get a hot bath and all clean underclothing -- a great luxury. I have left the infantry and joined the artillery. It is not a bad job behind the big gun. They have great inventions for washing and churning. The machines have treadles on them, and a dog turns them."