

# BRIDGE HOTEL



Lehman's - Bridge Hotel possibly 1892  
 Hennessy - 1st tenant-licencee about 1860.  
 George Usher 1874, 1876, 1877, *George Hughes*  
 John K. Dunbar - 1881  
 G. J. Lehman 1892, 1899  
 Parker 1906  
 Mr. & Mrs Dale 1902

Dandenong Historical Society  
 Ref: Businesses Album 1850-1900  
 Leaf # 6



Mr Geo. K Dunbar - Bridge Hotel  
 Cobb & Co's Booking Office  
 See also: Cobb & Co Transport

Dunbar's Hotel

Dandenong Hotel

Royal Hotel 1870 & 1880

Royal Hotel Circa 1920 & 1948

Dandenong Historical Society  
 Ref: Businesses 1850-1900  
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*The South Bourke & Mornington Journal*  
**Bridge Hotel- Dandenong**

- \* Advert (O'Callaghan) (01/01/1896)
- \* Mrs Lehman taking over (20/05/1896)
- \* Renovated; Mr Lehman has taken over. Notes (01/07/1896)
- \* New Advert (01/07/1896)
- \* Charge against Senior Constable Taylor (22/02/1899)
- \* Change of proprietor; renovations and alterations made, no names given (10/07/1901)
- \* Change of proprietor to Mrs Dale late of Benalla (01/01/1902)
- \* Mrs Dale sells out to Mrs Fell (01/07/1903)
- \* Picnic at hotel (Mrs Fell) (11/11/1903)
- \* Advert C Fell Proprietor (06/01/1904)
- \* Advert J Mues Proprietor (late of Warragul) (27/01/1904)
- \* Mrs J A Howard of the Bridge Hotel reported to have a rare collection of shells (28/12/1904)
- \* Proprietor Frank Parker, Advert (19/01/1910)
- \* Results of billiard tournament (03/07/1913)
- \* Bridge Hotel (Mrs E M Deam takes over) (05/01/1922)

"KEEPING POSTED" (Continued)

this magazine on his childhood days here. A gifted scholar he declined an opportunity to attend one of Melbourne's leading secondary schools, preferring to stay with his friends at the Dandenong High School. He became the first Dux of the school in a class that consisted of all girls, apart from Fred. On leaving school he became a trainee teacher at Noble Park as he prepared to take a Science Degree at the Melbourne University. He achieved that ambition and his degree was conferred in April, 1928 - the same time as the late Frank Field, M.L.A., a fellow pupil at Dandenong H.S., gained his. Frank later became Minister For Education. Fred played football with the Melbourne University team. His first appointment with the Education Department was to Horsham High School - a school to which he was later to return as Principal. In 1938 he met and married Margaret Herbert, of Dandenong, the ceremony taking place in Scots Presbyterian Church, Dandenong. They had three sons - John, Peter and Robert.

In Fred's successful career with the Education Department he served at Warragul H.S., Maryborough, Warrnambool and Horsham, winding up as Principal of the Noble Park Technical School, from where he retired in 1960. Sadly he lost his wife in 1976. Among his interests were his membership of the South Oakleigh Bowling Club (where he was a Pennant player for years) and of our own Society. Quiet and unassuming, Fred had an abiding interest in Dandenong, his home town.

ALTHOUGH the present two-storey Albion Hotel in Lonsdale Street is 100 years old this year, its history goes back beyond that. While the Licensing Court records can only trace it back to 1886, our own records reveal that David Pope was the licensee of the little old single-storey Albion back in 1877. Pope sold it to C. K. Dobson in 1882. The long association the McQuade family had with the Albion goes back to 1889. As a young married couple (Peter married Agnes Bergin in 1883) were conducting the Bridge Hotel at Dandenong when the Albion hotel came on the market. They bought the old single storey hotel about 1889 and that year an uncle, Captain Arkney, loaned them £6,000 to finance the erection of the present building. In those days it had a verandah and a balcony right across the front. Ten rooms were added in 1914.

Here he went into business at Berwick, and established a business at Dandenong, 1884 also a branch in Mortlake. Sold out his business in Mortlake some time ago, and is still carrying out business in Dandenong as a chemist, druggist and dentist. (Page 738, Vol 2).

TOBIAS BRENNAN (Spring Vale)

was born in Kilkenny, Ireland, where he was engaged in agricultural pursuits up to the time of his coming to Victoria in 1855, when he went to the Ararat diggings, and remained there nine months. He then, in conjunction with his brother, purchased 160 acres of land at Spring Vale, and after a three years sojourn in New Zealand (1861-64), he returned to Victoria and settled on his land, which he uses as a dairy farm and market garden. He also carries on the business of road contracting. He married the second daughter of Mr. Thomas Butler, of Kilkenny, and has a family of three sons and six daughters. (Page 737, Vol 2).

THOMAS HARRISON (Dandenong)

was born in Cumberland, England, in 1827, and learned farming with his parents. He came to Melbourne in 1855 per ship, "Morning Star", and went gold digging at Bendigo, Ballarat and afterwards New Zealand. He returned to Melbourne and bought 80 acres of heavily timbered land at Dandenong, where he still resides, chiefly occupied in dairy farming. He gave 3 pounds per acre for the land, which would now readily fetch 14 pound per acre. He keeps 60 cows and seven horses, and owns 300 acres of land. Mr. Harrison was married in 1865 to Miss Johanna Husband, and has a family of eight children. (Page 739, Vol 2).

\* PETER JAMES McQUADE (Dandenong)

was born in Monaghan, Ireland, and came with his parents to Victoria He first engaged in farming at was is now known as Flemington, and afterwards took up land at Spring Vale, where he spent 15 years as a farmer and contractor. He next took the Huntingtower Hotel, Fern Tree Gully, which he conducted for four years, and then his present house - the Bridge Hotel, Dandenong. (Page 741, Vol 2).

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Interesting little extract from item about G. R. Story (South Preston) : "He built the Wesleyan Church at Dandenong. (Page 736, Vol 2).

# Harking back 75 years ago . . . . .

*A regular feature by Life Member, Mr. Dave Mickle taken from the files of "The South Bourke & Mornington Journal".*

1905

- March 29 : At the Cheltenham Court three Chinamen were fined 5/- each with 23/6 costs for working on the Sabbath.  
Mr. Leslie Keys, secretary of the Dandenong Shire Council passed his exam for a Municipal clerkship.  
Mr. Sydney Smithson, former Dandenong storekeeper, who died on Jan. 25th. left an estate worth 2655 pounds to relatives, also directing that 100 pounds should be spent on a window in St. James' Church in memory of his wife and himself.  
The erection of a new schoolroom in connection with St. James' Church "marks a district step in advancing the town by taking the place of the oldest public building in the district that in the early days was used for many diverse purposes." The cost: 370 pounds.
- April 5 : Mr. Rogers won the Championship of the Dandenong Bowling Club, defeating Mr. Swords, 33-31 in the final.
- April 12 : The Bishop of Melbourne officially opened the new schoolroom at St. James' Church. The building is large and roomy, 50-ft. x 28-ft. Mr. John Abbott collected all but 33 pounds of the cost (370 pounds). Another 16 pounds and 14 shillings was collected at the opening and the Bishop gave 20 pounds to liquidate the debt.
- \* May 3 : Mr. Suding, who formerly conducted Loch Hotel, takes over the Bridge Hotel from J. Mues.  
At the auction of land in the Est. of Sydney Smithson, dec. bidding was brisk for the property in Lonsdale St. contained two W.B. shops and this was sold to Mr. Wm. Thomson for 1470 pounds "which we believe is a record price for Dandenong.". For 32 pounds and 10 shillings Mr. A. Kingsbury bought a vacant block with a frontage of 100 links to Lonsdale street.

## "DANDENONG IN 1930" (Continued)

death of Mr. Roberts. Rev. Gregory used to hold services in a slab hut on the Grange Estate at the corner of Kidd's and Stud roads. Amongst the earliest scholars were Mrs. A. Henderson, Mrs. Bartlett, W. Blackmore, Kirkham and W. Masters. Mrs. W. Masters acted as sewing mistress. In 1865 the school was enlarged by Messrs Kirkham, H. Young and G. White.

John Hemmings came to Dandenong in 1855. Dr. Phillips arrived in 1857 and his family two years later. Hennessy's Hotel was built in 1859, and Dunbar's Hotel about the same time on the site of the present Royal Hotel. Thomas Dallimore brought the mail from Melbourne twice a week, driven in an American waggon, carrying 3 passengers at a fare of ten shillings each. At a later date five coaches ran at a reduced rate of a shilling.

On 5th. July, 1864, Governor Darling laid the foundation stone of St. James Church, which was opened by Bishop Perry on 2nd. January, 1865.

Charles Wilson, born in Sunderland, England, in 1849, followed the sea for eight years, and in 1868 came to Victoria and worked for Cobb & Co. for a few years. He then went to the Palmer diggings in Queensland, and two years later was engaged by Cobb & Co. as coach driver in Queensland and N.S.W.. Returning to Victoria he continued in the same employ, and eventually started in conjunction with C. McMahon, a line of coaches between Balranald and Wentworth. Finally he settled in Dandenong and ran a line of coaches between that place and the Bass. He was a keen sportsman and owned Gardenia, Freetrader, Man of Kent and other horses.

\* Peter James McQuade, born in Monaghan, Ireland, farmed at Flemington, took up land at Spring Vale, where he spent fifteen years as a farmer and contractor; next took the Huntingtower Hotel, Fern Tree Gully, for four years, then the Bridge Hotel at Dandenong, and the Esplanade Hotel, St. Kilda, and the Albion Hotel, Dandenong, until his retirement.

Obadiah Potter, born in Norfolk, England in 1814, arrived in Victoria in 1849, and started an orchard on the banks of the Yarra until 1856, when he purchased 66 acres of land at Dandenong and commenced fruit-growing. He held a seat on the local road board until the shire council, of which he became a shire president, succeeded it. (To be continued)

*Middle Days*

of Walker and Lonsdale Streets and provided as a result an arguing point among historians as to which was where; a problem not made any easier by the fact that Dunbar's *Dandenong Hotel* was also known for a time in the 1880s as the *Royal*.

The *Bridge Hotel* was also the terminus for a number of local coach services: To Tooradin and Grantville, and after the advent of the railway these feeder services increased the importance of Dandenong as a junction town. The food was good, the liquor plentiful with a variety of imported wines and spirits at moderate prices. In 1856, it was reported that one hotel served kangaroo and emu. Kangaroo is good meat, emu more controversial, but Dandenong's situation on the stock routes from Gippsland to Melbourne ensured an adequate supply of conventional meat. G. W. Robinson, in his *Reminiscences of Early Berwick*, leaves behind a detailed account of a journey he made in that year:

The vehicle we travelled in was called a dog cart in those days, made in Melbourne at a cost of £100 . . . after we left Prahran we did not meet any defined main road till we came to Oakleigh, thence on to the main Dandenong Road . . .

It is not clear whether he is referring to the northern Dandenong Road or to the 'old' Dandenong Road. The former runs through North Oakleigh, the latter through South Oakleigh. The former seems to be the likelier!

This road I was told was made three chains wide for mobs of Gippsland cattle to travel to Melbourne. The road was full of trees like a forest with tracks winding in and out of the timber. Soft boggy parts were corduroyed for about one or two hundred yards, in about three or four places.

The corduroy road was one of Australia's special barbarities. There would seem at first little connection between the traditional *corde du roi*, a cloth of excellence, and the heaving bumpy bone-jolting series of parallel logs laid in mud which is given the same name. The connection is simply in the series of parallel ridges.

Going over the corduroyed road was most excruciating even at a walking pace. At last we arrived at a place called Dandenong. There was a small shop and some small houses, I think workmen's [sawmillers] homes. A very high-wheeled jinker for conveying redgum logs to the saw pits for cutting up for redgum weather-

### Chronicles of Dandenong

other races and skin colours is commendable, but in 1880 men of sterling character saw nothing wrong with despising the Blacks. The Kelly Gang themselves were affronted at the idea of using Black men to hunt White; and their reaction to this was the savage attempt to blow up the train at Glenrowan which led to their capture. Whether the trackers would have trailed them in the end is an open question. Certainly the Kellys feared they would, and this fear of being caught was aggravated by the infamy of being caught by Black men. They had little compunction about killing police; and less about killing Blacks.

The five trackers were quartered at Dandenong Paddocks, and two were detailed for the Benalla expedition against the Kellys. They were never used, because the whole thing ended at Glenrowan; but the value of having Black trackers was obvious and a permanent corps of trackers was retained.

\* With the growth of the independent Dandenong police district, it was not long before a Court of Petty Sessions was also established. The first court was held on 13 February 1858, in a room of the newly-opened *Bridge Hotel*. R. C. Walker jr and William Thomas jr were the presiding justices and an indication of the concentration of civic duties in those days was the Clerk of Court, John Dobson, who was also postmaster and secretary of the cemetery trust.

The court moved its quarters many times and naturally enough was held for a time in *Dunbar's Hotel* where many other civic functions were carried out; and an early defendant was Dunbar himself, nabbed for selling liquor out of hours. The hours were generous enough in those days so Dunbar must have been a tireless worker.

The police had a wide range of duties. They had to collect various taxes, licences and imposts; and were required to patrol as far afield as Fern Tree Gully, Emerald and Brandy Creek where the gold diggings inevitably attracted some doubtful characters. But their most desperate character was to carve a niche for himself in Australian bushranging history. A Mr Steer was employing a man named Morgan somewhere in the Dandenong-Berwick area. Morgan he described as a morose character operating an illegal still in his leisure moments. One day without warning he attacked Mrs Steer with a carving knife and she was rescued only when a neighbour, attracted by her screams, broke Morgan's grip by his own grip on the assailant's beard. Before the police arrived, Morgan had escaped.

Morgan disliked squatters intensely as he believed that a squatter's false testimony had been responsible for an earlier gaol sentence. It seems likely that his job with Mr Steer was his first after being released. He went on to become a violent and brutal bushranger,

### *Chronicles of Dandenong*

One document, quoted by Gunson, deserves to be again recorded:

One young man narrowly escaped drowning last Wednesday fortunately a team of bullocks were crossing at the time or the loss of a valuable shaft horse was inevitable two other cases of bogging on the same day have been brot under my notice one my own cart with a staunch horse would have been in the bog all night had not some friends coming past at the time gone into the middle in water and assisted the horse to pull the load out. A very trifling sum would render this place temporary passable until the completion of the approaches to the new bridges.

Prior to 1865, the usual means of transport from Sale to Melbourne was by coach to Port Albert and then by steamer to Melbourne. Cobb & Co advertised the quickest route to Melbourne, a mere thirty hours to Port Albert, but in September 1865 a competitor entered the field. Hewitt & Co would convey passengers to Melbourne overland in thirty-six hours. They left the *Club Hotel* in Sale every evening at 6 o'clock except Sunday.

We hesitate to imagine what it was like, sleeping in the coach, and the possibility of heavy rain, of vile roads and flooded streams; and the chances of maintaining a tight schedule were small. If some roads were at that time 'in a deplorable condition' they must have been horrible indeed; for their notion of a good road was poor enough. Nevertheless Hewitt's coaches managed to lop three hours off their time and by October were confident enough to be advertising a thirty-three hour journey. Finally Cobb and Hewitt amalgamated and they managed in time to reduce their time to twenty-four hours. The steamer company seems at this time to have given up the ghost!

The significance of this manoeuvre was to bring Dandenong to the forefront as a staging post on the main Gippsland run to Melbourne; with its inevitable influence on hotels, services, horse supplies, fodder supplies and mails.

\* In the normal evolution of a community, roads and hotels appear first to serve the migratory populations. Probably *Dunn's Hotel*, a small establishment of only four rooms on Thomas Street, was the earliest hostelry in Dandenong; but effectively the oldest and certainly the most important was George Dunbar's *Dandenong Hotel* which served as social, cultural and political centre of the town for many years. Hennessey's *Bridge Hotel* and Bowman's *Royal* completed a quartet of hotels which served Dandenong for most of her early years. The *Royal Hotel* was later rebuilt on the opposite corner

was as solid and of as suitable dimensions as was considered necessary. Then the work of "sodding" began. This was a careful operation, and called for expert knowledge. The first sods were placed face in against the pile, and others were packed against them to consolidate, until sides, ends, and tops were proof against the escape of smoke and gases. A small hole having been left, a dry wood fire was set going well into and under the pile, and, as soon as the workmen saw that it was burning well, they sodded the opening and left it. Care had to be taken that no smoke or gas escaped, as if it did, the pile of wood at that place would sink in and perhaps ruin the lot. A large kiln was estimated to turn out from 70 to 80 bags of charcoal, and when the "turkey" was considered to be perfectly cooked, and the fire out, the men, armed with long iron hooks, tore away the roof and sides of the kiln, and drew the charred logs out. If a spark remained there would soon be a blaze, and then the charcoal would be jeopardised if prompt measures to extinguish it were not taken. I have known instances where, apparently, all was safe, with no sign of a spark, when a puff of wind would fan an undetected one into activity, and away would go a week's work in smoke. There was no loafing on these jobs, and as soon as the charcoal could be safely handled it was bagged and carted away to the city.

#### A JOKE THAT MISFIRED

John Jacobs arrived about 1860, and he, with a band of Germans, also commenced charcoal burning. I don't suppose many remember the time when John Jacobs contested a seat for the North riding of the Council with the late Colonel Hutton? Well, he did, and what is more, he won the day; but he not being a naturalised subject, and also not being able to read or write English, was deposed, and the Colonel gained the seat. The contest was more of a joke than a serious attempt to capture the seat; but the unexpected happened, and old John gained the votes of more jokers than were thought to be joking on polling day.

#### A GREAT SCRAP

Amongst the throng of woodcutters there were many who, if not drawingroom boxers, were well up in the art of self-defence, and who were ready upon every occasion to "put 'em up," either for the love of the game or else to settle grievances real or imaginary. One of the latter arose out of a trifling matter, and two old mates had a terrific battle over a matter of threepence, on the Diamond Hill. They had finished a woodcutting contract, which ran over £50 odd, and upon the division of the cash a difference arose over the sum named. Neither would admit that he was in error in computing the allotment, so they went to it. It must have been a sanguinary affair, as, when passers by eventually saw the scrappers, both were so exhausted that they could not stand, but were actually lying down striking blows when sufficient strength came to either to do so. They were separated and dipped in a waterhole, as that was the only way to fix them, they were so gory, and when all was over, they marched off to the township to cement their friendship in pints of the brown stuff. It would not do to mention names, as descendants of both craggie

warriors are living in Dandenong at present, and it might be my lot to fall in, or out, with one or both of them if I gave out "who's who" in these columns, so I'll make a guessing competition of it.

#### A PARLIAMENTARY CONTEST

An incident at one of the Dandenong elections in the early days might not be amiss, as, if I did not relate it, it might be assumed that we had no such luxuries in the early times. I remember it well enough. Messrs. O'Grady, Gavan Duffy and Wm. McCulloch were candidates for the South Bourke seat. They had had a strenuous time on election day, McCulloch gaining the seat, and in the evening, about nine o'clock, a fight began in front of the Bridge Hotel. It was a pitched battle — a three-cornered one at that, and anything liftable was used in argument or for the purpose of driving home a point. The police were powerless, and the candidates came out in a body on the balcony of the hotel and tried to induce the combatants to cease. They might as well have talked to the gum trees! The fight went on until the exhaustion stage was reached, when gradually the street cleared as the weary warriors were induced by their friends to "come along now, and kape the peace," or were hauled off to the "Hill." It was a glorious ending to a wild and woolly day.

#### EARLY BILLIARDS

Those who patronise the elegant billiard parlours of to-day must not run away with the idea that Dandenong was altogether behind the times fifty or sixty years ago in the matter of billiards, or, should I say, bagatelle? In the long run it amounts to much the same thing, so we will not split straws.

When George Hughes took over the "Bridge" he introduced the game, and set up a half-size table. At the beginning bagatelle was played, but as the then rising generation became expert with the cue, they gradually supplanted the original game with the more fashionable billiards, and thus went another step up the hill of progress. How well I remember the nights we put in around our marvellous table, and it really makes one feel actually old when thoughts crowd in of the "boys" who sat around waiting their turn for a game. That table was the school at which scores of the district's youth gained their first knowledge of billiards, and proved a veritable gold mine to Host Hughes.

For years this table was the only one in the town and district, but when George Usher succeeded George Hughes, he installed a full-size table and had for years a monopoly of the town in this department of sport. The billiard room was on the left side of the house, and the small table occupied the end near the bar, being sideways to the street, the new table running lengthwise from the side of the small table to the rear wall. Nightly the room was packed with players and onlookers, and I have seen some fine games played there. Although we had but poor means of transit to the city, at various times good players were induced to come up and give exhibition games, and also tackle our local champions (with a good start). It was fine fun (for the onlookers) watching the local boys all out to win, keyed up tight like piano strings, making every stroke an attempted winner, whilst the "pro."

and pair of horses, and brought them away. Whilst the coach was returning past Keighery's, all that could be seen of the horses, at one time, was their heads and necks.

Those persons who were flooded out were kindly received by their more fortunate neighbours and at Dunbar's Bridge Hotel, and Dawson's Royal Hotel, accommodation was found for a number.

Residents in the township turned out in the rain to watch the flood, and some anxiety was manifested to know how people living in the flooded parts were situated.

During the evening two young men swam across, by the aid of trees and fence tops, to a house in which it was known some people remained, but it was found that they had retired to bed, the water having risen only a few inches over the floor, this was accounted for by the fact that, although the house was close to the creek, it was on a bank of high ground, and also built (on piles) off the ground a short distance.

#### RAILWAY EMBANKMENT BLAMED

On viewing the flood from the railway line it was seen that the level of water on the lower side was about six feet lower than upon the upper side of the embankment, thus proving very conclusively that the high waters in the township was caused by the embankment damming the flood up. The openings in the two bridges were altogether too small to carry the amount of water, and appear also to be placed too near the Brighton road, as by being in that locality they draw the flood on to the township. It is very evident now that this line should have been made on piles in the vicinity of the creek, and had this been done we venture to say that the flood in the township would have been a matter of comparatively little moment.

As the flood rose, various wooden yard requisites were to be seen moving off with the current, such as wheelbarrows, firewood, implements, etc. There was over four feet of water over Mr. Powis's timber yard, and even more in some places, the water playing sad havoc there altogether. Mr. Powis is the heaviest loser we have heard of, as the water was over two feet deep in his shop, and injured a large amount of ironware, oil, glue, etc. He estimated his loss at £200, and has asked the Government to send up a valuer to make a valuation of the damage done.

#### FLOOD FREAK

On Sunday a quantity of lime was raised off his floor to prevent its getting wet, and setting the place on fire. Among other remarkable freaks of the flood, two heavy stacks of railway sleepers at Mr. Powis's yard were lifted from one portion of the yard and set down on the other side without disarranging them; another floating body of timber knocked the fence down, and let more timber float away.

Great injury has been done to about half a mile of the main road from Dandenong to Berwick, over which the flood rushed for two days, the water being from two to five feet deep. The metal is washed away, and it will cost something considerable to repair it.

Mr. Griffiths' blacksmith's shop contained about 2ft. 6ins. of water, and Mr. Hemmings' shop floor was also covered; and an adjoining brick building being in two feet of water. There was a great body of water on the Police Paddocks flat, and

## REMINISCENCES OF DANDENONG

the immense torrent which came down the Eumemmerring Creek has loosened the piles of the culvert on the railway line, and made traffic over it doubtful. The trains have, however, passed over safely up to the present time.

The Lyster bridge, at the Carrum Swamp cutting, has been damaged beyond repair.

This was the flood when the waters washed the foundations of the Bridge Hotel, and it was days before foot traffic was resumed along the Cranbourne road.



*Flood-waters of the March 1911 flood covering the present-day Park & Wilson Ovals in Pultney St, looking toward the footbridge over the creek.*

#### GRAND DOINGS

On Sundays, in the Spring and Summer, there was hardly room in Dunbar's hotel yard to accommodate the vehicles. Drags, drawn by four, and at times six horses, came up from Melbourne for the day. Captain Standish, Commissioner of Police, usually drove a six-in-hand. He would call at the hotel in the morning, have dinner, and then drive over to the Stud Depot, thence on to Stamford Park to the Row's, and so back to Melbourne.

#### COLOURFUL CHINESE VISITORS

Mr. Kong Meng, the wealthy Chinese merchant, usually came up in a drag and six. He also dined at Dunbar's, and then called at "The Grange" to see his old friend, Capt. Ross. His retinue, sometimes twenty all told, was a blaze of color, and the material usually the finest silks and satins, and as gay as the Chinese love to have these things.

Upon occasion there would be a grand dinner given by one of the wealthy Melbourne personages, when people from around about would be invited, and a great affair made of it. I have a faint recollection of Capt. Wedge, R. C. Walker, J. P. Power, R. Row, A. Patterson, all being at Dunbar's upon one occasion. Those were busy and gay times, and money was spent very freely.

## THE FIRST THROUGH COACH TO GRANTVILLE

A Mr. George Usher's first through coach to Grantville also commenced running in December, 1876. It was a great feat in those days, when one considers the state of the roads — almost either all mud or dust. I take the following account of the initial run from the "Journal" of the 13th December of that year:—

"It is only a few months since we had the pleasure of being present at the trial trip of the 'Eclipse,' a nice little steamer purchased to trade from Hastings to Phillip Island and Griffith's Point, in which business she is now employed; but it seems that the country is to be opened in another direction.

"Last Saturday morning a representative of this journal accepted the invitation of Mr. George Usher, of the Bridge Hotel, Dandenong, to accompany him on the first occasion of his coach being driven right through to Grantville. If genuine pluck ought to succeed, then Mr. Usher deserves to do so.

"A start was made from Dandenong about 11 o'clock, with four spanking horses and a most competent, careful driver, and a full complement of passengers, some for one place and some for another. For the first quarter of a mile the horses, which had never worked together before, were a little trouble to the driver, but after that they went splendidly along at a slashing pace, soon making Cranbourne.

"At 12 o'clock another start was made. The main road between Cranbourne and Tooradin is not in such good condition as might be expected since last we travelled it, but works are being carried on that will improve it. A brief call at Host Strudwicke's (who has recently taken the Sherwood Hotel) and The Tooradin Hotel soon appeared in view, where the traveller will find himself treated with that homely hospitality so desirable when on the road. Here the change of horses took place, and four specially fine animals were put into the places of the others, speeding away over Tooradin Bridge, between the large properties of Mr. William Lyall, on one side, Mr. McMillan's, with its miles of fine Hawthorn hedge, on the other; Mr. C. Rossiter and the Messrs. Facey, and other fine estates.

"Shortly arriving at McDonald's Track, many of the passengers, being selectors, were put down to find their homes, the main road being off to the right. The road then gets worse, but we understand that improvements will shortly be made by the Shire Council. It was here where the driver showed his skill, navigating his four horses through very narrow places between or around trees, but he was equal to the occasion.

"The country does not seem what one might call interesting, as the timber is close to the so-called road. At length a house came in view, which we found to be Mr. J. Monk's, and as he, like many others, desired to be present at the arrival of 'the first coach' at Grantville, he came on. Another mile brought us to 'the city' of Grantville and to Host Dickens' Grantville Hotel, where there were a good many in waiting for our arrival, and greeted us with hearty cheers.

"The journey, about 60 miles, had been made in less than six hours, with only one change of horses. The remainder of the evening was spent pleasantly with many of the residents who came specially to meet the coach.

### MANY TRAMWAYS

At Grantville the tramway from the mills leads on to a very good jetty, from which the timber is conveyed to Melbourne. We accepted the offer of a very respectable resident, known as 'Chips,' to escort us to the saw-mills next day. The distance is said to be four miles, but we must have got on the wrong track, but eventually arrived at Brazier's mills, where a large business must be done: from thence to Mr. Crump's mills, which, as far as the machinery is concerned, seemed pretty much the same. It seemed as if the whole country about there is laid with tramways, and they traverse the country for many miles further back.

"After enjoying Mr. Crump's genial hospitality for a couple of hours, a start was made for Grantville again, which ended a pleasant day.

"Next day, under the guardianship of Host Dickens, a start was made to see Mr. A. Stewart's new boat, which was about to be launched. On ascertaining that the tide would not answer, we made 'tracks' for Bass township, visiting Mr. Misson's, soon arriving at Host Langdon's, to whose care we were transferred, with the understanding that he would in the morning show us the celebrated Kilcunda coal mine. The accommodation at Langdon's will be found as good as in most of the Melbourne hotels, even to a fine billiard-room.

"A start was made about eight next morning to drive to the mine. The country about Bass is different altogether from any yet passed. The land is made good use of. It is a long distance from Bass to the mine, and it is a pleasant sight to the eye to arrive at the little township of Kilcunda. Except the hotel and the residence of the manager (Mr. Watson), the houses are all of one pattern, being the residences of the workmen. Out to the left stretches Cape Patterson.

"On arriving at the mine our party was received by Mr. Watson, and after a friendly chat we found we were booked for a downward passage of nearly 100 feet, and an hour took us through all that was to be seen. Throughout the same seam of coal shows to a thickness of about two feet sometimes a little more, and we were informed that the company held about 1800 acres, supposed to carry the same seam.

"The great lack is want of hands, and 50 men can find work at any time and earn from £3 a week.

"After this we visited Host Carew's hotel, and, having refreshed the 'inner man,' made for Bass, under Pilot Langdon; and, as it was understood the launch was to come off, he drove us near Mr. Stewart's, at Queensferry, but again found that the tide would not be high enough, but he expected fully that it would be so at two or three next morning."

### MAILS

The contract for carrying the mail between Dandenong and Berwick was secured in 1875 by A. W. Bowman, who, as well, took passengers at a fare of 2/- each way.

Messrs. Cobb and Co. had the mail contract from Melbourne to Dandenong

residents of the Cranbourne district for his reprehensible conduct towards women. He was found dead on the roadside, with an awful gash in the region of his buttock, and with a partially consumed bottle of spirits beside him. The keenest enquiry by the police failed to fathom the mystery.

This year (1875) saw the erection of a new produce shed in the market, and I think it was the structure which was doing duty when the old market was dismantled.

It also saw the announcement that our "pack" of hounds would be sold, but we hung on a little while longer. The dogs had become an expensive luxury.

The "Royal Hotel"\* did not long remain in the name of its builder as licensee, James Egan securing the lease, which, I believe, he held until the house was delicensed, in 1874, when it became in succession printers' and auctioneers' offices, until purchased by the Keys family, pulled down, and replaced by the present buildings.

In the 60's we had the fruit industry going strongly. Obadiah Potter, an Englishman and professional gardener and orchardist, established nurseries on the Melbourne road, almost opposite Gladstone road, and which he called "Eglantine Park,\*\*" and did a big business. He it was who went down to Melbourne and assisted in laying out the old Cremorne Gardens, just across the river from South Yarra.

Even with the vast grazing areas of the district in the 70's, there were those who hankered after the green grasses of the "long paddock," and a petition was submitted to the Road Board for permission for the residents to turn their stock on the road for "one night" — same old game.

#### DANCING ON THE TURF UNDER CANVAS

On New Year's Eve we could always rely upon an enjoyable time. Mr. George Usher had a large marquee, which upon these occasions he erected on the bank of the creek, near the bridge, where we danced, sang, and made merry strictly in accordance with the old custom. The boys made the turf as smooth almost as boards, and I can assure readers there were few idle moments in that marquee from evening until early morning.

An advertisement in the local paper to-day to the effect "that Sydney Smithson (or anyone else) wanted 500 dozen 'possum skins, and also any number of 'possum skin rugs," would doubtless read queerly, but such an advertisement appeared in an old "Journal," of the 70's. Nowadays 'possum skins are a luxury!

#### A SPRINGVALE ATTRACTION

And, I wonder, have any Dandenong folk been down to the "Springvale Tea and Pleasure Gardens" lately? The gardens were flourishing in 1878. But it was

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## REMINISCENCES OF DANDENONG

rather risky for patrons to attend singly, as the boys of that locality were rough customers, and, whilst not exactly bushrangers, were forcibly persuasive.

Miss Thornton for many years carried on a costumiere's business opposite the old market, in a shop built by A. W. Bowman, and subsequently in rooms in the boarding house conducted by Mrs. A. W. Bowman. I have no doubt but that many of the elderly young ladies in Dandenong to-day have kindly memories of this extremely engaging seamstress. She was a charming girl.

John Mason was one of the earliest arrivals. He engaged in carting and contracting, and built a house about on the corner of Scott and Robinson streets; and, I believe, the original building is still standing.

Jas. Lee was another of the early citizens. He also was a carter and contractor. He built just over the bridge, on the Gippsland road. His sons, John and James, survive him. Both were carters and contractors.

The frequency of floods by the creek caused a deal of anxiety in the town; and representations for aid to clear the creek of snags having been made, a promise of £300 towards the work was obtained from the Government in 1873. Crs. Attenborough and Whitham were instrumental in obtaining this promised grant, but, as was usual, nothing came of it.

#### TOLL HOUSE BURNT DOWN

A sheaf of trouble struck the town in March this year (1876). The planking between the township and the bridge required serious amendment; the toll-house on Gladstone road had been burnt down; the cupboard of the Mechanics' Institute had been tampered with and papers burnt; and, it was also discovered that the levels of the Lonsdale street drain were wrong! Well, our city fathers were "goers" these times. They did not waste much time over useless chatter, but offered a reward of £20 for information that would lead to the conviction of the person who burnt the toll-house; ordered a new safe for the Institute; and had the channels relaid at a cost of £20. And thus they did all the business in one hand.

The line from Oakleigh to Dandenong was creeping up slowly but surely, and many of the younger people made riding parties up on Sunday afternoons and went down to view the works. These were enjoyable trips, and we had lots of fun on the road.

Many important events were now taking place in the town; new tradesmen were coming in, whilst others, who had been here some time, were starting out in business for themselves. Arthur Griffiths left John Hemmings in 1877 and opened a blacksmith's shop at the corner of Foster and Main streets, in a little brick shop, which originally had been the dwelling of Herbert Rogers.

This block is now covered with buildings from end to end, and presents quite a different appearance from the days when Arthur Griffiths and John Dunbar occupied little premises side by side; or, in earlier times, when it was a fruit garden, and Dunn's Hotel overlooked it from the rise in Thomas street. About midway between Thomas and the main street was a clayhole, from which the bricks were made for the Bridge Hotel. In the picture of the main street, published

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when the first of these Reminiscences appeared, a keen observer might discern a small building at the rear of the Bridge Hotel — the original Dunn's Hotel and the first building in the town.\*

Another of our pleasant functions was the presentation to Mrs. Rippon, lady teacher at the State school, on the occasion of her leaving, of a silver teapot and pearl-handled butter knife. Mr. Malcolm Macpherson, head teacher, made the presentation, and we had a half-holiday to celebrate the occasion. Miss Annie Fraser succeeded Mrs. Rippon. Hands up all who can "speak a piece" about this function.

Our Shire Councils did not mince matters when making requests to the "Powers that be." At Berwick the representative of the Law did not suit the head men of the district, so they wrote to the Department asking that he be removed. I don't think that they had much luck, nor should they have had; but it is surprising how a small public position urges some people to greater things; sometimes indiscreet ones, too!

Mr. Powis, who up to this time had occupied premises at the corner of Walker street, opposite the Town Hall, in the main street, removed to larger premises in Foster street, on the south side. The late Mr. Clem Tharle built a number of shops on this site of Mr. Powis' old timber yard, and one of the very few instances in Dandenong of the succession of the family in carrying on is the descendants of the Tharle family in business in one of the shops built by the originator of the firm of Tharle Bros. There are very few similar instances in the town. When the creek overflowed its banks, the water rushed over Foster street, and sometimes washed up to the Bridge Hotel. Then Powis' timber yard got a good soaking, and had it not been for a substantial fence there would have been plenty of cheap timber floating over the Carrum. As it was, at times the flood waters burst through the fence, and search parties were formed to recover timber.

#### "A GOOD OLD SCOUT"

Just a little incident about Henry Powis. He had several men and boys working in his timber yard, and was strict in regard to smoking. He would not permit it by anyone, which was quite right, as the strictest precautions had to be taken against fire. But the boys will smoke, even if they could only raise "smoking root," cane or "sheoak" cones, and Henry Powis knew his boys as well as they knew themselves. But he always approached his yard with a "whistle on his lips" and his faithful old dog running a score of yards ahead of him, thus giving ample time to his "men" to conform to the rule! He was a good old scout.

#### WE HAD OUR VANDALS

Some people in our midst seemed always set upon damaging something, some time, somewhere. So, having burned down a toll-house, they fired some calf pens at the market. They were not found out.

\* This photo is re-printed on Page 8.

## REMINISCENCES OF DANDENONG

### RANDOM THOUGHTS

How many readers remember Mr. Dunbar's "Yorkey"? He was a magpie: but, oh, what a talker! Such a bird could not long remain in the possession of its rightful owner, and one day "Yorkey" was missing. The police got on the right trail and followed swiftly to Collingwood, but the unfortunate bird's linguistic ability was the cause of its death, and he was found in a street with a broken neck. Two young men working the district were suspected, but the bird was dead when they were interviewed. Mrs. Dunbar offered a reward of £10 for "Yorkey's" recovery and £1 for information re the thief, but the culprits were not arrested, although the evidence was almost conclusive against them.

The first white child born in the district? Well, I always have heard that John Killebrew Dunbar had the honor. He was born at "Wethersdane," on Pound road, in 1851, and his sister, Fanny, in the Dandenong Hotel a few years later. There may have been children born earlier than this among the timber-getters or early settlers, but this was the earliest birth recorded — at least, so I have been informed.

This year a piano tuner visited Dandenong, and, although there were not many pianos to tune, he had all there were, and so gave the place a tone, so to speak.

The Gippsland railway was still making satisfactory progress, and on New Year's Day (1877) the report was that the rails were laid as far up as Pakenham.

### RACE RESULTS BY PIGEON!

The boys of Dandenong who keep pigeons and squabble about who owned the first birds, and who owned the best, can take a back seat, as George Dunbar flew his homers from the Baxter's Flat races in February, 1877. And when he offered to make wagers about the races "all the boys wondered," but stood off. It is remarkable how suspicious boys are of each other.

Sly-grog shanties were fairly numerous in the Ferntree Gully Ranges, but the country was difficult to travel, and the scouts were very keen, so the Law did not score very heavily. But gradually the "moonshiners" saw the error of their ways and the "industry languished."

The gate receipts at the first Agricultural Show were £46/11/-, a good sum for the first effort.

Mr. Weston Phillips, who had some years previously sold his business and had left Dandenong, was married in May, 1877, to Mrs. E. Ellis, widow of Mr. Ellis, storekeeper, who died some years previously at Dandenong. The ceremony took place at St. Matthias' Church of England, Prahran, the Rev. William Carter, our old minister, performing the ceremony.

About this time Crs. Rodd and Potter thought we should have a local pound, as that at "Wethersdane," on the Pound road, was too far away, and, besides, it was in the Cranbourne Shire. They moved to that effect in council, but gained no supporters. But a year or so later a pound was established in the market yards and Alf. Potter appointed keeper.

In 1877 the brick building erected by Mr. E. Ellis and used by him for some years as a store, at the corner of Walker and Langhorne streets, was sold by auction by Thos. Rosling and Co. for £630. Mr. James Greaves being the purchaser.

Messrs. William Renfree and Robert Orgill were appointed trustees of the Temperance Hall. So, even in these early years, the Temperance Movement was well under way.

On Wednesday, May 23, of this year (1877), Mr. Michael Bourke (at one time a resident of the Dandenong district) died at Pakenham. Mr. D. J. Ahern read the funeral service at the graveside, the Pakenham Cemetery being the place of interment.

"Old George," who had driven the coach to Cranbourne almost since the commencement of the service, met with a buggy accident and was seriously injured.

By a peculiar coincidence, "Old Lazarus," an itinerant draper and odd-sorts merchant, was also thrown out of a waggon, but he was not badly hurt. Lazarus was a hawker of note. He travelled Gippsland from one end to the other, and was credited with having made a fortune.

The Masonic fraternity gave a ball and supper this year. These were grand affairs, and the girls talked about the finery they would wear for months before the ball came off.

Poor old Granny Bryant died this year (July, 1877). At one time she was possessed of considerable property in the Lancefield district, but lost most of her wealth before she died. She met with an accident some months previously, and was taken to the Melbourne Hospital, where she passed away.

Mr. Dunbar built chambers for the Provincial and Suburban Bank on the corner of Walker and Lonsdale streets, and business was being transacted by the middle of 1877.

We lost one of our most charming girls this year, when Miss Frances Amelia (Fanny) Dobson married Mr. De la Motte at Maffra. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. J. Allan.

One of our entertainments in aid of the Mechanics' Institute took a novel form this year, being an exposition by Mr. Camm of his "Panorama," comprising views of Berwick and Dandenong. This took up the first half of the evening, the other portion being devoted to the usual variety entertainment. Mr. A. W. Rodd read the "Candle Lectures," and songs were rendered by several ladies and gentlemen, which nicely filled up the night's entertainment.

#### BRIDGE HOTEL SOLD FOR £1600

An auction sale of property in the estate of E. J. Prevot was held by Thos. Rosling at the Royal Hotel. A piece of land in the main street (Ewart's) was sold for £10 a foot. £850 was bid for Bowman's Royal Hotel and £2200 for the Bridge Hotel, but they were not sold. Some little time later the Bridge Hotel was sold to Mrs. Dunbar for £1600, and Mr. John K. Dunbar entered as manager.

Mr. G. W. Robinson, of Berwick, got the best of an argument about growing

## REMINISCENCES OF DANDENONG

"cinchona calixya," a native of Peru. It was thought, even by Baron von Mueller, that the plant could not be grown here, but the Baron was most agreeably surprised when shown the growing plant by Mr. Robinson at his place at Narre Warren. "G.W." was an enthusiastic amateur horticulturist, and worked hard for the advancement of flowers, etc.



Some members of the Southern Troop of Light Horse (sixth from the left is Mr W. P. Cadle).

The Southern Troop of Light Horse took shape in reality in September, when Major Anderson, Colonel Hutton and Sergeant-Major Price attended and swore in the recruits.

In an agricultural news paper of 1877 I came across the following paragraph:—"That the camellia will grow out of doors has now been proved, and George Smith, nurseryman, of Ballarat, has sent three plants to Geelong, at between prices of 30 and 40 guineas." The old-time nurserymen were a long time finding out this obvious fact, but they made no mistake about their charges.

A lecture was given at Dandenong on August 21, 1877, on the "Phonograph, Microphone and Telephone." It was a highly instructive lecture, and a good house listened intently to the speaker, the Rev. Duncan Frazer. So we were not so backward even in the "old times," eh! and knew something about the wonders of to-day before even the flappers flapped!

The first pile of the new bridge over the creek at Point Nepean road was driven on Wednesday, March 27, 1878, and the bridge was opened on May 2, 1879. Surely the foregoing will be news for some of the old boys!

# REMINISCENCES OF DANDENONG

Back in 1870

Vacant Land

COMMERCIAL BANK

Vacant Land

BRIDGE HOTEL

T. WALKLEY

(Painter)

S. HYDE

(Private House).

A GRIFFITHS

(Blacksmith).

J. K. DUNBAR

(Wheelwright).

In 1932

State Savings Bank.

Moran & Cato.

Commercial Bank.

Gippsland Tea Rooms.

Mr. Haines.

Mr. Duff.

Mr. Drayton.

Electricity Commission.

Bridge Hotel.

Mr. Butterfield.

Mr. White.

Mr. Parton.

Empire Cafe.

Mr. Figgins.

Mr. Pocknee.

Brown & Andrews.

Mr. Edwards.

## FOSTER ST.

This block, now covered with buildings, rightly should have a place on the plan, but whereas in the old days only two small shops were built on it, facing the main street, now it has quite a number facing Foster street, viz., Rutherford's, Pitt's (1932), Figgins' boot shop, Browne's and Edwards'. Whilst on the other side of Foster street, on Powis's old timber yard site, are the shops of Messrs. Russell, Reedy, McKinnon, Blain, Tharle Bros., Scott, Mrs. Darke, and, a little further on, C. Godfrey, and Pigdon and Lardner have fine business premises.

## DUNN'S INN DISAPPEARS

And the last place to be mentioned is Dunn's Hotel. A nice villa now stands where Dandenong's first hotel (or house, as far as I can ascertain) was erected, but I do not suppose that even a block of wood used as a building block could be unearthed. It would be interesting to discover a trace of the old hotel and hand it over to the Mechanics' Institute as a relic of the past. The hotel, although built so far back from the main street, faced that way, and as there were no fences around it, was just a step or so off the track that wound down the flat and on to the creek. It was built up on the Thomas street rise as a precaution against floods, which occurred every time there was a fairly heavy rainfall, and the little flat, where now are the buildings noted, was an orchard. And, just beyond flood level was a clay hole, from whence the clay to make the bricks for the Bridge Hotel was taken.\*

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\* John Dunn's Inn was also Dandenong's first Post Office.

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET

On the eastern side of the main street there has not been much change. Mr. F. H. Searle built the run of small shops between the old market and Cadle's store, which first was a sawmill, built by William Monger. But the timber business slumped, and, being a wise man, Mr. Monger turned the timber mill into a flour mill and ran it for a time. He sold out to Mr. P. Hurlstone and Mr. J. D. Cadle, who later acquired sole control. Mr. Oldmeadow now conducts the business.

The Post Office and Town Hall have been erected upon land which was the grant to the Mechanics' Institute, but the latter does not properly come within the range of the "Old Days." And all the other buildings, except Crump's and Alex. Evans' old premises, are new, comparatively speaking, of course.

Well, then, taking that as the fact of the matter, I can with safety move on to what may rightly be termed the "Brick Era." This was inaugurated by William Thompson (as no brick building had been erected for many years) when he built "Melbe House," next door to the little single-fronted shops, in one of which he conducted a fancy goods and stationery business for many years. Afterwards he built the brick pharmacy which the Titcher family has held since its erection. "Pearson's Buildings" followed, higher up the street. Then Isaac Lowenstern built his new premises and moved out of the Kangaroo store. And so on, and so on, until this year. O. Gilpin bought "Melbe House," demolished it, and built the up-to-date and commodious premises which I promised to mention early in these reminiscences.

In the passage of years between 1880 and 1931 many new brick structures have gone up, and the only original ones of brick on the street are the Bridge Hotel, Commercial Bank, Kangaroo Store and the Shamrock Hotel. The latter and the former, and also the Bank, have been altered and improved, but there is sufficient of the original edifices left to warrant the claim to early-day workmanship. There are also the small brick shops next to the Club Hotel and Poncy's old shop (now occupied by Messrs. Tatterson). These also have been altered and improved, and there is Hemmings' paint shop in Pultney street.

And one going down the street, looking for old buildings, would be very much at sea; that is, if he had been absent for any length of time. And, indeed, one need not be a lengthy absentee to be puzzled. It was only the other Tuesday that five old cronies met on the main street and vigorously debated the exact location of the old Post Office. The approach of a police constable stopped any serious consequences to the controversy that blocked the traffic and caused wonderment among the little crowd that gathered in anticipation of witnessing a fight, so keen became the discussion. One cannot beat the old timers for calm and judicial word battles.

## HORSE BREEDING

The late Mr. James Greaves took a keen interest in breeding horses and cattle, and introduced several sires of note into the district. He owned "Cowden Lad's Orphan," a magnificent dark brown Clydesdale; "Sir Charles," also a Clydesdale,

## Oh what a scandal!

by Penny McColm

George Thomas Usher was born on the 17th May 1829 the second son of George Sterne Usher and Elizabeth Jarvis. This Usher family were shipwrights by profession who carried on the tradition of their forebears in the Sheerness Dockyards on the Island of Sheppy, Kent England.

The garrison and docks at Sheerness were established in the 17th century and had played an integral part in the spectacular rise of the British Navy and its ensuing history. By the time George would have completed his apprenticeship as a carpenter-joiner the activities of the shipyard were beginning to wind down, and he moved on to work on the docks in London, where he eventually met and married Rose Ann Burton. Rose Ann was the last of 5 daughters born to Samuel Burton, a tailor, and Sarah Gault. A record of Rose Ann's birth has not been found but according to her marriage records she would have been born c.1830 in Ipswich, Suffolk. George and Rose Ann married in the local church in the Parish of West Ham, Co Essex, on 26th June 1854. Rose Ann states that she is a spinster, and her sister Matilda and her husband Thomas Burns are the witnesses.

Six years prior to her marriage to George, Rose Ann married Joseph Sewell, a Law Clerk. They were married in St Pancras Church in the Parish of St Pancras Co Middlesex, on 28th August 1848. Present were her father and Mary Williams. Joseph disappeared after the 1851 census where his profession is shown as a cabinetmaker. So what became of Joseph?

It has to be assumed that Rose Ann's marriage to George was bigamous, and that she had conveniently forgotten that she was previously married. As she was pregnant at the time of her wedding in 1854, it would have been considered most desirable to be married to a man who intended to migrate to Australia.

George, Rose Ann and baby George Thomas arrived in Adelaide, South Australia aboard the Telegraph on the 23rd January 1855, where baby George's birth was registered, as he had been born at sea. He was the only child George and Rose Ann were to have.

After living in Adelaide for seven years they headed for Victoria in the early 1860s and settled in the recently established township of Dandenong outside of Melbourne. George immediately became the publican at the newly built Bridge Hotel. The building of the hotel commenced in 1858 and had been fraught with financial trouble, but finally a fine two-storied building was erected and George with Rose Ann and baby settled in to be the 4th Licensees.

George began to build a comfortable life and profitable business and had a hand in many business schemes and local community affairs. His first documented venture was in 1871. George, in conjunction with other ardent fishermen, imported trout fry from Tasmania to stock the Dandenong creek in order to partake of the joys of fly-fishing, which from all accounts was not a great success. In 1874 George became a founding member of the Hunt Club, and leaseholder of the land used for the race-track. The local pack of hounds were put to use to chase anything that could run, mainly kangaroo or dingo with the chase going as far as Frankston on occasions.

By 1875 George, as an avid punter and ever fond of the races, was now deeply involved with the Dandenong Hunt Club, where he donated the Steeplechase Cup valued at 20 guineas. 1878 saw George's horse Bumblefoot, so named due to an odd shaped foot, racing in the Steeplechase. On one occasion Bumblefoot made a show of it and the story goes:

*He was a good jumper, but on the day was apparently short of a gallop, as last time round he dropped in front of the refreshment booth, literally knocked out, and refused to get up. One bookie offered a hundred to one that he'd never get up, but before the wager was taken one of the onlookers got a glassful of water and poured it into the chestnut's ear. Another 'vet' grasped him by the tail and gave a heave, but whether it was the water in his ear or the lighted cigar applied near the root of his tail will never be known, but the 'deadun' sprang up like a shot and appeared to have enough energy to go another round. But by that time the race was over!*

As well as living a grand social life George also seized a business opportunity to commence a coach service. This service ran from Dandenong to Grantville, which was south of Dandenong on Western Port Bay. This trip took 6 hours with a change of horses along the way. He advertised this service and the benefits of staying at the Bridge Hotel in the local paper, the South Burke & Mornington Journal. His marketing skills were considerable. By New Years Eve 1875 George was credited with having erected a large marquee in the town for the New Year celebrations for the entire town to enjoy.

About this time Rose Ann began to stray. Her husband was always busy with his business, and his other activities would have taken a great deal of his spare time. It eventually became apparent that she found consolation with a lodger of the hotel, John Jones, who was a baker by profession. By November 1876 an article appeared in the South Burke & Mornington Journal, detailing the whole scandalous story of their flight. We can only imagine the gossip that this caused. Sadly there is no longer a transcript of the trial, as it would have made for great reading. However the article from the paper tells the story:

### AN ELOPEMENT FROM AUSTRALIA

*At the Thames Police Court John Jones, a baker, was charged with receiving two gold watches, gold chains and a diamond ring, some silver spoons and a quantity of linen articles, value £500, the property of Mr. George Usher, hotelkeeper. Of Dandenong. Mr. Humphreys, jun., solicitor, who appeared for the prosecutor, said the prisoner was charged with receiving the things well knowing them to have been stolen. Mr. Usher, the prosecutor, was a gentleman carrying on an extensive business near Melbourne; the prisoner was living on pretty intimate terms with the family, and a short time ago took advantage of this intimacy to elope with Mrs Usher.*

*They took with them a large quantity of personal property belonging to Mr. Usher, and a quantity of securities, such as shares, &c., to the value of about £3000.*

*On (our) Prosecutor, discovering the flight of his wife, he put the telegraph in motion, and discovered that Mrs Usher and the prisoner had taken passage for Europe. Mr. Usher followed them, and on arriving applied to Mr. Chance at this court for a warrant, which was placed in the hands of the police to execute. The property named in the sheet was found in prisoner's possession, but only a small sum of the £3000. It has been ascertained, it had been invested in Melbourne in Mrs Ushers name.*

*Mr. Humphreys then said he would proceed to prove his case, and ask for the committal of the prisoner. Mr. Lushington said it seemed to him that if there had been, a felony at all it had been committed in Australia, and that he did not think he should be justified in detaining the prisoner in custody for the offence he was charged with. The things, according to Mr. Humphreys' own statement, were not stolen till they came into the possession of the prisoner. He did not think the charge of receiving could be sustained, and defendant might go way (away). He could make no order about the property.*

*The prisoner and the wife of the prosecutor then left the court together.)*

\*Printed In The South Burke & Mornington Journal November 6th 1878 Issue.

It is not known when George and Rose Ann returned to Australia, but return they both did. Whether they stayed together or went their separate ways is a mystery, but in the mean time we find George in 1877 arranging a billiard tournament at the Bridge Hotel Dandenong. Billiards was the rage at the time and the tables had to be imported, and players came from Melbourne to play in the lucrative tournaments.

In September 1880 Dandenong was seriously flooded and George was to show great courage in rescuing a family trapped in their home with his coach and horses.

On 31st May 1882 in the Registry Office in Gore St Fitzroy Victoria, George and Rose Ann Button-Sewell married for a second time. Rose Ann claimed to have become a Widow in 1872, and she was a gentlewoman from Fitzroy. George Thomas Usher stated he was a bachelor and a gentleman from Fitzroy. Whether they ever lived in Fitzroy is doubtful. They gave the same parents and birth locations as they did for their previous marriage in 1854; neither of them owned that they had a son, naturally. No one from their family attended the ceremony. One of the witnesses was a John Setches, a young waiter who was next in line to be married.

This definitely gives the impression that George and Rose Ann were keeping the occasion very private.

In 1884 George had moved on from Dandenong and had the license for the 'Grosvenor' Hotel in Brighton Road St Kilda, and by 1899 they lived at 235 Williams Road Toorak.

So we have come full circle. The reasons why they remarried are numerous, perhaps for legal reasons so that son George, who was married with a family of his own by 1882, would not be considered illegitimate or perhaps the inheritance and property were an issue.

George Thomas Usher died at the age of 88 in the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum in North Melbourne on the 20th September 1904 and is buried in the Springvale cemetery. Rose Ann moved to Sydney in 1909 and lived there with her son until her death on 9th May 1913. She is buried in Rookwood cemetery. ■

#### Note from Author:

Without the AIGS and all the great people behind the counter, who are so helpful and who over the years have pointed me in the right direction with my research, George and Rose Ann's story could never have been told.

#### Sources:

*South Burke & Mornington Journal*  
*Chronicles of Dandenong* by Niall Brennan  
*Reminiscences of Early Dandenong* by "G.F.R" George Fenton Roulston  
 Reprinted by The Dandenong & District Historical Society



The Bridge Hotel. Photograph from 'Reminiscences of Greater Dandenong', by G F Roulston permission of Dandenong Historical Society.

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