DONALD HISTORY SOCIETY INC.

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Enquiries for July

John Fairbairn is one of our newer residents and is seeking the history of his house. John tells us that his uncle, Allan Barratt, was the manager of Crofts stores in 1952 and that one of Allan's sons was born in Donald. We do not have much history of the various "Crofts" managers so this is something fresh to add in.

We were invited to attend the last two occasions of the Vinelander Tourist train stopping at Donald in 2026. The organisers wanted us to welcome and interact with the dozens of people who alight from the train and are looking for locals to talk to. The lovely toilet facilities at the Donald Station have been remarked upon by many of the visitors, who suggested that a gold coin donation would be enthusiastically supported. Four History Society members attended on the 24th July and one had attended on the previous visit. Some great conversations were had and a number of "Railway to Donald" books were purchased. Two women were looking for an extra to make up a bridge game. If we had said that we played we may have been kidnapped. The next trip through is 21st August and the train pulls in generally between 11.30 and 12 noon.

Russell Skelton rang. His father, Philip Skelton taught at Litchfield from 1926-1928. Russell said that his father took leave from his teaching job, during this period, to travel to America to ride "the Hobo Trains" with the unemployed workers as the Great Depression worsened. Russell is writing his father's story about the trip. Our Donald Times indexes have Philip living and teaching at Litchfield in 1926. He played football for Litchfield Carron and also had a bad experience after attending something at the Litchfield hall and having someone else take his hat home, by mistake, leaving theirs in its place. The Victorian Electoral rolls have Philip living and teaching at Lichfield in 1928.

The White ant infestation at 58 Woods St is still active but is greatly reduced with just a few ants remaining.

Tam from Mt Jeffcott decided to do her family history and found that one of her great-great grandmothers was a Whelan from Banyena. She was curious to find photos and a number have been found, shared in trees on Whelan Family history websites. Tam and the Archives now have photos of the original selector, John Whelan and his wife, Julia Carroll.

Kel Boak from Maitland called at the archives. Kel is the youngest child of Bill and Pat (nee Cannard) Boak. Bill and Pat Boak were part of the exodus from this area to Moree in the 1960s and that is where Kel grew up. We were able to give Kel all the Donald Times entries about his parents and two photos, a DHES one containing his mother and a family group containing his grandmother, Ruby.

Denise Cochrane is doing family research on the Noonans/Nunans from Corack East and purchased one of Ron Falla's Selectors Books of that Parish.

Tom Lannigan from Plymouth UK is researching his family history and writes "I am currently researching my family history and, in particular, the life of my great-granduncle, **George Charles Santillo (1905–1927)**.George was born and raised in Plymouth, before emigrating to Australia. He arrived in Victoria in March 1927 and found work as a farm labourer in the Donald district. Tragically, George took his own life near Donald on **3 August 1927**, only a few months after arriving in Australia."

Tom has the inquest into the death and has found that George worked for Henry Salter Pope on his property "Currajong", which is only a few km from Donald on the right hand side of the Stawell Rd. George shared a hut with Joseph Greenup on that property but was also friends with Thomas William Wigham/Wightman, who worked at R.A. Broughton's nearby. Both these men gave evidence at the inquest. George is buried in the Donald Cemetery under the name Santello. Tom Lannigan would like to know if any descendants of Wigham, Greenup or any of the Broughton descendants have any further information for him about his uncle. The Donald Times indexes record that Greenup left Pope's property later in August, heading for interstate. There is no information on Wigham. George wrote to his mother in a final letter saying that Australia was "not the land of milk and honey that it is painted".

''Blasts from the Past. August 1926.

August 3. Donald Police Court. (Before Messrs. C. J. Forer and W.G. Pearse J's.P.) Sentence Suspended. Henry Hands, a farm labourer, employed by Mr. J. Paynter of Laen, was charged with having had, in his possession on July 27, a tarpaulin suspected of being stolen. Defendant pleaded guilty. For the prosecution, Senior Constable Gibson said that on the 16th of July a man named J.H. Manson passed through Donald in a car on his way the Wentworth. He placed his car at the rear of the Grand Central Hotel for the night and partly covered it with a tarpaulin. In the morning, it was gone, and he reported it to the Birchip Police as he went through that town. Later Constable Morrison went out to Laen and interviewed defendant. Constable Morrison said that he saw the accused at Laen on July 27. He admitted having been in Donald on the night of the 16th, and admitted having taken the tarpaulin. When asked where it was, he had taken witness to his room and gave it to him.

Accused, when asked if he had any statement to make, said that he was “terribly drunk" on the night in question. Senior Constable Gibson said that Hands had had four years of the war and his present employer had found him an excellent worker. Mr. Paynter was quite willing to take him back. After consideration, the Bench decided to convict the accused and to impose a sentence of one month’s imprisonment, sentence to be suspended on accused entering into his own personal surety in the sum of £10 to be of good behaviour for 12 months. Costs amounted to 30/-.

August 6. Wrestling Matches. On Wednesday night a fairly large crowd witnessed the wrestling matches between Jack Hamon and Anton Koolman, and Sam Burmister and Peter Fatouros. The contests were won by Hamon and Burmister respectively.

August 10. Personal. Friends of Mr. R. Sands of Corack East, who recently several fractured ribs and collarbone when his horse fell with him, will be pleased to know that he is making very satisfactory progress.

August 13. Price of Bread. A notice appears elsewhere in this issue to the effect that owing to successive increases in the price of flour, the following prices for bread will operate on and after Monday next. 4lb. loaf, 1/1 (cash), 1/2 (booked). It is further stated that accounts will be regarded as being on a cash basis if settled within thirty days.

August 17. Donald Higher Elementary School. Presentation of Picture. On Wednesday last, at the Higher Elementary School, the A.N.A. prize for the most improved school garden was presented by local members of the A.N.A., in the presence of the assembled children. Mr. V. Smith, president of the A.N.A.(Donald) presented the picture to Mr. G. Weinberg, president of the School Committee, who after addressing the children handed it over to the head teacher Mr. J. Williams. The picture was hung in the main hall and is a fine addition to those already there.

August 22. St. Arnaud-Donald Road. The Country Roads Board has granted the Kara Kara Shire Council the sum of £10,000 for connecting up metal sections of the St Arnaud-Donald road.

August 27. A Brilliant Function. The annual Hibernian Ball, which was held on Thursday last, was a splendid social success, attracting visitors from St. Arnaud, Charlton, Minyip, Woomelang, Birchip and other places. It is estimated that over 160 couples were in attendance, but notwithstanding this great throng, arrangements were carried out smoothly, and with great credit to those responsible. Messrs. W.I. Ryan and J.J. McFall, president and secretary respectively of the local H.A.C.B.S. are also to be commended for the manner in which they handled the arrangements for supper. Music was supplied by the Donald Merrymakers’ Band, and the hall was prettily decorated.

August 31. Personal. Messrs. T.O. Guthrie and R.H. McLennan have again been elected to the committee of the Australian Sheepbreeder’s Association.