



NUNAWADING HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, 14th May, 1969 8 p.m. in the
Coffee Room, Civic Centre, Whitehorse Road,
Nunawading

Mr JOHN BLAZÉ of the Genealogical Society of
Victoria will speak on:
'GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH'

' THE NUNAWADING MESSIAH '

JAMES FISHER, the "Nunawading Messiah", emerged as an enigma from an address by Mr David Duke to the Nunawading Historical Society on 9th April. There are many unanswered questions and unconfirmed stories about his activities, and there seems no sure source of information.

Fisher was born in England and, with little education, ran away to sea. When his ship visited Melbourne during the gold rush he left it to hunt for gold, then settled in Nunawading just as it was being opened up to settlement.

He came in contact with some "Christian Israelites", whose movement had developed from the followers of Joanna Southcott, who in the early 19th century in England had claimed to have had a number of visions and revelations. They dressed in the style current in Joanna Southcott's time and held rigidly to a number of doctrines not generally recognized by established churches. As a particularly promising young man, Fisher rapidly assumed a position of leadership and attracted a number of followers from the Christian Israelites and apparently from another rather similar group.

They had a chapel at the north-western corner of Springvale and Canterbury roads, but their membership, numbering about 100, was widely scattered from Nunawading to Richmond and Oakleigh.

After some years of quiet development, they were thrust into notoriety when a former leading member charged Fisher with false pretences because he had failed to save the life of a sick child.

ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA BI-ENNIAL CONFERENCE: (contd)

History. It will consist of 5 members from the RHSV and 7 from affiliated societies. The representative from the Eastern suburbs Historical Societies is Mrs M. Green of Doncaster H.S.

The President, Mr L. J. Blake, announced that a deputation has approached the Premier on such matters as the renaming of Pt. Everard, the acquisition of a larger area of National Park in this vicinity with accessibility there by the public, financial aid for special RHSV publications, and the urgent need for a permanent H.Q. for the Society. The Committee of the National Trust recently met with a committee of three from the RHSV to discuss the formation of a joint policy; it is realised that each group is complementary to the other.

D.M.

There were five main speakers at the Conference and their theme was 'GOLD'. Professor Russel Ward considered the effect of gold on the development of Australian patriotism. He suggested that the people of N.S.W. are more inclined to emphasise their loyalty to Australia, while Victorians tend to see themselves as independent Australian Britons with a basic loyalty to the throne, the Empire and all white English-speaking people. The Victorian attitude was traced to the type of people who came seeking gold.

Mr Geoffrey Blainey's topic was 'HOW THEY WON THE GOLD'. A knowledge of how the gold was won is basic to an understanding of life on the fields. The surface gold was won by primitive washing, puddling and sluicing. For deeper mining, the system of 'hammer and tap' was used. This was replaced by the rock drill in the eighteen seventies and eighties. One type of rock drill was known as the 'widow-maker' because the men using it contracted tuberculosis. It was used extensively at Bendigo.

Mr Blake spoke about 'THE GOLD ESCORT', particularly the South Australian Gold Escort to Mt. Alexander (Castlemaine). He showed slides of the Little Desert and pointed out the tracks made by the escort carts.

Mr Geoffrey Serle examined the gold generation very closely and indicated the effects of the gold migrants on the composition and development of Victorian society.

Dr Noel McLachlan spoke about the visitors to the gold-fields, the hardships of their journeys and their opinions of Australia.

These were five thoroughly stimulating lectures on very different aspects of the gold-rush period.

E. Ronaldson

DISCOVERY SUMMER SCHOOL 'IN THE WAKE OF CAPTAIN JAMES COOK',

organised by the South-Eastern Historical Association, at Queenscliff, March 7-9, 1970. For details see Secretary. Day tours also.

Recently published by the Nepean Historical Society is the History of Quarantine at Port Phillip Heads, 1852-1966: 'HELL TO HEALTH', by Major J. H. Welch. Excellent buying at \$1.50. Particulars from Mrs Field. 878-0142.

STAWELL recently celebrated its municipal centenary.

In 1840, Robert Briggs occupied the Ledcourt run, the first established in the eastern Grampians, and in 1841, John Allen occupied the 57,000 acres of the Concongella selection which included the site of Stawell. Dr Blundell acquired Concongella in 1844. In 1853, William McLaughlan, a shepherd employed by Dr Blundell, who occupied an

outstation hut on Pleasant Creek near the site of the present Shire Hall, found gold. Gold rushes began to Pleasant Creek and Deep Lead, and reached their peak by 1857, the population being estimated at 20,000.

On 11th June, 1858, the site of the Township of Stawell was proclaimed. Prior to this time, the district was known as Pleasant Creek and the quartz reef mining area as 'The Reefs'. William Foster Stawell was Chief Law Officer of the District of Port Phillip, and Acting Governor of the Colony of Victoria from its proclamation on 30/4/1851 until LaTrobe took office. He was also Attorney-General of the first Victorian Parliament and Chief Justice of Victoria. His family, in the 12th century, took its name from the Somerset Parish of Stawell, which is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. Stawell is a corruption of 'stony well', a spring in the parish whose mineral waters petrified objects placed in it.

In 1861, Stawell Road District was proclaimed, in 1864, Stawell Shire, and in 1869, the Borough of Stawell. This in turn became a Town in 1957.

WATER CONSERVATION

Recently the Premier of Victoria officially opened Lake Bellfield at Hall's Gap. This reservoir is the latest link in a long history of water conservation and distribution in the dry Wimmera and Mallee area, where rainfall ranges from 12 inches to 20 inches, with no permanent streams.

The Wilson brothers are regarded as the first to initiate water conservation in the Wimmera, when, about 1856, they dammed the Wimmera River at Ashens and Longerenong to divert the water into the Ashens and Yarriambiack Creeks. These were regulated to hold supplies, and water was carried more than twenty miles from the main streams to water the squatters' back country.

Droughts in 1877 and 1881, with fairly dry years in between, brought the question of water conservation to the fore. The Shires of Dunmunkle and St Arnaud carried out some work on this, and then the Wimmera United Water-Works Trust and later the Shire of Wimmera Trust in the eighteen-eighties constructed many miles of distributory channels.

In 1882, the first of the Wimmera-Mallee storages, Wartook, was begun. Lake Lonsdale followed, and, in 1906, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission was formed, and further projects were undertaken.

Fyan's Lake, Taylor's Lake, Pine Lake, Toolondo, Rocklands and Bellfield are all part of the domestic and stock supply system which serves an area equal to one-eighth of the State. The annual value of agricultural and pastoral production here is \$60,000,000. There are more than 6000 miles of Commission channels and 4000 miles of farmers' connecting channels, and the system is the largest of its kind in the world.

The construction of Bellfield took place between 1963 and 1966, with all the benefits of modern earth-moving equipment, a very great contrast to the 'pick and shovel' methods of earlier times. For example, during the construction of Taylor's Lake from a natural lake to a reservoir (1915 to the early nineteen-twenties), horse-drawn scoops moved 1,000,000 cubic yards of earth for a new bank, each scoop making three trips to obtain one cubic yard.

Many of the pioneer settlers after the 1869 Land Act, whose story was recounted recently by Dr Powell, would have been very interested in the early projects of water conservation and distribution. Today, dry seasons do not bring the threat of disaster for farmers in the north-west of Victoria.

Acknowledgments for latest figures to State Rivers and Water Supply Commission.

EXTRACTS FROM THE 'RINGWOOD BOROUGH NEWS'

BLACKBURN PROGRESS ASSOCIATION 1/5/1931

Increased Postal Facilities Secured

For some time the Blackburn Progress Association has been in communication with the P.M.G.'s Department in an endeavour to secure increased postal facilities for Blackburn. On Wednesday last, Mr Taylor, District Inspector for Metropolitan South, visited Blackburn to investigate the requests. He was met by the President, Mr A. G. Furness, and Secretary, Mr A. Jamieson, of the Progress Association, who conducted him around Blackburn, and re-stated the wishes of the residents.

Mr Taylor was impressed by the case presented, and promised that three postal boxes would be provided, one at each of the following points: Corner of Canterbury and Blackburn Roads, Laurel Grove and The Avenue, Central Road and Parkside Street. These would be cleared by the postmen on their morning rounds, and probably again in the afternoon, in time for the evening mail.

1st BLACKBURN TROOP BOY SCOUTS 10/4/1931

Arrangements are now complete as far as the above troop is concerned for the rally on Saturday next at the M.C.C. ground, to commemorate the visit of the World Chief Scout, Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell, and the World Chief Guide, Lady Baden-Powell.

CROYDON 17/7/1931

Walking Tours Popular

Croydon is fast becoming known in Melbourne as the starting point for those who like country walks. Some 350 members of the 3AR Broadcasting Company Hiking Club detrained at 11 a.m. at Croydon last Sunday, and their hike was from Croydon to Eltham. Special arrangements had been made with the Railway Commissioners for trains from Melbourne to Croydon and Eltham to Melbourne. The 'Fox Movietone' motor-car accompanied the party from Croydon to Eltham, taking pictures and generally recording the hike. When the party left Croydon, the sun was shining, but soon afterwards rain came down. The members of the party, however, were well equipped for the wet weather. It was interesting to note the various modes of dress, both of ladies and gentlemen; some were in ordinary town attire, while others dressed to suit the occasion, this included startling colored pullovers and caps to match. Again, some had packs on their backs, which made one think they were going away for a week; others contented themselves with a small handbag, and, of course, with the ladies, a powder puff.

Their chief refreshment while on the march appeared to be P.K.'s and Minties, but no doubt, a good meal awaited them when they arrived at their respective homes.

D. Mattingley

(Editor)

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