



BULOKE BULLETIN NO. 321 FEBRUARY 2024

Please note that we now have a new email address: [*donaldhistorysociety@gmail.com*](mailto:donaldhistorysociety@gmail.com)

Enquiries for November -January

Former Donaldites, Des and Pauline Sunderland called in to the archives to enquire about donating family photos to the archives when they are next passing through. We said “Yes Please”.

Craig Finnegan wished to know the site of Meyer’s original store at “Richardson Bridge”, which was what Donald was first known as. The answer is in “Shanty at The Bridge” and is based on thorough research done by Ron Falla.

It states that the North Western Rd linking St Arnaud to Morton Plains (now Woods St Donald) was 5 miles south of Banyenong Homestead owned by William Donald (now Glengar). The first Richardson Bridge was already constructed by then but it was a mile south of this new road. This is where the Meyer plaque is installed showing the site of the store and house (on the Donald South Rd, behind the golf course). J.A. Meyer had his store and built a substantial dwelling with a tin roof near to this bridge. The Squatters tried to get him shifted but he wouldn’t comply. They thought that they had won when the bridge had to be moved to be on the new road. The bridge was then moved to near the current Laen Bridge, at the Johnson Goodwin Homes. Meyer claims to have helped with the removal of the first bridge and promptly put his house on skids and used bullocks and a roughly cleared road to drag his house and store over to the new road and close to the new bridge.

Lois and David Spenceley want information on the Lavery, Moran and Moore families. They will return at a later date.

Nola Aiken wanted information on Gladys Walford, former infant welfare sister in Donald in 1929.

Heather Woods has been trying for many years to find a trace of her grandparents. Mary Anderson, who was said to have been born in Donald in 1871 and later married James Maher, in Donald, c. 1900. Heather has been unable to find any certificates, birth, marriage or death to trace Mary Anderson, but Heather and her brother are living proof that she existed. Heather has found evidence of James Maher being in Donald about the time of the marriage. It seems like DNA testing will be

the best way forward for Heather, and she has decided to go that way. We look forward to hearing what she comes up with.

Samantha Church writes from Queensland

“My great- grandparents and their family once owned a pub in Donald, but I can’t find it. I’m not sure if the name has changed or if it’s no longer there. My great grandparents were Vincent Herwin Gray and Ethel Davis Gray and they owned the Grand Central Hotel in Donald in 1954.

As part of my father’s bucket list, we’re planning to stop in for lunch at Donald while doing a road trip from Queensland to Victoria. Any help you can provide would be fantastic.”

We have sent information to Samantha on the site of the now-demolished Grand Central Hotel, and look forward to meeting her family later on in the year.

Maree Goods sent a photo of a family that was in the possession of the late Rene and Bob Anderson of St Arnaud. The photographer was W H Whiter of Donald. Whiter was a photographer in Donald 1908-10. His shop was the first in a row of shops next to Donald Tyre and Mechanical, later demolished by B.M.Basset to build the current shop, occupied by Bev’s Baubles. Whiter took the 1909 flood photographs. Maree wondered if we could identify the family in the photo, saying that they could be Duxsons, Morgans, Coates’ or Pilgrims. The photo was taken c.1910.



We did some sleuthing and came up with the following.

The Parents are Robert Elijah Pilgrim and Ellen Crosbie of Cope Cope. The children are from left:

- Robert Charles b. 1905 at St Arnaud. This is Charlie Pilgrim who farmed and retired at Donald. He married Ailyce in 1940 and had two children, Gary and Marjorie.
- Clarence b. 1894 at Gre Gre
- Ruby b. 1896 at St Arnaud. Married William G Pope. Died of pneumonia, aged 22.
- Irene Margaret b. 1900 at St Arnaud. Married Henry Humphreys in 1928.
- John Edward b. 1907 at St Albans. Known as Jack. Married Olive Goldsbury in 1937.

The couple had another daughter, Sarah Ellen May, in 1912.

Phil Waring would love a photo of Theo Harsant, who was Donald's chemist from the early 1900s. We were unable to oblige and would like to hear from anyone who can, as we would like a photo of Theo as well.

Kim Goldsmith from Dubbo wanted information on the Corack Goldsmith family which we were able to supply.

Julie Richards and her husband, from Leongatha, called at the archives during a January caravanning trip. Julie is the great granddaughter of Frank Perry and Agnes Falla. We were able to tell Julie the site of the original Methodist Church in Campbell St and the three brick houses, 18,20, 22 that were built on the site following its demolition. Edward Perry, her farmer Ancestor and a staunch Methodist lived at Corack Station and had much to do with the church and building the Campbell St cottages. Peter Falla, Donald's first Blacksmith was Julie's other ancestor. There is a display of Peter Falla machinery miniatures in the courthouse Museum made by Boyle of Lake Goldsmith. Julie and her husband were thrilled to see them. They also ventured onto Scilleys Island to find another Peter Falla implement on display. They intend to return to have a look in the Agricultural Machinery Museum at the Showgrounds to look for more Peter Falla implements.

Blasts from the Past. February 1924

1 February. Dogs and Sheep. Owing to the depredations of dogs Messrs. Miller, Broughton and Sproat have lost sheep to the value of £50 within the last three weeks. Complaints are also prevalent from other landowners situated closer to Donald, and poison is being laid in an endeavour to put a stop to the pranks of the predatory canines.

5 February. Rain, Hail and Dust during the weekend. For some days past residents of Donald and district have been anticipating something startling in the way of weather conditions- and not without just cause. A gradual change from perfect weather, to sultry days and intolerable nights, presaged something unusual, and although thundery conditions followed as a matter of course, nothing sensational materialised. On Saturday the threatening aspect of the sky kept many country residents from visiting the town, and slight showers occurred at intervals. The heat was not minimised, however, but was aggravated by clouds of dust blown from fallow paddocks and wagon-ground roads. A heavy downpour occurred late in the evening, and during the night the wind blew with hurricane force. On Sunday afternoon dark storm clouds appeared in every quarter, while brilliant flashes of lightning were very frequent. Nearly every portion of the Shire was visited by the storm at some period during the day, the rain being particularly heavy in the Cope Cope and Laen districts. At the residence of Mrs Grewar, snr. (Cope Cope) a heavy visitation of hail occurred, the piece of jagged ice being too large to admit of their being placed in a large sized tea cup. Many of the pieces were secured and used in the cool safe. All of the windows on the west side of the house were broken, and in one portion of the verandah a hole in the iron bore testimony to the force of the storm. The trees in the fruit garden were wholly stripped of leaves and fruit, leaving the ground carpeted with debris. On the Soldier Settlement at Rich Avon much damage was done. Messrs. C. Evans, R. Woods and F. Rodgers had a particularly lively time. Pieces of ice the size of hens' eggs were plentifully strewn around slaughtering 20 fowls, 5 turkeys and dozens of chickens. Most of the windows were broken and the iron roof was perforated until it resembled a giant sieve. The diggers were forced to take refuge under the tables wherever possible, the hail threatening to wreak as much destruction as shrapnel. Mr F. Rodgers had the misfortune to have 20 acres of crop destroyed. In Donald the fall of hail was negligible. The lightning was very severe. At about 7 pm Mr H.G. Tonkin was watching the progress of the storm from the verandah of his residence, and saw a record hit for the golf links. The lightning struck a tree, enveloping it in flame, after which a yellow haze appeared. On making an examination it was discovered that the tree had been struck high up. The lightning had then travelled to the ground making a hole and loosening the earth to a depth of several inches. Pieces of the tree were scattered in all directions. Crossing the Banyena Road near the Soldier Settlement, a strip of timbered country shows the effect of the storm, trees of all descriptions having been completely stripped of their foliage. A bull belonging to Mr H.S. Pope was struck by lightning and killed. A total of 21 points of rain fell on Saturday, and 60

points on Sunday. When full details come to hand it will not be surprising if the total damage done is found to be very considerable.

February 8. Sad Fatality. A most unfortunate occurrence took place at Mrs J. Byrne's residence, 4 miles from Banyena on Tuesday last, when her little daughter, Veronica, aged 7 years, met with an untimely death. The little girl's brother, aged 14 years, was driving a low-set lorry which is commonly used on farms, and was carting a water trough on it. The little girl was standing near her mother who was milking a cow at the time and, on the approach of the lorry, she jumped on to it. Her brother called to her to get off again, and, as he looked back the horse moved round. By some means the bolt from the body of the vehicle had slipped down and jammed the turntable preventing the wheels from slewing in the ordinary way. The consequence was that when the horse turned the lorry capsized, falling across the little girl's stomach. Her death ensued two hours later. The deepest sympathy is felt for Mrs Byrne, who suffered bereavement by the loss of her husband only seven months ago.

February 12. Motor Accidents. Two motor accidents of a minor nature occurred in Donald during the past day or two. Mr Gooden was driving his Ford car carrying his Artistone piano when a back axle broke at the entrance of Wood Street. No further damage was done. A car, belonging to Mr H. McNeill of St Arnaud, and driven by Mr J. Swanson, swerved off the Watchem Road just above the bridges and crashed into an electric light pole near the gum plantation. The accident was due to a breakage in the steering gears, and although the car was considerably damaged, nobody was injured.

February 15. The Ubiquitous Motor. Business in the motor car line appears very brisk at the present moment, so much so that it will soon be more uncommon to be without a motor than to possess one. Agents in Donald report good sales, and it is only a few days ago that Mr Browne and four other residents journeyed to town to bring back five cars for Lance's Garage, the purchasers being Messrs. T.P. Connellon, J. Crosbie, D. Lowry, D. McIntosh and R. Richards. Three more cars are now on the way to Donald.

February 19. Duck Opening. Each succeeding year sees Wood Street, Donald, becoming increasingly animated on the day preceding the opening of the duck-shooting season on Lake Buloke, 1924 being no exception. Though arriving somewhat later than usual, hundreds of cars passed through the town, and formed an impressive sight when lined up on both sides of the street while the owners provided the finishing touches to the commissariat. The attendance of guns and cars at the Lake itself easily constituted a record and can be taken as a certain indication of the growing popularity of this sporting ground. Those unfortunate enough to station themselves on the south side of the lake could not claim to have had a successful morning's shooting. The only complaints arising from those located at the north-east and Watchem sides were that the ducks were too thick. Quite a number of car loads of five or six shooters collected the full bag allowed, while scoops of 60 and 100 birds per party were frequently reported. Most of those in possession of boats shot until they were tired. On the whole, the opening was considered an enjoyable, and, from the point of view of 90

per cent of the shooters, a successful one. A big effort is being made to organise another tilt at the duck on the morning of the second day of the Donald races, Wednesday, February 27, at day-break. The only accident reported was in the case of a visitor from Stawell, who was treated in Donald for a gunshot wound in the hand. Visitors from distant parts, attending the lake for the first time, left Donald promising themselves another visit next year.

February 22 Vital Statistics. The record of births and deaths registered at Watchem and Donald for the year 1923 is as follows.

	Males	Females		Males	Females
Births, Donald	48	51	Deaths, Donald	9	10
Watchem	7	2	Watchem	7	1
Total Births	55	53	Total Deaths	16	11

Of the deaths, 4 were under the age of 1 year, 5 between the ages of 20 and 40, and the rest over the age of 40 years.

February 29 Serious Charges Dismissed. Two charges of indecent assault preferred against Oliver Samuel Fordham at the Donald Court yesterday morning. The cases were heard behind closed doors, and were not disposed of until the afternoon sitting. Defendant was acquitted on both charges and was discharged. Mr C. J. Robinson appeared for the defence.