

# GRAPEVINE CUTTINGS (November 2001)

By Rob Upson

## THE WEEKLY TIMES – 1869

Victoria's first newspaper, *The Melbourne Advertiser*, was founded by John Pascoe Fawkner and published in 1838. The following year it became the *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser* and was later known as *The Daily News*.

In 1852 it was absorbed by *The Argus* (founded in 1846). *The Age* was first published in 1854 under the direction of Ebenezer and David Syme. In 1840 another newspaper called the *Port Phillip Herald* was established by George Cavanagh. In 1849 it became the *Melbourne Morning Herald* and in 1869 it became the afternoon *Daily Telegraph*. *The Weekly Times*, printed and published from the same offices, first appeared on Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> September 1869.

To celebrate the centenary of *The Weekly Times* in 1969 a facsimile of the original publication was printed, a copy of which I have recently perused. It was described as a 'New Independent Liberal Weekly Newspaper', a 16-page tabloid, priced threepence.

Here is a selection of items that were making news back in September 1869.

Under the heading of General News –

- A miner near Talbot strikes it rich – finding gold to the value of £80.
- Two feet of snow in the Mt. Macedon region delayed the mail train to Castlemaine.
- £200 reward for information leading to the conviction of a bushranger named Henry Power who bailed up the Bright to Beechworth coach.
- At the Sandhurst Public Court, a James Fawns was summoned by the manager of the Bendigo Great Extended Gold Mining Co. for refusing to pay his share of a call that had been made.

The death of John Pascoe Fawkner, aged 77, on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1869 was reported with half a page devoted to the career of this founder of Melbourne.

Alcoholism and the horrors of drink were highlighted by the deaths of two females from alcoholic poisoning.

Sports and Pastimes reported on a race meeting at Randwick, as were several meetings of various cricket clubs. 'A football match was played at Sandhurst on Saturday between a dozen of the Press Club against an equal number of Foundry Men'. The score was one goal each so presumably it was not Australian Rules.

Under the heading of 'Exhibition of Colonial Woods' it was reported that the Public Library are arranging for public inspection an exhibition of timber samples from all the colonies. It was classified and put together by Dr. Müller.

The Ladies Column covered the latest fashions by describing a promenade dress, a carriage dress, a morning dress and an evening or ball dress. However, another article really sticks the boot into ladies' fashion. Under the heading 'The Extravagance of Fashion' it reports 'Among the follies of the day which the Press has, from time to time, seen proper to denounce, is the prevailing extravagant fashion of woman's attire. A seeming epidemic of gewgawism and frippery\* of costly sort, obtains mightily among the Melbourne ladies just now, and it is aggravated by an incomprehensible disposition to garb themselves in a manner so ungracefully fantastic as to pass the verge of absurdity.....' (No doubt written by a male journalist?)

The quarterly meeting of the National Short Hours League was held at the Trades Hall, Lygon Street in the presence of about 100 members. A petition to Parliament had been prepared to make eight hours the legal working day and to also limit the hours worked in factories by youths of tender age who are compelled to work 13 to 14 hours per day.

Under the heading of 'Farm and Homestead', comes reports of various agricultural activities, lists of forthcoming Crown Land sales and forthcoming Agricultural Shows including 'October 14, Bendigo Agricultural and Horticultural Society'.

From Sydney, it was reported that the officers of the United States corvette, 'Kearsage', were entertained to a banquet where 'fatted kangaroo and the piquante wallaby were offered as gastronomical novelties' and the 'choicest colonial wines' were offered as a German band played 'national airs'.

The back page was devoted to Shipping News and advertisements. Messrs. Money, Wigram and Sons were advertising passages to England on their latest steamship, taking about sixty days and costing from £16. (All aboard!!!!)

The Weekly Times of today is devoted to rural and associated news.

\* *Gewgaw – a showy and worthless thing.*

*Frippery – a showy and useless ornament in dress.*