**Happy Hollow background**

The land surrounding Happy Hollow farm at Plenty was purchased by Francis Wickham in 1840. The land was later subdivided and held by various owners including Charles Partington (1875) and John McLaughlin who leased the property in 1892 to Robert Emmett Whatmough who erected the first dwelling on the property.

The land was later owned by Mrs Betty Bell and was purchased by Parks Victoria in 1994 to form part of the Plenty Gorge Parklands.

**Happy Hollow articles from Trove (Christopher Bell)**

Weekly Times (Melbourne, Vic. : 1869 - 1954), Wednesday 3 September 1952, page 37

COCONUT FOR WRENS

Another bright note from "Happy Hollow" farm at G r e e n s b o rough (Vic.), where young Christopher Bell writes of fantail cuckoos, embellishing his notepaper with sketches of same. He says that the scrub wren, in whose nest the cuckoo wanted to lay, dived in agitation into some Christmas lilies and disappeared. Do vou mean Christmas bush, Christopher? The Madonna lily, second earliest of all liliums to sprout, is only up a few inches. This bit will appeal especially to those who feed birds: "I bought a coconut and hung half of it up at the window sill and the blue wrens love it."

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Weekly Times (Melbourne, Vic. : 1869 - 1954), Wednesday 24 March 1954, page 42

Trigger plants not native to Victoria

Here is a letter from Christopher Bell, of Happy Hollow Farm, Greenshorough (Vic.) that I laid aside for a while, trying to see if I could get a reproduction of one or two of the sketches that adorn his notes and. give an entertaining glimpse of what a boy's life on such an aptly

named -property is like; but I think we will have the epistle without embellishments. It well deserves, and gets, the 10/- prixe this week.

Trigger - plants that Christopher describes are not a native of Victoria at all, but somehow must have strayed over from the highlands of New South Wales and Queensland. As he notes, the pollination mechanism of this little grass-like plant is so arranged that any insect touching the lower end of the column (which is the combination of stamens and pistil into a solid body) causes it to spring up and hit the insect, powdering it with pollen. It is a mechanism to make any botanist rejoice and marvel. Christopher writes : — "When I was walking home from the dentist, I heard 'Kwok! Kwok!' And on looking up, I beheld a Red Wattle-bird on a gum tree. I had not seen one before. "There was a trigger plant growing nearby. It is a very curious plant. When a bee comes to get nectar, the triggers are released, showering the bee with pollen! I also captured a Caper White Butterfly, which feeds on the 'Native Caper.' Though this is not plentiful in Victoria, the butterfly sometimes comes down here. "On Sunday I went over the river to help some students look for ants. There was one who had a jar with a bulb and tube on it. When he pressed the bulb ants were sucked up the tube. We found several kinds, and I have a nest of harvest ants in a jar. They gather seeds. "I also have a collection of caterpillars, and am waiting for them to become butterflies. There is a Monarch and ' a Darala, and a black and yellow one."

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Weekly Times (Melbourne, Vic. : 1869 - 1954), Wednesday 22 November 1950, page 36

"Things" About A Snake

With an inquiring turn of mind and delightful economy of ; words, Christopher Bell, of "Happy Hollow," Greeitsborough, Vic. warms the cockles of my heart with a letter that wins the 10/- prize this week, "hands down." Consisting of 30 words, his literary effort earns 4d. a word, which elevates this very young Australian into the top ranks of highly-paid Australian authors, none of whom, I imagine, ever earned half as much for twice the effort:

"We killed a copperhead snake today. It had about nine things half under the scales on its back. Could you say if snakes often have them, and what they are?" In a carefully sealed little packet. Christopher enclosed nine small dark objects and labelled them "things." Bless him! I have seldom enjoyed an enclosure so much, not even in those rare epistles that begin with the four sweetest words in the English language, "Enclosed please find cheque. . . ." Reptile Parasites they are, or rather were, ticks, and they are parasitic on most Australian snakes and the larger lizards, though I think the snake ticks are of species different from the lizard ticks and one cannot live on the host of the other, any more than a fowl tick can live on a dog. In keeping snakes in captivity, these ticks become a menace to the health of the snake, which if forced to starve, rapidly lose condition. As the ticks increase their blood-sucking activities, the snakes weaken and die. The old snake-pit at Healesville Sanctuary was literally lousy with them and had to be most thoroughly "de-loused" before re-stocking. The ticks can be easily removed from a snake by drawing it through a kerosened rag, which of course is a job for experts. Otherwise, in a state of nature, the ticks do not seem to worry the snake much. As an old American humorist, David Harum, said of similar parasites: "A reasonable amount of fleas is good fer a dawg— they keep him from broodin' over the fact that he is a dawg!"

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Weekly Times (Melbourne, Vic. : 1869 - 1954), Wednesday 6 April 1949, page 26

Found Remains of a Feast

A very young Australian who lives in a 1 house with a delightful name, "Happy Hollow,' Greensborough, tells of an unusual discovery. A prize of 5/ to seven-year-old Christopher Bell for a remarkably well-written note:—

I would like to tell you about an extraordinary thing I found today. On a slightly raised, bare patch of earth, I saw the remains of hundreds of beetles. While looking at them, I discovered that lots of tiny black ants were crawling around. These ants were going in and out of the beetle remains. I also saw that the beetles were different colors and kinds. Do you think that the ants had collected them, or found a beetle burial place —if beetles have them? Probably some insectivorous bird; such as a blackbird or thrush, had been carrying beetles to this mound and beating the hard wing-cases, or elytra, off the body before swallowing them. Then along came the ants to fossick among the remains to see if any crumbs, such as odd legs and things, could be gathered from the bird's feast. Specimens of elytra of these beetles were submitted to Mr C. G. Oke at the National Museum, He identified four different species: the gold stag beetle, a bleached black dynastid, a black cistelid and one of the large ground -weevils.

Weekly Times (Melbourne, Vic. : 1869 - 1954), Wednesday 20 October 1954, page 53

Kangaroos near city

Greensborough is almost an inner suburb of Melbourne these days as the over-populated metropolis sprawls out, and it is remarkable to hear from Christopher Bell who lives at "Happy Hollow Farm" of great grey Kangaroos not merely visiting his suburb, but living there. There are no toads in Australia, and the brown batrachian found by his pup Sally was the Australian Bull-frog (Limno-dynastes dorsalis), whose first name means "Lord of the Marshes." It is usually olive brown, with or without darker markings. The Golden Frog (Hyla aurea) is generally, but in correctly, called a bull frog. Though its color is normally bright green, it can camouflage itself by turning brown. A 5/ prize for Christopher's letter: — "Six great grey kanga roos had been living here, but they have gone now. One day I saw a grey goshawk sitting on a tree, and on another day I found a half-eaten whistling eagle on a log. I think it must have been eaten by another eagle. Yesterday when I was in my tree hut, I saw Sally (our puppy) digging in the bracken. When I investigated I found a large brown toad. "I took him home but he escaped. I also saw a tiny fawn tree-frog in a crack in the bark."

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