



BULOKE BULLETIN NO. 317 AUGUST 2023

Donald History Society Inc. has had microfilm copies of The Donald Times (1883-1946) The Donald Express (1883-1894) and The Donald Mail (1913-1917) digitised. The old microfilms were proving difficult to read as they and the reading machines had become very old. This will make our research much easier and will be less of a strain for our aging eyes.

People with “younger eyes” are always welcome to volunteer at the archives. If you are interested in indexing the papers, we are currently working on the 1970s and 1980s so we are well behind. Computer skills are not a prerequisite as you will be instructed on what to do and it is not very difficult.

Enquiries for July

Una Round wished to know if the Donald Times indexes had information on the wedding of a relative of hers, Edith Alice Peverill, who married Victor Dunstan in April 1923. The couple lived in the Donald area after their marriage, but Edith sadly died in February, 1924. Edith was born in Charlton in 1899 and is buried in the Charlton cemetery. We had no information on the wedding but a little on her death.

Michelle James was looking for family details on her grandmother, Pearle May White, who was born in Donald in August, 1917. We were unable to help as Pearle’s parents did not come up in our index.

Kevin Findlay called into the archives on his way to Mildura. He is 83 years old, and he recalls being sent to stay with a family in Donald in about 1940 as a holiday “away” from the city. He thought that the family that he stayed with was “The newspaper people” but the ages of the children that he played with did not fit the Letts family and Robin was away that day so he couldn’t be consulted. Kevin ran out of time and went on his way, but we hope that he can call back and we can sort it out for him. He has definite memories of the paddocks behind the house that he stayed in but much of Donald may have been like that then.

John Coats called in, triumphant with a copy of the Coats family history, 2nd edition, "A Devonshire Lad", which he has donated to the archives. Florence Breed, who is a cousin of the Coats family, compiled the original edition and John has been busy collecting updates from all over Australia. The family had a very successful reunion and launch of the book at "Ilfracombe", the original Coats selection at Jeffcott.

Stephen Henderson is researching John Shirley (1817-1890). John was married in England but was widowed eight years later, leaving him with four young children. In 1854 John and his second wife came, with his four children and a stepdaughter, to Victoria. Stephen Henderson is trying to trace John Shirley's life from 1854 until his death in Watchem in 1890, aged 72. Our Donald Times index helped with the last 8 years of his life as they show that John Shirley was in Watchem in 1882 and selected land there in 1883. The land was near to that selected by Robert Blair, whom John's daughter, Sarah, had married in Clunes in 1861.

Blasts from the Past. August 1923

August 3. Floods in Donald. Owing to the heavy weekend rains the Richardson has been in full flood over the past two days, the maximum height, which was about four feet below the 1903 flood, being reached on Wednesday. The yards and several dwellings at the lower end of Woods Street were submerged, but the water is now receding, after having broken the bank at many places and torn up the roadway between the bridges. Small losses of sheep are reported in paddocks adjoining the river. Owing to washaways between Cope Cope and Sutherland and at Curyo, the train services from Melbourne and Mildura have been seriously dislocated. At the time of going to press, word had been received that water from the breakaway from the Little Wimmera had reached Banyena.

August 7. Rich Avon Hall. A dance was held at the Hall on July 28, and, considering the almost impassable state of the roads, attendance was very good. Dancing was carried on until 11.45 to the music of our well-known artists, after which a very dainty supper, provided by the ladies, was handed round. The next dance is to be held on Saturday next. In consequence of the decision of the committee to have the Hall painted, this has been carried out. The Hall is now one of the best in the surrounding districts. It is pleasing to note that the library is well patronised.

August 10. Local market gardener charged with possession of opium. At the Donald Court of Petty Sessions yesterday, before Messrs. D. Grant P.M. and A. Hepworth and T.W. Cantwell J.s P., a Chinese named Willie Dark, who is a familiar figure in Donald, was charged with having, on the 26th July, been in possession of opium in a form suitable for smoking. When the charge was read out to him by the Clerk of Courts, Mr. D.G. Blair, accused nodded, confirming the gesture with the expression "Yes, I smoke 'im". Mr W.E. Pearcey, of "Pearcey and Ney", instructed by the Pharmacy Board, appeared for the

prosecution. Constable Morrison deposed that in company with Sen-Constable Power, he visited defendant's garden at Witchipool Road, about 1.5 miles from Donald on 25th July, about 1.30 p.m. In the presence of the accused they searched his room and found the opium and outfit produced in Court. One tin contained pure opium, while the other three contained opium which had been smoked once, but could be used again. The tin of pure opium had been hidden in the leg of his trousers, and he was sitting on it. The rest of the outfit, consisting of lamp, pipe, and other paraphernalia had also been discovered in the room. Several questions were addressed to the accused, with a view of ascertaining his knowledge of the English language, but the answer was "no savvy".

Constable Morrison said that the defendant understood and spoke good English, as he had known him for two or three years. Holding up the tin of pure opium, he said, "Did I find this under your leg" The answer was an understanding "Yes".

Sen-Constable Power gave evidence as to the search. He could also say that the substance in the tins was opium as he had had previous experience of it in Ballarat and Bendigo.

Mr Grant asked Mr Pearcey whether it was not usual to prove the character of opium by expert evidence. Mr Pearcey said that it was not the usual thing to go to the expense of proof by analysis when the constables concerned had previous experience of opium.

Mr Grant "This substance has not been submitted to any analysis. How is the Court to believe that it is opium on the evidence of a witness who is not an expert".

Mr Pearcey "We admit there has been no analysis, but would point out there has been no contradiction and that there has been definite evidence as to its character. It would be an easy matter to adjourn the case to a later date, but it would mean much more expense if I were to return and bring with me the analyst, Mr Price".

After consultation with the remainder of the Bench, the P.M. said that the Court was not satisfied that it was fair to say that the substance before it was opium on the evidence of non-expert witnesses, unless it were submitted to analysis.

An adjournment was therefore ordered to the 6th September, when the analyst will also be present in Court. It was also decided to obtain the services of an interpreter.

We spoke to Willie Dark's family about including this article in our "Blasts". His grandson, Terry Young, wished us to include the following statement.

Historical research can be biased by the newspaper reports of the time.

"Opiates were used by members of both European and Chinese communities, however there were specific racially-biased fears around the importation and use of smoking opium by Chinese immigrants and the operation of so-called 'opium dens'. These fears dovetailed with a backlash from Europeans over an increase in Chinese immigrants during a period of recession in Australia, contributing to the existing political and economic-based fears fuelling the growing hysteria surrounding the Chinese community."

This Excerpt is from "Drugs and stigma: a short history. 21/08/2019. Alcohol and Drug Foundation"
<https://adf.org.au/insights/drug-stigma-history/>

This is a bemusing example of a typical newspaper article in 1923. I just don't want history to brand Willie Dark as an opium addict. An article without context will continue this bias.

August 14. Not to Act as Justice. Notification is given in the "Government Gazette" that at a meeting of the State Executive Council on July 31 an order was made by the Lieutenant Governor (Sir William Irvine) prohibiting Mr Bernard Lavery, who by virtue of his being president of the Donald Shire, is a justice of the peace, from acting as a justice. The Attorney General (Sir Arthur Robinson) declined to comment on the prohibition, but admitted that the procedure was unusual. We have been informed by Cr. Lavery that he considers his side of the question has not received due consideration. We understand that he has a perfectly good explanation to tender. In connection with the Shire elections, which will take place on Thursday, August 23, Cr. Lavery has withdrawn his nomination.

August 17. Football. Premiership Table.

| | Played | Won | Lost | Points |
|-----------|--------|-----|------|--------|
| St Arnaud | 11 | 8 | 3 | 32 |
| Donald | 10 | 7 | 3 | 28 |
| Watchem | 10 | 6 | 4 | 24 |
| Birchip | 11 | 0 | 11 | 0 |

August 21. Donald Police Court. (Before Messrs W.A. McPherson and C.A. Forer, J's P.)

Robert Eric Vaughan was charged with having, on the 24th July, at Donald, stolen an overcoat, valued at £6, the property of J.L. Fahey. Mr C.J. Robinson appeared for the defendant, who pleaded guilty. Sen-Constable Power prosecuted.

Joseph J. Fahey, railway clerk, stated that he attended the dance at the Hall at Donald on the night of the 24th, and left his hat and overcoat in the dressing room. He left at 12.15, and was unable to find his overcoat. The coat produced was similarly marked to the one that was his. He did not wish to see the accused heavily penalised now that he had his coat back. Constable Morrison said that on the 13th inst., in company with Sen-Constable Power, he had visited accused at Mr J. Whelan's house, Laen. He admitted being at the dance, but denied having taken the coat. Witness searched and found it in a bran bag. When accused was asked to come in to Donald he admitted to Sen-Constable Power that he had taken the coat. He said that he had gone out with several companions to have a drink, and as they had all put on their coats, he had picked up one and put it on. When he came back he heard somebody saying he had lost his coat, and he was frightened to put it back then. He said he was sorry, and did not know why he had taken it.

Witness said that the accused had not given any previous trouble, and he believed his story to be true. Sen-Constable Power gave corroborative evidence, saying he had seen the accused enter the dance room that night. Defendant told him later he had placed the coat in a lane and had ridden as far as the bridges, when he then returned and took the coat home. He expressed relief at "getting the thing off his mind".

Mr. Joseph Whelan, farmer, of Laen, said that the accused had worked for him for nearly six

months. During that time, he had found him reliable, well-spoken and honest. He had frequently left him in charge of the farm in his absence, and had entrusted him with business in Donald. He was willing to take him back again.

Mr C.J. Robinson said that it was evident that the accused had not taken the overcoat with any criminal intent. His story was perfectly reasonable, as he was frightened to put the coat back when the owner was in the room with Sen-Constable Power looking on. He had not attempted to get rid of the coat. He had only had one or two drinks during the day, which were just enough to render him incapable of looking at things in their proper perspective. He had an overcoat of his own and the original taking of the coat had been purely an act of foolishness.

The Bench announced that, in consideration of the good character given to defendant by the police and Mr Whelan, it would deal leniently with him. A fine of £2, with £1 costs was imposed.

August 24. Cr McPherson retains South Riding Seat. The election for the vacancy in the South Riding, caused by the effusion of time, was held yesterday, when a steady stream of ratepayers was maintained in the direction of the polling booth. The retiring candidate, Cr. McPherson, and his supporters left no stone unturned to secure his return. Mr Morgan made no canvased and solicited no votes, he left the choice solely in the hands of the voters. Shortly after 5 p.m. Cr McPherson was declared re-elected with a solid majority of 205 votes. In proposing a vote of thanks to the returning officer, Cr. McPherson said that he did not take credit to himself personally. He considered it was meant as a vote of confidence in the whole of the Council. Mr Morgan had said nothing that was good about the Council's actions and had pulled it to pieces whenever possible. He again thanked the returning officer.

August 28. Donald defeats Cope Cope. This match provided a really excellent game. Donald secured a fair lead in the first half, but Cope asserted their superiority in the second half, and drew up amid tense excitement. The teams were as follows:- Cope Cope: Bath, Humphries, Coats (4), Gilmour (2), Trollope (3), Penny, Willis, Goode, Anderson, Pritchard, Pilgrim (2). Donald: Mouldy, Mills, Wright, Kane, Harris, Justicar, Baker (2), Douglas, Bayles, Pearse, Cummings, Hay, James, Pollard, Warren, Burns, Henderson.
Final score Donald 6.3 to Cope Cope 5.8.

August 31. Paved with Gold. When breaking the metal for the new formation in High Street, Wedderburn, several specimens were found by those engaged, and last week another, containing 5 dwt of gold, was picked up by Mr James Hall, who was filling his draw with the metal. How much more has been spread on the road is not possible to say, but the "Express" says it is probably the richest stretch of metalling in the Shire of Korong.