

**EARLY
SETTLERS
OF
ARTHURS
CREEK,
VICTORIA**

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SOME DATES

- 1844 Leaseholds taken up in the district.
- 1862 Arthurs Creek named and surveyed. Duffy's Land Act.
- 1863 The first selectors arrive. A log crossing constructed over Arthurs Creek.
- 1873 Methodist church built.
- 1876 Arthurs Creek school opened (No. 1666).
- 1887 Mechanics' Institute erected.
- 1913 A new bridge put across the creek.
- 1922 Motor trucks begin to be used by fruit carters.
- 1928 Catholic church built.
- 1941 Rural Fire Brigade formed.
- 1953 Fire shed erected.
- 1961 Electricity connected to the area.
- 1962 School and schoolhouse burnt down.
- 1963 New school built.
- 1966 Reticulated water supply. Bridge widened.

A Pool of Memory

When we were very small, my sisters and I used to paddle in a shallow pool in Running Creek while our parents packed peaches nearby. About 15 feet square, the pool was floored with flat rocks and kept to a depth of 18 inches by wooden posts driven into the bed of the creek. It was a sheepwash, built by the Draper family about half a mile downstream from Brennans Road and used until the river flats were planted with fruit trees.

A mob of wild horses, coming down the spur from Ardchattan station, used to drink and cross there before working their way back up the creek on the other side. If Drapers wanted a horse they would drive this mob into the sheeyards and rope one; but eventually they shot them out when they became a nuisance to the young orchard.

My father told me about the horses. I remember the pool myself and I reckon the flat stones are still there under the mud, though few know of them.

Much else about the Arthurs Creek district has been covered by the years and largely forgotten, and this short account of early settlers is meant to save some of it — interesting, amusing or instructive — from oblivion.

Based partly on what I heard from my father and, for the the rest, on what I could recall myself or find out from other people and old records, this historical sketch is concerned, mainly, with the first generation of settlers before and immediately after the passing of Duffy's Land Act in 1862.

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James T. Murphy
Bradefort
Arthurs Creek
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Patrick Reid

A stroller along Bourke Street, Melbourne, in April 1839, might have noticed a Scotsman busily engaged in building a house on a grassy slope, near Queen Street. This was Patrick Reid, a solicitor, who had left Scotland in October the previous year in the S.S. **Glen Willie**, landed in Sydney, transferred to a small schooner and completed the voyage to Melbourne, the whole journey taking some six months.

While he built his house, his wife and seven children (soon, with the birth of Hugh in 1840, to become eight) were living close by in tents. His cowshed was where the Law Courts now stand, and his children went to school where Kirk's Bazaar was later to flourish. Reid was a great friend of Sir Redmond Barry, but there was little scope for solicitors in Melbourne, so he decided in 1843 to go on the land.

He was granted a leasehold of Stewarts Ponds, being one square mile (640 acres), in 1844, and named his holding Hazelglen after his home estate in Scotland. Later he added more land, his northern boundary (a plough furrow) running east from Yan Yean adjoining the southern boundary of Bear's leasehold of nine hundred acres. Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe once forfeited Reid's lease on the grounds that twelve full months notice to renew had not been given. This led to a law suit which Reid finally won. He also won the right to convert his property to freehold, but the legal action had nearly ruined him. It was not until his sons William and Hugh went to the diggings in 1852, and did very well, that the Reids were able to buy out the original leasehold and convert about 1200 acres to freehold.

In 1858 William Reid inherited the property. He had a family of four boys and four girls. Two of his sons served in the Boer War and two in the First World War. Two grandsons served in the Second World War. William Reid was a member of the first Road Board, a member of the Whittlesea Council for fifty-two years, a foundation member of the Arthurs Creek Mechanics' Institute and a trustee of the Arthurs Creek cemetery.

Arthurs Creek and its Cemetery

Arthurs Creek was named in 1862 by the surveyor Thomas Nutt, supposedly because one of his party, a Mr. Arthur, died and was buried close to where the bridge now stands. He was buried on the rise above the bridge, where William Murphy was later to build his house. (The land is now owned by F. W. Nankervis.)

But what became the local cemetery was the hilltop where Mrs. Patrick Reid had expressed a wish to be buried, and where she was laid to rest in 1847, her husband following her eleven years later. First called Linton, the surrounding area, covering six acres, was gazetted as a cemetery in 1867. The original road into it was so steep that the horses often could not pull the hearse up the hill in wet weather. It was not until 1927 that the trustees,

John MacDonald Jr. took over his father's farm. In his family were five girls and three boys — one of whom, Harold, was killed in France in the Great War.

Other Early Settlers

The **Christian** family arrived in 1864, but no record remains. **James Sutherland** sailed with his parents from Liverpool on the **Black Eagle** in 1854, having come from Sutherlandshire in Scotland. He eventually took up land south of the Christians' holding and running towards Mine Road and Lintons Bridge. He married Mary McPhee and died at the age of seventy-eight years, being buried in the Hazelglen cemetery in July 1922. **William Laidlay**, born in Cumberland in 1841, arrived in Australia in 1853 and lived at Glenvale, Barbers Creek and Bundoora before coming to Arthurs Creek (Nutfield) in 1873. He had two sons and four daughters. **Charles Creighton** was born in 1846, also in Cumberland. He arrived in Melbourne as a child of six, living at Bundoora before moving to Nutfield in 1869. He had a family of two boys and four girls, and was a champion ploughman, winning many trophies. **Joseph Lobb**, born in Cornwall, and coming to Australia in 1857 on the **S.S. Eastern City**, worked for some years at Brunswick before coming to Doreen in 1865. **James Millar Brock** came, with three sons, from Kirkliston, Scotland, to Tasmania, in 1833. He came to Melbourne in 1840 and took up a leasehold at Bundoora and Oak Hill, Preston. Later he settled at Arthurs Creek. **Richard Bassett** was born in Cornwall in 1838 and reached Melbourne in 1859. After working in Brunswick for a year, he farmed at Darebin Creek, then at Greensborough and, finally, at Arthurs Creek (Nutfield) from 1866. There were eight boys and one girl in his family. All the boys married and settled within fifty miles of the old home.

A Continuing Connection

Several families have retained an unbroken connection with Arthurs Creek. Richard Bassett's youngest boy, Harold, took over his father's home and was still living there in 1970, when he celebrated his hundredth birthday. Totally blind, but still active, he maintained that if he had his sight he could manage another fifty years! However, he died a few months later.

The Reid family are still on Hazelglen. Two families of Drapers still live in the district, and own the original selection. There are four families of Murphys and one Brennan family. There are two Macmillan families, two Sutherland families, and a Laidlay, a Brock and a Bassett family.

These nine names were all borne by men who settled in Arthurs Creek before 1870. There are also women whose name or maiden name is MacDonald, and are of the family of John MacDonald — and so on.

Ardchattan

Down Running Creek from Murphy's was Ardchattan, the Macfarlane home on the originally large leasehold taken up in the 1850s. Selections were eagerly made on parts of this land after 1862, until the property was whittled down to about four hundred acres. This, too, was eventually sold and the Macfarlanes moved away.

Brennans

Below Ardchattan was Lodge's place and, next, Pierre (Pirrie) Brennan's. Pierre's brother, Michael, had come to Queensland from Kilkenny, Ireland, about 1855, where he joined a drovers' camp which brought a mob of sheep through New South Wales to Bendigo (then Sandhurst). He caught the gold fever, then left for Diamond Creek about 1862. A relative at Greensborough persuaded Pierre to migrate without Mick's knowledge, and the two brothers played cards all evening without recognizing each other. Later the two went to New Zealand to mine, and did well.

In 1869 Pierre bought the selection on Running Creek and Mick bought Pine Hill. Michael had three boys and three girls; Pirrie had two boys.

An occasion still remembered in the family is the day that Pirrie lost his log roller. He had put the swingle tree on, hooked up the horse and led her to the ploughed ground. What he had not realized was that, coming down a steep gradient, the roller had run on to the swingle tree, unhooked and shot over a bank out of sight. Pirrie headed back for home when he found that he had no roller, missed the point where the roller had gone over the bank, but followed the tracks back to the pine tree where the roller was usually kept — and was completely bewildered by the apparent disappearance into thin air of a heavy log roller. Poor Pirrie had some bad moments before it was eventually found.

John MacDonald

John MacDonald arrived with his wife on 12 August 1852, by the **Theodore**, having come from Inverness, Scotland. Their first child (also John) was born in Collins Street in 1853, but in that year they moved to Yan Yean, where they lived until coming to Arthurs Creek about 1864.

Mrs. MacDonald was a wonderful woman. She did a lot towards the building of the Arthurs Creek Methodist church. When a Mrs. Roberts died in childbirth, Mrs. MacDonald took the baby, rearing him on the breast with her own son, Alex. This lad later went back to England with his father (and was alleged to have been closely connected with Lord Roberts of Boer War fame).

MacDonald died in 1869 and, on 12 October 1874, his widow married Cornelius Stewart, a carpenter from Glasgow. This was probably the first wedding in the Methodist church.

supported by Councillor Raymond Reid, were able to procure land, with funds raised by public subscription and a grant from the Whittlesea Council, and construct an easier entry.

A Ghost Story

A widowed Mrs. Smith attended her husband's grave very religiously each Saturday evening, usually finishing what she was doing by lantern light. One evening a rabbit was caught in a trap under the fence and she thought she would give a lecture on the cruelty of trapping to those responsible. She sat on a gravestone and hid the lantern under a white dustcoat she was wearing. The trappers arrived and were just taking the rabbit from the trap when Mrs. Smith stood up and walked towards them. One looked up, saw a light and a white figure rise from a grave, grabbed his mate by the arm and pointed. The second trapper looked, screamed something, and both took off as fast as their legs would carry them — maybe faster.

Schools and the Smiths

The Hazelglen school was the first in the district. In 1872 there were over fifty scholars, taught by Mr. and Mrs. Alex Smith. Initially engaged as a tutor for the children of the Patrick Reids, Smith was a brother of Duncan and John Smith who held the leasehold of the nearby Glen Ard station.

This property extended from Strathewen along Arthurs Creek to the present township; the homestead block included the land on which the Glen Ard Cool Stores now stand. About half a mile north of this a herdsman and his family were burnt to death in a bushfire. The two landholders are buried in the Arthurs Creek cemetery.

The Arthurs Creek school was opened in 1876. The school and schoolhouse were burnt in 1962 and a new school was built in 1963. Early in this century there were as many as ninety-three scholars on the roll, and an average attendance of fifty-two pupils having to attend only three days a week in those times. The school now averages about twenty pupils.

Near Hazelglen also, on its eastern boundary at Pine Hill, was a general store (destroyed in a bushfire in 1902) run by a Mr. Cornell and, later, by Alfred Bassett. (Pine Hill is now owned by F. T. Frankish.)

John Bear

Almost nothing is known of this pioneer. He took up land in the area about the same time as Patrick Reid, having a leasehold extending two miles west from the Plenty River and one mile north, and another leasehold running a mile east of the river, adjoining Patrick Reid's on the south and Archibald Macfarlane's Ardchattan station

on the east. A large landholder, Bear also had a lease of land between Morang and Diamond Creek.

A Curse in Verse

Bear left his name to a hill which features in a local feud. A contrary man named Rankin, who had a selection on Bald Hill beyond Strathewen, was very bad friends with another settler named Davey Wilson (Lame Davey). Wilson had to meet the three o'clock train at Yan Yean to pick up his wife. Just at the foot of Bears Hill, his jog cart came up behind the slow vehicle of Rankin, who was going to Gillian's store at South Yan Yean for his week's groceries. The road was very narrow. Rankin kept right in the middle and Wilson could not pass. In the cutting, where the road was particularly narrow, Rankin stopped, put two stones behind the wheels and the nosebag on his horse, got back into the four-wheeled trap and settled down for a nap. Davey Wilson called Rankin everything, but to no avail. And the incident gave rise to the following verse:

Out of the way, Mr. Rankin, for I cannot wait,
I'm meeting my wife, and I know I'll be late.
Why did you stop, your nag's stomach to fill,
 Couldn't he wait till the top of the hill?
I hope when you die and you go to the Gate
 St. Peter will give you a very long wait.
I hope he will say 'Rankin get down below,
 For you never gave Lame Davey Wilson a go'.

The Macfarlanes

Archibald Macfarlane was headmaster of a boys' school at Brighton, England, before coming as headmaster to a boys' school at Brighton, Melbourne. Deciding to go on the land, Macfarlane secured the leasehold of the area between Bear's and the Smith brothers' Glen Ard. His holding ran almost to Arthurs Creek from the mountains. Three of his children attended the Arthurs Creek school for some years. One son became a doctor, one a minister, one the owner of a sheep station near Bathurst, N.S.W., and the fourth (Alex) studied medicine for three years before trouble with his eyes forced him to give up his studies.

Macfarlane built on Running Creek, calling his place Ardchattan. Alex took over the management, married William Reid's eldest daughter, and selected four hundred acres after 1860. He farmed this for many years, but later sold out and the whole family moved away.

Thomas Murphy

In 1864 Thomas Murphy arrived in Arthurs Creek with his wife and seven children. Two more were born later. He had left Lurgan, County Armagh, with his wife and three children in 1856, sailing on the **S.S. Atlantic**. He worked at various jobs, at one time contracting with a horse and dray in Melbourne. He split posts and rails in Prahran, carting them to fence the first stone bridge over the Yarra at Flinders Street.

Selling a bush block of five acres at Clifton Hill, he started dairying at Somerton, but water was scarce and the family moved to Arthurs Creek, selecting a block adjacent to Charles Draper's.

A Church and a Hall

Thomas Murphy, his son William and a Mr. Green (a Catholic) split palings and shingles in Kinglake to build a Methodist Church at Arthurs Creek in 1873. All the palings and shingles were split from one tree, and the shingles remain under the iron which now roofs the church. The land was given by John Ryder. Before this the Methodists used to hold their services on his property anyway, under a gum tree on the flat.

The Mechanics' Institute was built in 1887 and a public library was added. Mr. P. Green was the librarian for years, keeping the library open two nights a week.

The Brass Band

There being quite a number of young men around, a brass band was formed. Mr. Collins, of Tanks Corner (Yarrambat), was bandmaster. This venture was very successful and for many years the band played at functions in surrounding districts.

Three Green boys played in the band. When the last family of Greens sold out in 1967 a long connection with the district was broken. The Greens were a great asset to the social life of Arthurs Creek in its early days.

William Murphy

The eldest son of Thomas Murphy, William, bought all but thirty-five acres of Ryder's, and built his house where the post office now stands. He had a brick kiln, worked by the Spicer brothers, opposite Drapers Lane. He donated the land on which the Mechanics' Institute was built and eventually sold the post office block and built a new house over the bridge, about where Mr. Arthur had been buried.

Altogether five Murphy boys settled in Arthurs Creek when they were married, so that it was often referred

had to find work elsewhere until their farms became profitable, and they sought employment on the construction of the Yan Yean reservoir, the Wallaby Creek waterworks and the Whittlesea railway line.

From the 1890s into the early years of this century, every farm had a wagon and horses carting fruit to Melbourne, a dreary trip of six hours. Towards 1910 the export of apples to England was taken up and, until about 1920, it was common to see some thirty wagons at the railway siding at Yan Yean when there were apples to be loaded for a fruit boat.

But fruitgrowing fell into decline. Most orchards were beginning to show the want of manuring by the 1920s, although growers were slow to realize it. Then very poor prices in the depression of the 1930s settled the issue.

The large Glen Ard orchard and cool stores, owned by the Apted family, survived the depression — and still survives, the considerable quantities of manure and water used from early days making the trees look very different from those in the first orchards.

Most residents, however, turned from fruit and stepped up tomato-growing which had been gradually developing. As the depression worsened, and buyers offered a mere shilling a case for factory tomatoes, this line became hopeless.

The neglected orchards — apples and peaches, pears and plums — were pulled out, the tomatoes were forgotten, and the farms were sown down to grass and given over to sheep. Wool and fat lambs were profitable at times, particularly for the larger landholders, but wool could sell as low



A fruit-carting scene. Actually taken at nearby St. Andrews, this picture is equally typical of Arthurs Creek around the turn of the century.

The Village Smithy

Where the Catholic Church now stands (a late arrival, built in 1928 by F. Sims), a blacksmith's forge and two-roomed cottage were erected about 1892. The smith was a Mr. Maloney. Hundreds of horses were shod in this smithy, all the fruitgrowers of the district getting their work done there in the days of carting to Melbourne and, later, to the railway siding at Yan Yean.

Mr. Joseph Murphy had a set of three-leaved tyne-driven harrows handforged in that blacksmith shop in 1895. Very heavy, they were still in really good condition over forty years later when they were taken from the district in 1937.

Gathering Moss

On one occasion Joseph Murphy was going to market with peaches. While loading, he was asked if he could take in about four cases of cherry plums for Hugh Macmillan. He said that he would try to squeeze them on, but Macmillan arrived with nine cases of plums.

"Come and have a cup of tea," said Jos, "while we figure out how we might load them. You'd better tie your mare up to the fence there." "No need for that," said Hugh, "She'll stand there till the moss grows on her."

While they were away an old sow with her litter came sniffing and scratching under the cart. The scent of the plums excited her. She called her young, and they came running and squealing, which was altogether too much for the mare, who bolted down the hill, along the gully and up the next hill, spilling cherry plums all the way. Finally, she jammed the cart against a tree, and there they found her.

All hands were called to pick up plums, but only the greener ones were any good, and a total of four cases was salvaged — just the number Murphy had reckoned on fitting in. His young son was heard to comment during the loading operations, "Golly, the moss sure grew fast on your mare today, Mr. Macmillan."

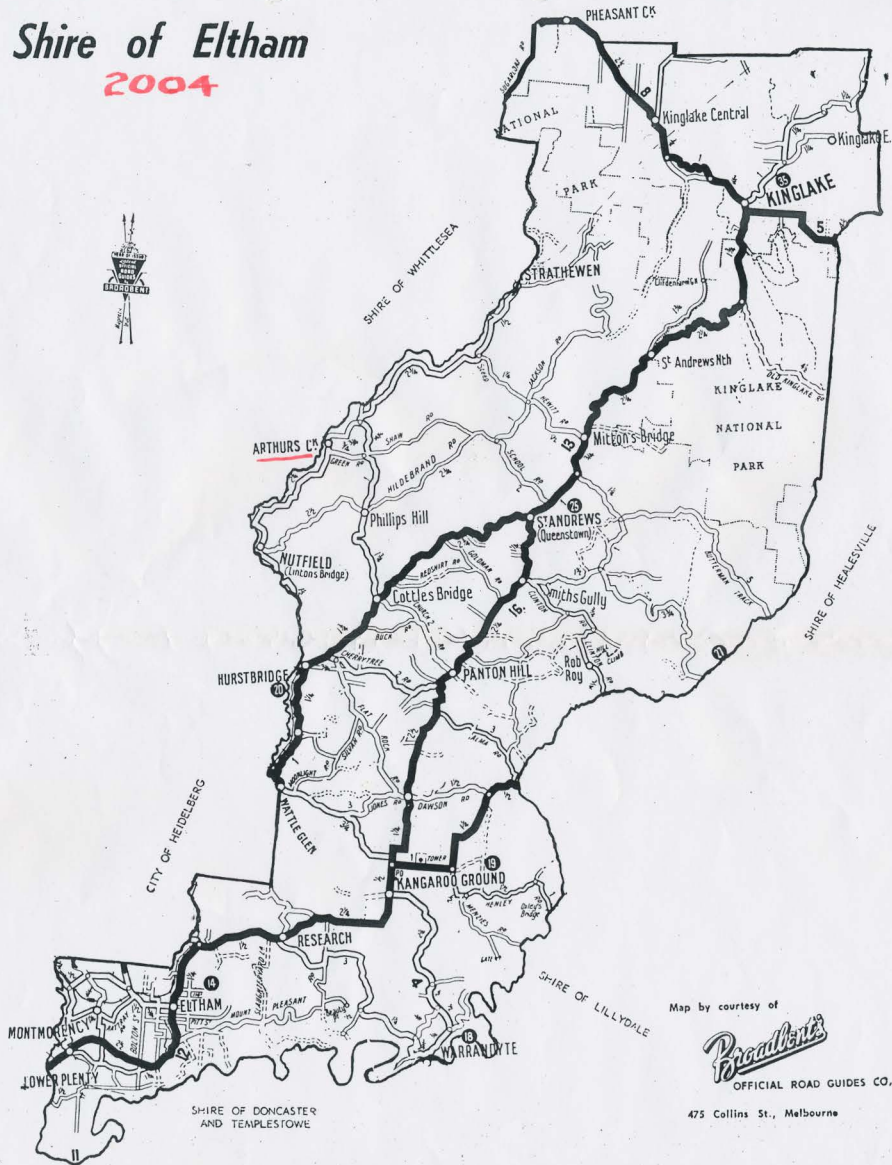
The Changing Economics of Arthurs Creek

In the 1840s the shepherds followed sheep about the unfenced runs. This began to end when the selectors, who were required to build a house and do a certain amount of fencing each year, started to move in. On the farms, butter, eggs and poultry were the first main source of income, and this produce was carted to Melbourne and sold in Bourke Street beside the Eastern Market. Later, a carrier took these products in, together with calves and pigs killed on the farms.

Almost from the start, the Drapers planted an orchard, raising the trees in their own nursery. Other settlers gradually followed suit until apples and, to a lesser extent, peaches, became the principal produce. Many selectors

Shire of Eltham

2004



Map by courtesy of

Broadbent's

OFFICIAL ROAD GUIDES CO.

475 Collins St., Melbourne