

GENERAL BUSINESS.

Mrs Bolton asked all members to undertake some task concerning the Eastern Districts Conference on April 29. Help with bringing food, serving, washing up, moving furniture, etc will be greatly appreciated.

Mrs Morgan announced that due to private committments Mrs Finlay was obliged to resign from the Secretaryship of the Society and the Committee from March 31.

~~SPEAKER Mr W. Dempsey spoke on JOHN GARDINER AND GARDINER'S CREEK.~~

Mr McCord thanked Mr Dempsey for his research and treatment of the topic, supper was served and the meeting closed at 10.15 pm
E.M.Finlay, Secretary, 890 4377

JOHN GARDINER AND GARDINER'S CREEK
Talk by W.Dempsey 23.3.1989

The lower reaches of Gardiner's Creek were originally a swampy area formed by a rocky ledge in the Yarra River which caused water to bank up on a higher level. This swamp was known as Kooyongkoot - the meeting place of the waterbirds. The creek drained, and still drains, 9 eastern suburban municipalities, but its former 1.5 meters width has been increased with the increased run-off after the removal of native bush which absorbed much of the rainfall.

John Gardiner, a man with a great drive to achieve, was a Dublin Irishman of good education, who married Mary Eagles of County Meath, worked briefly in a bank, and in 1822 at the age of 24 migrated with his wife, parents-in-law and their 3 sons to Van Diemen's Land, where he took up 800 acres of land at Ross. In 1824 he became principal accountant of the VDL Bank, then, ever bettering himself, he had a business in Cambelltown (Macquarie Plains) before taking up the lease of the 5,250 acre Lovely Banks property in 1834.

Losing his tenancy in a time of drought and depression, he sought opportunity elsewhere by moving to Yass in NSW, but found things no better and with Hordern and Hepburn undertook to drive 400 head of cattle to Port Phillip through country unsettled and virtually unexplored, with no known stockroutes or grazing areas. This journey is a saga in itself. Near Gundagai, on the Murrumbidgee, a party of men were seen on the opposite bank. They proved to be Major Thomas Mitchell's party, returning from Australia Felix (the Western Districts), a historic meeting with much swapping of yarns around the campfires of the first 'overlanders'.

Reaching Port Phillip, Gardiner forded the Yarra near Dight's Mill and followed the river round 'Scotch Hill' to the valley beyond. He obtained a grazing licence, built huts, then returned to Sydney by ship to buy more cattle (sent overland with 2 men) and to bring back his wife and daughter.

A prefabricated frame cottage from Launceston was erected upstream on the creek on the south side, probably the first in the Malvern/Hawthorn area. Mrs Gardiner's diary(1837) describes the house with its outbuildings and separate accommodation for the servants, and a sketch made by his daughter is in the 1925 History of Malvern.

Gardiner became a very active and influential member of Port Phillip society. He bought land in the city and 960 acres at Mooroolbark; he was first President of the Temperance Society and Chairman of the PP Bank. From meetings at his town house in Bourke Street (built when he sold the Gardiner's Creek lease in 1839), came the committee which founded the Independent Church in Collins Street. He was a director of the Melbourne Fire and Marine Insurance Company. In the 1840 depression, despite his trip to England to raise capital, the Bank collapsed and Gardiner retired to Mooroolbark where he lived quietly waiting for prosperity to return.

In 1853, aged 55, he sold his assets and went to live in Leamington Spa in Warwickshire with his brother and cousin. His wife and daughter remained in Melbourne. After his wife's death he married his cousin Sarah Fletcher and died in Warwickshire in 1878. For 17 years John Gardiner had played an active role in building the new colony. Always 'a goer and a doer' he seized opportunities when he saw them and is worthily commemorated in the name of the stream which watered his grazing land near the Kooyongkoot swamp.