

The Tarnagulla Recreation Reserve and Reservoir

A Brief History



Preface

This booklet was compiled by the Committee of Management of the Tarnagulla Recreation Parks in the interest of recording the history of the Pavilion and surrounding Recreation Reserve. We thank Don Clark, Lorna Goltz and David Gordon for the information and photographs they supplied to us. The Pavilion is the oldest known surviving one of its type in the State, and expresses this by its timber construction and verandah details: similar buildings at Benalla and Beechworth are about 10 years younger.

The Pavilion is now officially listed on the Historic Building Register.

December 1990

Right from Tarnagulla's earliest beginnings, the townsfolk made a point of recognising the week or so over Christmas and New Year as a time for celebrating as a community. On New Year's Day 1870 the Tarnagulla Borough Council and local business people combined to give the children of the district a picnic in the new public park at Newbridge. This was so successful, thus was born what for years afterwards would be known as the Tarnagulla New Year's Day Fete.

The Borough Council in November 1870 took the first steps towards beautifying the area, by clearing the reserve of stones and rubbish, laying out a serpentine walk, and erecting a few seats of bush materials.

In December 1871, steps were taken to construct swimming baths, on the grounds, and at the same time the first licenses were granted to catch fish which had been introduced to the reservoir some time previously, as a primitive form of algae control. T L Williams, licensee of the Golden Age Hotel, was on the bank at first light and took home 126 blackfish for breakfast!

On January 1st 1873, a monster fete, including sports, was held at the reserve, to raise funds for the building of the new State School, which was opened in 1874.

Gateway to Reserve



By 1878, a pair of handsome gates graced the Reserve entrance, presenting an impressive welcome. Work was then carried out on the flower beds and walkways that wound through the beautiful area. A dam, with an island in the centre, was constructed, and this was unofficially used as the Swimming Hole. Statues were erected along the pathways to the original gate situated along the eastern fence, about four chains from the present gateway.

Regular New Year's Day sports were held over many years, but as they clashed with the Annual Maryborough Highland Sports, the day was changed to the Boxing Day Sports fixture, and continued up until the 1930s.

In May 1872 the Borough Council decided to fence in about 10 acres on the town side of the reservoir as a public garden. On January 1st 1873 the first of the really big charity sports and fetes took place (in aid of funds for the new school house, as it was called). An Immense Procession was advertised to start from the Town Hall at 9.00 am preceded by the Brass Band, then the school children, friendly societies and so on. The sports consisted of numerous footraces, jumping, wrestling, boxing, gymnastics, dancing, high-jumping, hop-step and jump, climbing the greasy pole, log wedge and beetle and several other strange sports (which apparently weren't sufficiently popular to be included in the Modern Olympics!)

Boating and boat races were held on the reservoir and rudiments of a sideshow alley consisted of The Wonderful Performing Dog, Black Bess, and Mr. Robinson's monkey and organ. A Grand Vocal Concert took place that evening at the Victoria Theatre, and, all in all, the day was a wonderful success and firmly cemented the event on the district's social calendar. The event also marked the erection of the first permanent booth by the Borough Council, a log structure 40 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 7 feet high. Receipts for the day were £92.12.4 and a profit of £52.0.9 was handed over to the school-house committee. The fete was therefore quite a substantial fund raiser at a time when miner's wages were in the range of £2.10/- per week. The running races were held on the reservoir embankment for some years. The bank was originally quite wide, but the raising of the height of the bank at a later date to improve the reservoir capacity put a stop to any ideas of holding running races on it. Later in the month of January 1873 the Borough Council took steps to secure public tenure over the reserve by applying to the Commissioner for Crown Lands, for a special survey as to the suitability of the site for a public park and recreation ground. This was sub-

sequently approved, and in July 1873, Council offered reservoir keeper H A McMillan the sum of £15 compensation for his house and garden.

At this time the Annual Fete became Tarnagulla's special event of the year, and long and hard did those well-mannered organising committees work towards the end of the year, in getting all the arrangements in place. Almost invariably arguments broke out as to how the profits should be distributed, and many a meeting broke up amid bad feeling as to what share the Dunolly Hospital, The Inglewood Hospital, the local Benevolent Society or perhaps a new fence for the Cemetery should receive. Towards the end of the financially depressed 1870s it became clear that for the Fete to continue to progress the reserve itself would require substantial improvements which the financially beleaguered Borough Council was unable to undertake in its own right. Therefore increasing proportions of the Fete profits began to be channelled into the reserve.

One half of the profits from the 1875 Fete was allocated towards new fencing at the reserve, although whether this was actually done is not clear, as exactly the same allocation was made in 1877. The year 1882 saw a public holiday proclaimed in the Borough to watch the English Cricket Team at Dunolly (Figgis of the Union Bank was Tarnagulla's only representative, he made 9 and 1).

The plans for the Pavilion were drawn up by the Borough's architect T Archard, but at first were to cost too much for the Borough Council to afford, however, by negotiation, the building arrangements were to commence in 1882. Firm steps were finally taken by the Council in July 1883 when tenders were again invited for the erection of booths which had been re-designed on a less pretentious scale by Mr J Fenton. Another event of interest also took place at Tarnagulla in this month: St Leons Grand Circus visited the town. This circus boasted a menagerie of tigers, bears, leopards, etc. Whilst many circuses visited Tarnagulla over the years, particularly during the early boom period, it is of interest to speculate on the possibility of a couple of St. Leons big cats being the founding parents of the latter day puma phenomenon! Tenders for the reservoir booths were received by the council in August as follows:

William Roper and Co.	£170.0.0
Wilson and Griswold	£188.2.6

and that of William Roper was accepted

Not much was known of William Roper before this time,



and this was the first major project at Tarnagulla, and it formed the leaping off point from which he opened, and for many years conducted a cabinet making business in Commercial Rd. opposite the Union Bank, to the north of what was then Kerrs Saddlery, and in premises which had previously been used as the Tarnagulla Courier Printing Office. At the same time as the two-storey pavilion was erected, William Roper also built two other booths, referred to as a Temperance Booth and a Sandwich Booth.

A Running Booth was later erected and any person, on the payment of three shillings for a key, was able to take a shower in the booth. With the construction of the booths well under way by October 1883, the residents of the town were looking forward to the improvement the booths would make at the 1884 Fete. Almost at this same time the selection of the site for the Prince of Wales and Old Poverty Co's main shaft was made and sinking commenced. It is interesting to note that considerable renovation has gone on in recent times almost simultaneously at both the mine and the pavilion—a notable coincidence!

Tenders were invited in November for asphaltting the booths, and in December the 1884 Fete Committee passed a resolution to charge an admission fee of 1/- to the new Pavilion. J M Williams of Stony Creek was engaged to play music in the Pavilion at £2.2/- as was Mr Millar of Berlin (now Rheola) for £1.1/-.

Tenders for asphaltting the floor of the Pavilion were

D J Duggan	£9
W H McGregor	£4.19/-
James Clouston	£7.

*Pavilion in background
with booths
Taken from Reservoir
bank*

McGregor's tender was accepted after considerable debate as to whether the job could be satisfactorily completed for the amount specified. Architect John Fenton was appointed Inspector of Works in relation to all matters concerning the Pavilion. The council also decided to erect a flight of steps up the reservoir embankment and to erect a structure to enable people to get in and out of the boats.

All was in readiness to ensure the 1884 Fete was a bumper one, and it certainly was. The new Pavilion was described as being as complete as any found up-country, and reflected great credit on all associated with its construction, although Mr Roper still had some work to do to finish the booths. His success in Tarnagulla was further assured when the Prince of Wales and Old Poverty Co. commissioned him in February 1884 to erect its blacksmith's shop.

Ancillary to the Reserve, but fundamental to its creation, is the Reservoir, which, being constructed in 1860, is also amongst the earliest of its type within the colony of Victoria.

To establish a water supply for the town was an early priority, as the establishment grew with the advent of mining, particularly with the Reef Mining in the late 1850s. In May 1860 Henry Morris, Surveyor, laid out a scheme which consisted of an embankment 17 feet high, 3 foot thick wall of puddled clay in the centre, and extended for 376 feet across the minor valley, with its earth walls battered down on either side of the clay core, on a sandstone bed. Contractor for the erection of the embankment was Mr A H Amos who completed the structure by the end of 1860.

*Old Jetty showing
drawing arm for water
supply for Tarnagulla*



Open drains conveyed the water to the Victoria Gardens, situated between Wayman St. and Poverty St. on the west side of the main town drain. This was for many years a well-kept garden area, but it was reclaimed by the Government for crown land in 1914. Pollution of the water supply was a constant threat, and the keeper of the Reservoir Mr H McMillan gave notice that he would shoot any goats he found in the reserve. Once established as a Reserve and hence one of the few places excluded from mining activity, it was sought out and cleared by the Tarnagulla Cricket Club in 1862.

In 1872 a more substantial boundary fence was erected, along with proper grading and drainage of the Cricket Ground. The area being fenced was 10 acres. Cycle racing was a very popular sport at this period, and special attention was given to the formation of a Cycle Track.

Water from the reservoir was laid to Commercial Road by the contractor D J Duggan between January and May 1882. Fire plugs were installed, and a fire hydrant and thirty feet of hose were purchased. The first fire after this was a house fire on the opposite side of the street to the pipeline and hydrant. The house was lost because the thirty feet of hose would not reach the fire. At the next meeting of Council, fifty feet of hose was to be ordered. Water was not laid to Gladstone St. until 1915. On August 31st 1887 the Fire Brigade held its Annual Ball, in the top floor of the Pavilion at the Recreation reserve.

Band Rotunda and Pavilion showing new toilet ammenity in background



In 1886 the Tarnagulla Brass Band, which had been raising funds for a Band Rotunda, arranged for assistance from the Borough Council and asked to situate the new Band Rotunda in the recreation reserve.

The swimming dam, with the island in the middle, was situated between the picket fence on the west boundary of the oval, and the north end of the present cricket pitch, so the bandstand was placed between the dam and the fence. The early cricket ground was to the south east of the reserve. Mixed bathing was strictly prohibited. Ladies were to swim between 8 am to 8 pm and men between 8 pm to 8 am. There was considerable upset in the town on January 21st 1888 because of the disreputable behaviour of some of the youths who were swimming out of hours.

The swimming dam at the reserve was filled in and the cannon and the Band Rotunda were shifted to the south end of the oval, near the bank of the Reservoir, and remained there during the early 30s.

In March 1884 the council decided to insure the Pavilion for £200. It was noticed that the oldest of the two boats on the Reservoir, The Pride of the Loddon was unsafe and as an agreeable alternative to spending money on repairs the council decided to let the boats out to Tender for one year, maintenance included! James Small the retired and aged ex-Town Clerk took the Tender for £5.0.0.

The annual accounts of the Borough of Tarnagulla for 1884 discloses that all up costs of the Pavilion and other works at the Reserve during the year amounted to £279.0.0 with insurance being £1.1.0.

On November 20th 1888 a great celebration took place at Tarnagulla Recreation Reserve, when 4000 people gathered from all around the district to observe the official opening of the Dunolly to Inglewood Rail link. A very hot day was recorded and the first train from Sandhurst (Bendigo) arrived via Inglewood and soon after was joined by a train from Maryborough via Dunolly. The passengers were ferried from the Station to the Recreation Reserve by horse drawn conveyances of all descriptions, led by the Tarnagulla Brass Band and Mr Comrie's buggy and Pair with the Members of Parliament. The Reserve presented an animated appearance when the Procession passed through the gates over which were erected a grand evergreen arch decorated with bannerettes and the word Welcome in large letters across the top. Such a large crowd had rarely been seen in the district. Still

the resources were equal to the strain there being plenty to eat and drink for all. A banquet was provided on the top floor of the Pavilion and an estimated 180 people were served lunch whilst all the speeches were delivered. It was truly a Gala Day for Tarnagulla and the district. The gathering at the Reserve that day happily commemorated the occasion.



ARRIVAL OF THE CANNON: FEBRUARY 5TH 1898.

A 64 pounder from the HMS *Nelson* was allocated to the Borough of Tarnagulla by the then Minister of Defence. After much discussion by the Borough Council, it was decided to place it at the Recreation Reserve, on the island in the swimming pool. This was duly carried out. The cannon was fired on several occasions on Saturday 19th of May 1900 on receipt of the news of the Relief of Mafeking. The reports were heard for many miles around and shook the houses and rattled the crockery. On Wednesday 23rd of May 1900 the townspeople held a monster picnic at the Reservoir to cele-

This photo shows the Rotunda and Cannon in their original positions

brate the Relief of Mafeking, on which occasion the cannon was again fired. During the afternoon Mr Reardon loaded the cannon, a muzzle loader, with sixteen pounds of blasting powder, this was tamped in with mud and bags and primed. Mr Duggan MLA fired the charge, and the cannon hurtled backwards in a cloud of black smoke and dust, knocking an



old lady into the swimming pool, and coming to rest itself in the pool. A team of horses was required to pull the cannon out of the water. The charge, in its passage out, knocked over the Fighting gladiator statue, and, the bags, having caught fire, then set fire to the bush on the south east side of the oval. The cannon was again fired on the Coronation of King Edward on June 26th 1902. It was also fired at the end of the First World War on the declaration of Peace in 1919. The cannon has since been moved to the Soldiers Memorial Park adjacent to the Victoria Theatre.

In 1890 the Reservoir Dam area was sold by the State of Victoria to the Tarnagulla Borough Council for the sum of

The Cannon situated at the Recreation Reserve



£25. The Tarnagulla Borough Council was granted Title to the Reserve in 1908, and when the Borough amalgamated with the Shire of Bet Bet in 1915, the Reserve became vested in the Shire.

In 1926 the open fronted building, at the north end of the oval, and on the road into the Reserve, was shifted, from the old Tarnagulla Racecourse at Poseidon Rush on the Loddon River, it being part of the old Grandstand buildings at the Racetrack. It soon became known as One-eyed Hill as it became the focal point of the main followers of the Tarnagulla Football Team.

In 1988 the Bicentennial Committee provided funding for the restoration of the Band Rotunda as one of their projects for the Bicentennial. The work was carried out by both the Recreation Reserve and Bicentennial Committees. The Rotunda was re-opened on the 18th June 1988 by Mrs Violet Clark. Mrs Clark at 93 years of age was the oldest resident in Tarnagulla.

Cricket shed 'One-Eyed Hill' moved from Tarnagulla Racecourse to Reserve

In 1989 work commenced on the restoration of the Pavilion, the cricket oval and building the amenities block. Mr Maurie Sinclair and the Committee of Management restored the Pavilion under the direction of the Shire of Bet Bet and

the Heritage Commission's architect, T Westmore. It is planned that the Park Reserve should once again become a focus for community sporting and other social activities and that in addition, combined with the Reservoir Reserve, outside uses should be attracted by provision of facilities for casual picnicing, bushwalking, fishing, nature studies, etc., for organised camps providing boating and swimming and for tourists using bicycles and horse drawn vehicles.

*The Reservoir
Pavilion, Tamagulla*



The present Committee of Management are:
John Sutton—President, John Sharman—Secretary, Peter Rogasch—Treasurer, Albert Gourley, Andrew Markey, John Chapman, Peter Jewell, Stewart Scholes, and Russell Dennis. We also acknowledge the assistance of Bruce Stevens and everyone who contributed time and effort towards the projects.

Cover:
*The Pavilion restored to
its former grandeur*

2020.0286