



**DONALD HISTORY**  
& NATURAL HISTORY GROUP



## **BULOKE BULLETIN NO. 288 FEBRUARY 2021**

Donald History Enquiries for December and January: Bob Muirhead requested the location of the Morton Plains homestead. We had this entry from the Donald Times, 13 May, 1913, which doesn't pinpoint the actual location so Bob was referred to the Birchip Historical Society.

"A fire took place at the residence of Mr. E. A. Warne, of **Morton Plains**, known as **Morton Plains homestead**, and demolished everything with the exception of a piano and a few summary pieces of furniture. It is thought to have originated from a fire burning in the children's nursery".

Brett Hudd is a descendant of James and Lavinia Ball. He called into the archives and requested information on the family. James and Lavinia were Carron farmers and then moved to Aitken Avenue where James ran a market garden from what was then 11 (now 9) Aitken Avenue. After James's death in 1962, Jack Burke bought the property. Some years later the house was demolished and Colin McConville, agricultural engineer, built the current house on the site. There were a number of entries for the Ball family in our Donald Times index.

Neil Stapleton is a descendant of Robert and Myra Ferguson who lived at 4 Gray St in the late 30s and early 40s and he intends to visit Donald later in the year. Neil asked for any information we have on the family. Robert Ferguson was a train examiner. Our Donald Times Indexes revealed an article where Myra had won "Stepping the distance". This led to a discussion amongst the archives staff as to what exactly this involved. We all knew that the older people, mainly women, at school picnics engaged in this competition. It was revealed that a length measurement (generally between one and two metres) was made with a fixed starting point and endpoint. People paced out the length and then guessed what it would be (in feet and inches of course). The winner was the one who had the closest guess to the correct measurement.

A family who have recently purchased a house in Donald wanted the history of their house. This is available for most houses for a \$5 fee. Houses which need to be researched will cost a little more. The family were told that the history of their house wasn't available but that has been rectified so we hope that they will call again soon.

A gentleman emailed from China to say that his copy of "Shire of Donald 1897-1995, A municipal History" had two missing pages and two blank pages. We immediately rectified this by sending him a new copy. Check your copies. There may be more.

Anne and Rob emailed to say that they had a copy of Winifred Fearon's book, "A journey back-1969", and that they would like to donate it to the Historical Society. Winifred, an English war bride from the first World War, is the mother of Bob Rogers, the recently retired radio personality. The book is a memoir of her life and includes her time spent on the Soldier Settler's block at Rich Avon. Her husband, Freddie, was also an immigrant having come to Australia in 1908. He enlisted from the Donald area and returned here after the war. We already have one copy of this very interesting book but will certainly accept another.

"Railway To Donald" by Lilian Kirk and George Stebbins still excites interest as another copy was mailed off recently. Our founding members have left us a wide array of publications, which are in constant demand.

Some of the late Ida Bourke's possessions, bequeathed to the History Group, included a lovely writing desk, given to Ida's aunt, Ida Trewin, on the occasion of her marriage to Rev Thomson, Minister at Mt Prospect, in October, 1915 by the Waubra Presbyterian Church community. Rev Thomson's Mt Prospect congregation presented the couple with a Silver Salver. Both items were engraved and we decided to offer them to the appropriate Historical societies. Creswick Historical Society, which encompasses Mt Prospect, were thrilled to receive the salver and Learmonth Historical society, which has now combined with Waubra, were equally delighted with the desk, which Peter Pendlebury obligingly delivered. Mary Archbold liaised with the two societies and also informed Carron Bourke of the successful return of the items to their rightful place.

## Blasts from the Past- January/February 2021

**January 31 Census Returns.** The Commonwealth statistician has forwarded to the various municipalities details of the Census of Australia compiled up the 4 April 1921. The population of the Donald Shire is set down at 3240 (1728 males and 1512 females). Occupied dwellings 662. Unoccupied 47. Charlton Shire at 2465 (1322 male, 1143 Female) Occupied dwellings 515. Unoccupied 20. Birchip Shire 1852 (1014 male, 838 female) Occupied dwellings 372. Unoccupied 23.....there were many other Shires listed as well.

**February 3. A Sad Fatality.** An accident, unfortunately attended with fatal results occurred at the home of Mr. And Mrs. Jno. Cannard, of Litchfield, on Monday last. About 4 o'clock in the afternoon, their little son, Harold William, aged 4 ½ years, was seen by one of the household, Miss Doris Merrett, to climb a large mangle, which overbalanced and fell across his body, crushing his head and chest. The mangle weighed about a hundredweight and when picked up, the child was found to be unconscious. Medical aid was summoned and the child was found to be suffering from fracture of the skull. He was speedily removed to Nurse Hoare's private hospital where he died at 9 p.m.

**February 3. Stoppage of Power.** Some inconvenience was caused in the town on Thursday by the difficulty experienced in starting the gas engines at the power station. Although much energy, both physical and mental, was expended on the refractory engines throughout the whole of the forenoon, it was not until after two o'clock that the recalcitrant consented to "kick" after which things went as usual.

**February 7. Watchem Races.** The Watchem Races will be held tomorrow. A special train is to leave Donald shortly after 12 o'clock, when a number of horses and passengers will travel north to attend this popular fixture. ;..The following may win the different events HURDLE RACE Wild Donald or Vestal maid, TRIAL Pearl Stick or Bal Boni, FLYING HANDICAP Beacon Fire or Hartoy, WATCHEM HANDICAP Lynwreath or Neilpo PUBLICAN'S PURSE Nocton or Hartoy.

**February 14. Elocution.** In response to numerous requests, the Misses MacDonald and Baillie, of Donald, have decided to open and conduct an elocution class, the first term commencing on Wednesday, 22 Feb. The children of the district have hitherto been at a great disadvantage in this respect....

**February 21 Statistics.** The local registrar of Births and Deaths reports the vital statistics for the district of Donald as follows

Births Male 47, female 52, Total 99

Deaths Male 3, female 8. Total 11

**February 17. A Hare Brained Act.** An act of folly, the like of which is periodically met with in some shape or form, was perpetrated on Sunday in front of Willey & Sons Premises. During the recent hot spell, it was the custom of townspeople and country residents alike to obtain the temperature reading from the large thermometer hanging under the verandah in front of the shop. On Sunday, however, some person or persons, with little else to waste their time upon and in benighted search of scientific demonstration, struck matches and held them beneath the bulb until the resultant heat caused it to burst. The damage could not

have been caused by a single match. Many must have been struck and used, as the protecting metal casing over the bulb was blackened and showed evidence of considerable heat. Some are born stupid and some achieve stupidity but the unfortunate owners of the thermometer and, incidentally the public, have had the results of inane stupidity thrust upon them in an aggravating and senseless manner indeed.

**February 21. A Painful Injury.** While running down the footpath in Woods St on Saturday afternoon Jack Power, son of Sen. Constable Power, had the misfortune to pick up a three inch nail, which ran through the ball of his foot. The lad was taken to the doctor where the nail was extracted.

**February 21.** Messrs Fred Perry and Edward Harty of Corack East, have both disposed of their properties, the former to Mr. Baldwin of Cope Cope at £9 10/- per acre, and the latter to Cook Bros. Mr. Perry will shortly journey to Heathcote where he will renew active operations as a grazier and Mr. Harty has bought land near Dumosa.

**C Accident in Woods St.** Wallace Power, the 8 year old son of Sen Constable Power had a narrow escape yesterday. While riding on Baker & Co.'s Lorry, he either jumped or fell off and the wheel passed over him. So far as can be ascertained, no bones were broken but the lad is suffering from shock, the wheel leaving its mark across his ankle. Sen. Constable Power is having more than his share of bad luck lately.

**February 24. A Narrow Escape.** A group Donald residents had a fortunate escape last week from what might have been a serious accident. Mr. Dave Muir was driving to Melbourne and had with him in his car, Mrs. J. Falla and Mrs R. J. Falla and children. All went well till climbing the big hill at Bacchus Marsh, when the engine stopped before the top was reached. The brakes refused to act and the car gained considerable speed as it rolled backwards down the hill. At the first it came into contact with a strong fence which had been placed there to protect vehicles from the gully below. The force of the impact threw the occupants out while the car was left hanging over the gully. None of the travellers were seriously hurt and it can only be ascribed as one of those acts of providence which often avert fatal results.