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TORQUAY MUSEUM WITHOUT WALLS QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

HISTORY MATTERS

1970 WORLD SURFING TITLES

HUGHES, HARRISON FAMILIES

BELLBRAE POST OFFICE

CONTENTS

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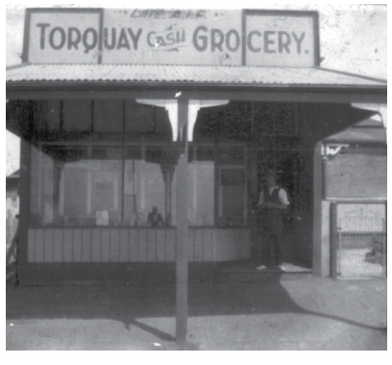

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Bass Strait Crossing Monument
Macfarlane - Harrison - Doc Hughes shop

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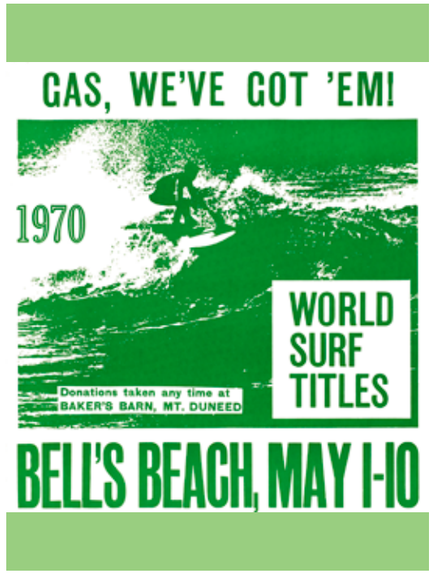


ABOUT US....

Torquay Museum Without Walls is a proud volunteer-run organization. In publishing *History Matters* our volunteers do everything from research, writing, editing, photography and page layouts. Each edition also includes contributions of stories and photography from supporters of our work.

We are very grateful for the support of our sponsors identified opposite and those who contribute in any way to the magazine.

Volunteers play an important role in the operation of our history group. They work in a variety of areas including research, filing, data entry, collections management, photography and working with community groups.

VOLUNTEER WITH US: We welcome new people and you don't have to be an expert in history. A friendly attitude and willingness to join in is all you need.

MONUMENT TO AIRMAN

REMEMBERING THE FIRST PILOT TO FLY OVER BASS STRAIT

Pirrie Shiel, author of Bridging the Strait

Chloe and Billie from Bellbrae Primary School read out the letters that Arthur carried

David Long providing memories of his father

Contributed by Cheryl Baulch

In December last year, the community celebrated Australian aviation history and the role Torquay played in the successful venture. We gathered at our aviator's monument dedicated to Lieut. Arthur Long, the first aviator to cross Bass Strait by air. The speakers gave us some background to the flight and the man who dared to cross the Strait in his little plane.

After the first powered flight by the Wright brothers in 1903, air transport gripped the imagination worldwide. The first flight in Tasmania was made by Delfosse Badgery, a New South Wales grazier, who shipped his biplane to Tasmania in September 1914 and made short flights for entertainment at the Hobart and Launceston Showgrounds, charging an admission fee. Planes played an essential role during the First World War for all sides. Initially, they were used for reconnaissance until the planes were weaponised. After the war, interest in flying intensified.

To promote Australian talents in the air, the Australian government offered a prize of £10,000 for the first Australians in a British aircraft to fly from England to Australia. There were six entries in this month-long transcontinental flight which brothers Ross and Keith Smith won on 10 December 1919. One entry arrived eight months later, and the other four entries crashed out of the race.

After landing the Smith brothers reported their next adventure would be to cross Bass Strait. Meanwhile, Tasmania's first unofficial airmail flight had occurred in 1919 when Lieutenant Arthur Long, a proud Tasmanian airman, left Hobart in a Boulton-Paul bi-plane shortly

before 7 am with a compass, a map and a bag of unfranked letters. Soon lost in clouds, he emerged over Maria Island and flew back to Ross to regain his bearings. His passenger threw out bundles of the Mercury in what was reckoned to be the first aerial delivery of a newspaper in Australia. Flying as low as 60 feet to identify towns, where large crowds followed his progress, he reached Launceston triumphantly at midday. Several months later, he flew from Stanley to Torquay then Melbourne in the first Bass Strait aerial crossing.

Arthur was only 23 years old and had served in World War One when he left Stanley on the northern tip of Tasmania early in the morning and landed at Torquay four hours later. He landed near Rocky Beach to check the lines to his petrol tank. To overcome the limited amount of oil and petrol for the trip Arthur had fitted an extra petrol tank to the front seat and after experiencing adverse flying conditions, he had to make adjustments to his oil and petrol lines. After making the necessary checks and adjustments, he went onto his destination of Carey's Melbourne Aerodrome located at Fisherman's Bend.

We celebrated Arthur Long's Bass Strait achievements at the memorial on the Torquay foreshore at the end of Anderson Street. Chris Barr, President of Torquay Museum Without Walls welcomed guests. Rose Hodge, Surf Coast Shire Mayor, opened the celebrations reminding us of the significance of Long's flight and the role Torquay played in making sure it was successful. Pirrie Shiel, the author of Bridging the Gap, set the scene by describing Arthur Long's journey to becoming a pilot and his determination to beat the Smith brothers in crossing Bass Strait. Pirrie contributed an article about Arthur and the flight in the December 2019 edition of this magazine. David Long, Arthur's son, talked about his father and the spirit that drove him to achieve such aviation efforts as well as his role in both world wars. David's recollection of the compass hitting Arthur in the head during a rough journey brought a smile to everyone's face for Arthur's determination to keep going.

Students from Surf Coast Secondary College and Bellbrae Primary School joined us as we commemorated this pioneering flight. The importance of the flight was not

lost on Tasmanians wanting to feel a closer connection to the mainland. Letters were sent with Arthur from the Mayor of Hobart and Governor of Tasmania and these were delivered promptly in person after his arrival in Melbourne. Chloe and Billie from Bellbrae Primary School read out the letters that Arthur carried and the responses from Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne and the Governor of Victoria. They did an excellent job of reading out the letters which were complemented by a flyover by Tiger Moth World. The bi-plane did a few circles above us and gave a fitting tribute salute to Arthur Long's incredible achievement.

1919 | 2019

***Tiger Moth World** fly over and salute to Arthur Long's achievement.*

David Long at his father's monument with Pirrie Shiel and Bellbrae Primary School students Chloe and Billie.

FROM THE AIR TO THE EVEREST OF THE SEA:

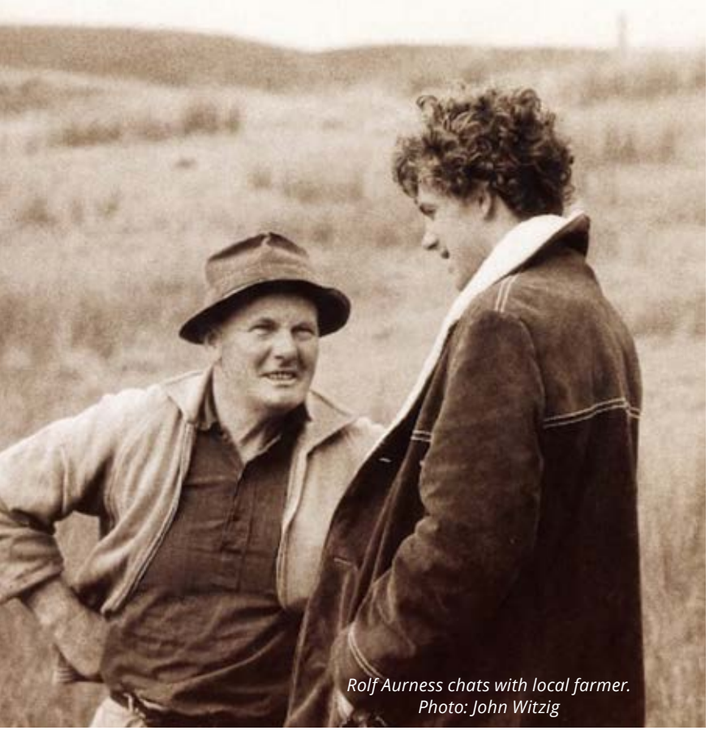
BASS STRAIT

«CHERYL BAULCH»

Bass Strait became the challenge not only for Arthur Long but for others that came after him.

Because of its limited depth, Bass Strait is notoriously rough. Strong currents and wild storm waves have caused havoc to many vessels that have ventured to cross the Strait. These waters give us much pleasure as we splash in it, swim in it, fish and dive in it. The more adventurous folk surf its waves and sail across its surface but some seek further thrills and have conquered it.

- In **1971 David Bowen** became the first man to row solo across Bass Strait in a 6.1 m (20 ft) dory, leaving from Devonport he landed on Wilson's Promontory.
- **Rod Harris, Ian and Peter Richards** are credited with the first kayak crossing in **1971**. They did this by island-hopping across the strait whereas **Andrew McAuley** was the first person to cross Bass Strait **non-stop** in a sea kayak in **2003**. He made two more crossings of Bass Strait before he died attempting to cross the Tasman Sea in February 2007. In 2014 Glen Drew from Ballarat, Jarad Kolar and five others conquered the sea crossing in a kayak. Glen trained on Lake Wendouree and in the ocean at Torquay and Barwon Heads.
- The first windsurfer crossing was in **1982** by **Mark Paul and Les Tokolyi**.
- **Tammy van Wisse** entered the record books in **1996** as the first person to swim the treacherous Bass Strait, freestyling 97kms non-stop from Tasmania's King Island to Apollo Bay for just under 18 gruelling hours. She is still the only person in the world to have accomplished this feat.
- Windsurfer **Nick Moloney** in **1998** achieved the only successful, non-stop, unassisted crossing on such a craft.
- Australian Olympic bronze medalist **Michael Blackburn** set a record in March **2005** when he crossed the strait in just over 13 hours in a Laser sailing dinghy.
- In **2009 Ben Morrison-Jack and James Weight** left Cape Crim, near Stanley to become the first pair to kitesurf, non-stop, unassisted across Bass Strait.
- In **2012**, the Lorne local, Australian ex-soldier **James Prascevic**, made two treacherous crossings of Bass Strait in a tinny to raise awareness and funds for the Black Dog Institute. He did this solo in his small 4.55m aluminium runabout. He travelled between Lorne to Smithton, Tasmania on 29 October 2012 and returned to Lorne on 3 November 2012 without stopping or assistance.
- The first crossing by paddleboard was made by **Jack Bark, Brad Gaul and Torquay local Zeb Walsh**, leaving Wilsons Promontory on 25 February **2014** and arriving at Cape Portland in north-eastern Tasmania on 4 March 2014.



Rolf Aurness chats with local farmer. Photo: John Witzig

Rolf Aurness at Johanna, May 1970 Photo: John Witzig

Rolf surfing in the final at Johanna Photo: Drew Kampion

1970 WORLD SURFING TITLES

by Chris Barr

Rolf Aurness

In May 2020 our town will celebrate 50 Years since the world surfing championships came to Torquay and left a remarkable legacy. The event almost certainly impacted the direction of the town for the decade that followed. Some have called it " the block of dynamite that got Torquay going".

This was not the first time the World Titles had come to Australia. In 1964 they were held at Manly, and local pair Midget Farrelly and Phyllis O Donnell held aloft the trophies and put Australia firmly on the world surfing map. Prior to that, National champions had travelled to Puerto Rico, Peru and San Diego.

Hosting the world titles was expensive with the host country having to pay the cost of flying and accommodating the national champions of member countries. The titles in 1970 were originally to be in Sydney but sponsorship fell through and there was a risk they would be cancelled. Tony Olsen who was the National President of the Australian Surfriders Association, based in Melbourne, successfully lobbied the State Premier, Sir Henry Bolte for support. The A.S.A were awarded a $25,000 grant and the location changed to Bells. But much work would need to be done to enable Bells to host the titles and upgrade the almost non-existent facilities.

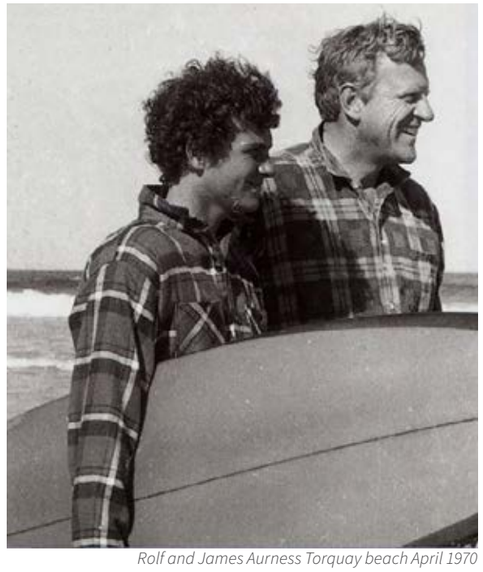
The Australian Surfriders Association had been lobbying both the Shire of Barrabool and the State Government for several years to put some money in to improving things at Bells Easter Rally and for other events that were also held occasionally at Bells. Toilets consisted of portable pots surrounded by hessian walls. The road in and out of Bells via Jan Juc was often a challenge as it was not sealed and full of potholes. The steps to the beach suffered in winter storms and were often falling away and dangerous.

The ASA sought the support of local politicians Aurel Smith, the member for Bellarine and Geoff Thom, the member for South-western Province. Their support meant a new toilet block was in place in time for the titles (this was in the dip at Bells, between where the creeks run out to the sea, near the old windmill. Both have since been demolished). A $14,520 grant from the Country Roads Board improved the access road. Part of this money was spent on opening and sealing the road from the beach to the Anglesea Road on the southern side, now Jarosite Road. All approach roads to Bells were sealed for the event. Despite funds being limited, the state government also agreed to produce poster advertising the World Titles. Surfing was in its infancy at the time the but the organisers had managed to secure not only funding for the event, but also some significant improvements for Bells itself. Many of these improvements were only finalised in the days before the contest was due to start.

Word had spread that the titles were to be at Bells and the interest from surfers and non-surfers was high. This would be an exposé of this exciting new sport. The surfing magazines from the U.S.A., on sale at the Torquay newsagent, had made locals aware of the big names in surfing, the likes of Gerry Lopez, Corky Carroll and David Nuuhiwa were coming to town to mix it up with our Aussie stars, Midget Farrelly, Nat Young and home grown youngster Wayne Lynch.

Torquay in 1970 had a population of only about 1300 people and was quite a different place from what it is today. There was a small motel on Bell Street ,the pub, and "Two Bays Guest" house for accommodation. Many of the locals put up their hands to billet some of the visitors. The American team were to be housed at the Lorne Hotel.

To cap off the early excitement, word spread rapidly around town late in March, that a Hollywood movie



Rolf and James Aurness Torquay beach April 1970

'Gunsmoke' actor James Arness with Torquay's Kitty Pigott

Corky Carroll and Sharon Weber

star had arrived. James Aurness (Arness) and his son Rolf had settled into a flat at Surf Side Ten and 18-year-old Rolf was already testing the waves at Bells. Rolf was no stranger to the World Titles. At 16 he had competed in Puerto Rico, and a dazzling season in 1969 had seen him become the nations top ranked surfer. In Torquay however, the locals had just as much interest in his handsome movie star dad James, who played Marshall Matt Dillon from Dodge City in the long running TV western Gunsmoke. It was hard not to miss the 6' 8" American as he moved around town. In the lead up to the event both the movie star and his gentle softly spoken son made a very good impression on the Torquay townspeople.

By Saturday May 2nd everything was in place. The Australian titles were held on the Gold Coast some weeks earlier and newly crowned champion Peter Drouyn would lead the team. Competitors and officials had arrived in town. However dark clouds were on the horizon and would mark this event as one of the most memorable for action both in and out of the water.

The first storm cloud brought with it a wintery blast from the southwest with rain-lots of it – and gale force winds that put Bells into a savage mood, and a mass of sloppy broken water. There would be no surfing on the planned first day of competition.

The second black cloud sat over the famous Torquay pub where on the night prior to competition starting, American Corky Carroll had been involved in a fracas with a waitress and insulting and indecent language was heard by all. Corky was thought to have been the instigator. The waitress as it turned out, was the publican's wife, he took offence and reported the incident to the police, who reported it to the American team manager who responded by banning Corky from the event.

Banning their favourite son from competing did not go down well with the Americans, and as the officials were putting together the opening ceremony, including a parade through the streets of Lorne, one the largest and most favoured team refused to compete stating - No Corky no contest!

The large crowd that gathered on the footpath in front of the old Cumberland saw the Puerto Ricans and South Africans proudly wearing smart shirts, ties and blazers with embroidered pockets . The solo Japanese competitor Doji Isaka described as, the Japanese team manager, official, competitor, and ambassador carried a toothy grin as well as his rising sun flag for the entire journey. Representatives came from Great Britain, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, and a large contingent of Aussies. The Hawaiians marched under their own flag and only 4 Americans marched under the 'Stars and Stripes'. Dale Tepper, Jericho Poppler , Joyce Hoffmann and Del Canon had decided they had come too far to miss this opportunity and left the rest of the team to sort out politics. The march included 15

The Hawaiian team lead by Mike Tabling at the opening ceremony march in Lorne Sat May 2nd 1970. Four Americans who marched were Dale Dobson, Jericho Poppler, Joyce Hoffman and Del Cannon.

women from 6 different countries.

The parade at Lorne was a big success despite the hiccups. The competitors and officials were loudly cheered on by a large crowd of locals. Geoff Luton, one of the judges for the event described it as:

"A semi organised group of notoriously unorganisable surfers, the worlds best, marching down that spectator filled street of Lorne. Who despite themselves, were obviously stoked with the whole deal."

The President of the Winchelsea Shire Cr J Caldow, Tony Street MLA representing the Commonwealth, and Aurel Smith MLA representing the Victorian premier Sir Henry Bolte, warmly welcomed the competitors and wished them the best of luck. All gathered hoped for an improvement in weather conditions and that the waves would arrive.

Behind the scenes frantic meetings were taking place to resolve the stand off with the American team. The President of the International Surfing Federation, Eduardo Arena, called in A.S.A representatives Stan Cooper and Tony Olsen and U.S.A team manager Brendan McLelland and asked that Corky swiftly send off a written apology to the publican and the organising committee, before his suspension would be reconsidered.

The publican himself attended one of the meetings and must have had a change of heart, or maybe he discovered that Corky was not solely to blame as he requested that Carroll be reinstated. Corky, who had been in Australia for three months training for the event , reluctantly offered a verbal apology and then a written one. To this day an air of mystery surrounds the famous food fight, which is said to have started when some boys from the Torquay footy

I S F president Eduardo Arena explains the rules to Rolf Aurness and Nat Young Photo: John Witzig

Rolf Aurness

club came in to celebrate a victory earlier in the day. Some "friendly banter" was struck up between the boys and the visitors. In any event, the suspension was lifted and Corky was free to compete.

This was not the only concern for the day as, before competition had started Ted Spencer, one of Australia's big hopes in the event, withdrew from competition. Stan Couper issued a statement saying that Ted disliked competition and had returned to NSW. A young Terry Fitzgerald wore a wide grin as he was named as Ted's replacement.

Surfing was scheduled to take place at Bells. World contest banners were in place, flags were flying. There were official caravans in place on the cliff tops, a judge's stand had been erected, food vendors arrived and so did a large crowd, but sadly the contestable surf did not. Despite the continuous rain, the officials staged some team trick riding much to the delight of the spectators.

A further opening ceremony took place in a giant army tent on the hills at Bells in the driving rain and all the member nations flags were unveiled .

Sunday dawned and there was no respite from the cold and rain and no sign of swell on the horizon. More surfing exhibitions were hastily planned as some 10,000 people had gathered on the beach and cliff tops. Eduardo announced that all competitors would compete in the trick surfing or face the severest penalty. Surfers are a hard bunch to control, and while some took up his challenge others went to Winkipop to do their own thing.

A festive atmosphere prevailed as tandem surfing paddle races and surfing relays more than satisfied the crowd's needs. Possibly the busiest people that day were the car parking attendants who spent a good part of the afternoon and evening dragging bogged cars out from

Nat Young, Johanna Photo: Drew Kampion

the mud.

By Monday the skies cleared and some decent waves arrived. The contest was under way. The Australians and the Americans were standouts. The smiling Doji Isaka failed to make the grade and was eliminated on Day 1 along with the team from Panama. Despite the atmosphere more dark clouds were gathering . Judging in surfing contests had been contentious in the past and this was to be no exception. Points were to be gained for placings obtained by all competitors in each contest and the highest aggregate point scorer at the end of the period would be the winner. The poor conditions magnified the anti contest sentiment that had been building in the surf world over the previous few years. At the end of Day 5,

Margo Oberg (neé Godfrey) competing at Bells Beach
Photo: Drew Kampion

and after his first heat, David Nuuhiwa joined Ted Spencer in exiting the event and he too headed home; the freezing conditions including hail did not help his cause. It was becoming clear many competitors were disturbed by the lousy weather and the absence of good surf. The Puerto Ricans had taken to their beds with the flu.

Perhaps the blackest cloud of all was about to cast its shadow over the event when news broke that there has been a drug bust in Lorne. Members of the Melbourne Drug Squad raided rooms of the Americans at the Pacific Hotel and found "a matchbox with a small quantity of a substance believed to be Indian hemp". This news made bigger headlines than any magic Midget was weaving in the water. And again Eduardo Arena was put in front of the cameras to issue a statement on behalf of the International Surfing Federation. Poor Eduardo was in disbelief at the turn of events. 17-year-old Brad McCaull was hastily afforded a lawyer and a jacket and tie and dragged before the court in Geelong.

The patience of many of the visitors was wearing thin with the antics of the Victorian Press and the perceived harassment from the Victorian Police. Certainly the Australian surfers were embarrassed by the attitude of many not connected to the contest. The feeing among all the Americans was that they positively believed that the young surfer involved never touched any of the substance that was found in his room. For the public however this publicity only fed the frenzy to go to Bells to see the action for themselves, with crowds arriving every day to see what would happen next.

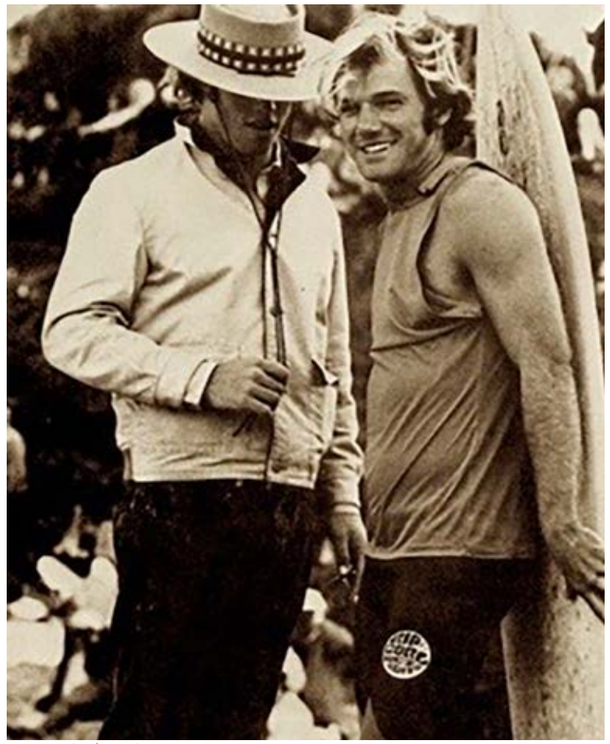
There were enough breaks in the weather during the week to allow for some events to be surfed. Bells held its shape long enough for the best in the world to strut their stuff. Mike Purpus and Rolf Aurness stand outs for the Americans. Midget, Nat Young and Peter Drouin the best of the Aussies. 14-year-old Shaun Thomson from South Africa left everyone in no doubt they would be seeing more of him in the future, and Margo Godfrey excelled in the women's heats.

The crowds arrived in huge numbers on the weekend despite the cold and rain. They were again treated to exhibitions of paddle races and trick surfing. A stand out exhibition surf from Midget had them cheering.

The women's heats were held at Bells on Day 10. In the days pre leash, the competition was tough with boards regularly washing in onto the rocks and valuable time wasted retrieving them. Judy Trim, Gail Couper and Nola Shepherd represented the home team.

Sadly the swell was short lived and by Day 12 officials were calling emergency meetings. Bells was dead flat and Lorne was a millpond. Already past the allocated time for the event, they were persuaded to give it two more days. Some of the boys including Rolf Aurness and his father James had ventured down south and thought there might be a chance of waves down there. The waveless days had sent everyone, surfers, officials, the media into a desperate frenzy.

By Wednesday morning the whole circus was packed up and on its way to a tiny place past the Otways called Johanna Beach. After the winding Great Ocean Road ,crossing rivers and creeks, and along axle breaking gravel roads they arrived at the magnificent stretch of windswept



1970 Aussie champion, Peter Drouyn
Photo: Drew Kampion

beach to see perfect 6ft sandbar tubes.

This was the panacea that the judges, officials and competitors had been seeking. Good surf, away from the crowd happy vibes and everyone laughing together. There would be no time wasting, as with luck, the semi finals and finals would be run.

One by one contenders dropped out. Brad McCall had memorable Titles in more ways than one but was one of the first to fail to qualify for the final. As rounds progressed he was joined by Paul Strauch, Mike Purpus, Keith Paul, Terry Fitzgerald and Shaun Thompson

The word had spread to the local farming community that something big was happening on the beach and they downed tools, wandered across their paddocks and climbed the dunes. They were able not only to watch the action but also to chat freely to the surfers on the sand. They knew little of the art of surfing but had a chance to see the best in the world that afternoon.

By 4.30 in the afternoon, with fading light, the scene was set for the final. Miles from anywhere with perfect surf, Geoff Lutin commented, "There is nothing commercial about this scene, no banners, no hot dogs, no PA system just the bare essentials".

The final was made up of three Aussies, Nat, Midget and Drouyn; two Hawaiians Reno Abellira, and Keone Downing; and Rolf Aurness from California.

Australian hopes were high when at 4.40 surfers were ordered into the water.

Almost from the start Rolf stamped his mark on the score sheet with clean take off speed on his streamlined 7ft board. Quiet, determined and confident Drouyn had long rides and sensational cover-ups, Midget's were smooth and consistent. Nat however failed to fire and Downing failed to catch the judge's attention. Reno's desire for speed caught him out .

Just five minutes before dark the event finished and no one was left wondering who the winner would be. After a testing thirteen days, Midget was said to have commented that he wondered if there was any ambition left in any of them, but once they were in the water, he like everyone else, saw that Rolf had a mission to win. He surfed faultlessly.

All seven judges carded the tall lean goofy foot on top and he became the first Californian to win the title.

Surfing World magazine proclaimed "Out of disaster upon disaster the thing ended up pretty well.

The final day approached and in desperation, on Thursday, after the men had finished their competition, the final of women's event was run at Skenes Creek.

Skenes was home to a handful of locals who were bemused by the arrival of the surfing entourage. The surf was poor with sloppy left breaking waves. Margot's form from the heats deserted her- this would not be her day. Hawaiian Sharon Weber emerged as the winner with Margot coming in second.

Sharon's win was comprehensively ignored by the surf media with surfer magazine devoting two sentences to the women's final.

Women's surfing has indeed come a long way since 1970.

After a long and often testing two weeks, in the worst wintery conditions, the awards ceremony was held in Lorne. Rolf's acceptance speech was short, he simply said "well that was outasight"

The World Titles have never returned to Australia. They went back to San Diego in 1972 but indeed the rise of professional surfing that followed them meant great changes in the surf competitions.

Sharon went on to defend her title in San Diego in 1972 and was set to go to South Africa in 1974 but took a stance against apartheid when she learnt that some of the native Hawaiian teammates would not be permitted to compete. The contest was cancelled. Sharon was disillusioned with the lack of money and support for women's surfing so she turned her head to making a living and stopped competing and travelling. She continues to live in Hawaii and runs a successful business.

The final event at Johanna became the last time we saw the gentle Rolf Aurness in the surf again. He returned to California in the aftermath of the win and struggled somewhat with his rapid rise to fame and the success he had .His journey to the top had been swift. Daily surf sessions at the Hollister Ranch, driving the coast from San Diego to Santa Cruz on weekends and getting as many waves as he could, had occupied much of his youth.

He went on to College and surfed only to be with his friends. He did not defend his title in San Diego in 1972 and was never again seen in a surf competition.

Surfers remember the 1970 World Titles for the maelstrom they created during a cold and wet two weeks in May. We remember the wild nights at the pub, the crazy scenes on the cliff at Bells , the International guests, the media circus but many also remember with affection the softly spoken Californian who seemed to like everything about the sleepy

Above Nat warming his butt at a fire on the beach after the contest had moved to Johanna for the finals. Photo: John Witzig

Left: Rolf Aurness Photo: Drew Kampion

little town and who took away the trophy and left us with a lasting memory.

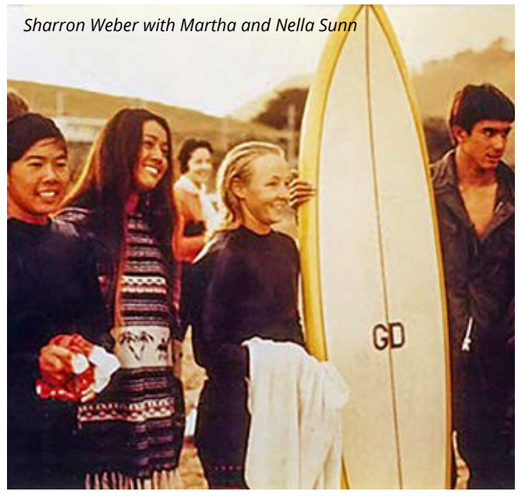
50 years down the track and things have changed. Competitors at Easter now jet in with an entourage of coaches and assistants, they have bags of technical equipment that record the data from their every move on a wave . They spend their evenings analysing it .

Torquay and Bells is just a stop on a lucrative worldwide circuit .

The most lasting reminder we have of the titles at Bells was the declaration by the Bolte government some 12 months later that Bells Beach would become the nations first Surfing Reserve. This magnificent decision, driven by the ASA, means that when you drive to the bottom of Bells Boulevard today, 50 years later you see the break over green paddocks. Bells is still as wild and beautiful as it was then. We are all grateful for that.

American Dru Harrison surfing Johanna
Photo: Drew Kampion

Women's winner Sharron Weber from Hawaii



Sharron Weber with Martha and Nella Sunn

Free surfing at Johanna during the world contest.
The surfer is Rolf Aurness. The woman in the bathing camp is Ma Bendall.
Photo: Drew Kampion

Men's winner Rolf Aurness

SOURCES:
Matt Warshaw, Encyclopedia of Surfing
Geelong Advertiser archives
Geoff Luton, Encyclopedia of Surfing
Gail Couper
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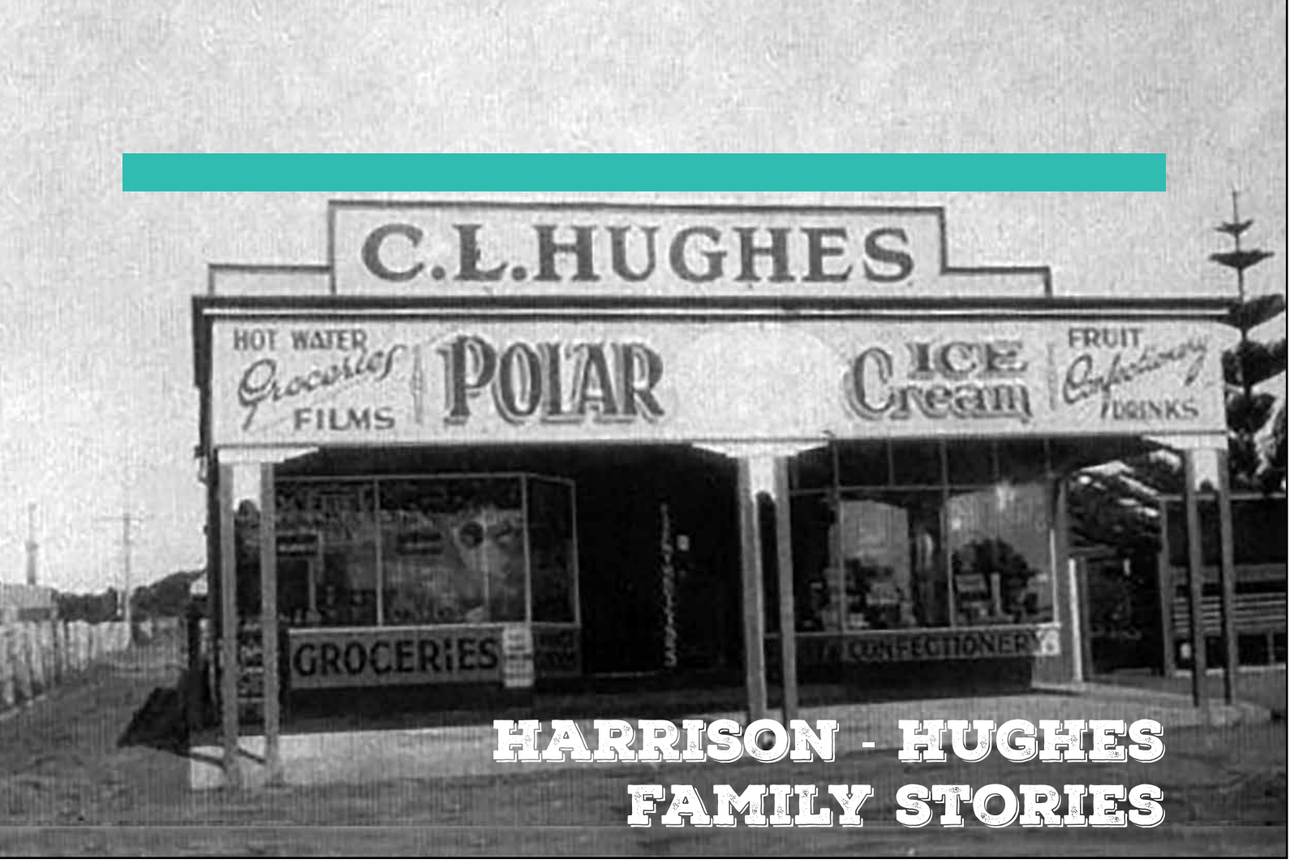
John Witzig
Jericho Poppler
https://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/Environment/Natural-environment/Coastal-land-and-beaches/About-Bells
Corky Carroll Excerpt from Corky Carroll - ***Not Done Yet - An Epic Journey of the Planet's First Professional Surfer***



HARRISON - HUGHES FAMILY STORIES

CROSSING PATHS

CHERYL BAULCH

Photos: John Perrett, Leonie Vrymoet, Barb Robins, K.G. McIntyre

Wu Bingjian

One of the exciting aspects of doing any form of research is when the unexpected pops up.

A newspaper article in the 1926 Geelong Advertiser describes the death of a Torquay man, Harry Harrison, which automatically raised my interest for a History Matters article. I never imagined that this story would link back to my hometown St. Albans (Melbourne) and more family history information on my grandfather, father-in-law and their neighbours.

The story starts with Ah Kin Howqua (1829-1873), a Chinese immigrant from a wealthy Chinese family. His father, Wu Bingjian was a Chinese banker and merchant, one of a handful of merchants authorized by the Chinese government to trade with the West. They exported native products to America and European nations and imported opium from British traders. In the course of his transactions, he became one of the world's richest men according to the New York Times.

1970 Doc Hughes store
Photo: Drew Kampion

Ah Kin Howqua left China around the time of the opium wars. He arrived in England during 1843 where he resided for eleven years and embraced the Christian religion. In 1854 Ah Kin arrived in Victoria aboard the ship '*Invincible*' and headed for the goldfields. The following year he was appointed by the government as a Chinese interpreter. In 1858 he married Eleanor Derrick who had arrived in the colony two years earlier at the age of 15. Ah Kin was naturalized in 1861, citing that he wanted to become a British Subject and purchase property in the colony. Working as a government interpreter was not steady work and Ah Kin wanted more for his family. He obtained a publican's license in 1871 and operated a pub with accommodation at Percydale, Avoca. Before Ah Kin's sudden death, their fifteen years of marriage produced seven children. Their sixth child, Louisa Howqua (1871-1952) was to become a large landowner in Torquay. Her sister Clara (1867-1936), married Welsh Maryborough miner William Hughes (1861-1947) at Avoca during 1887. They were the parents of Effie, Caradoc and four other children. The family lived in Avoca before moving to Percydale. In the early 1900s they moved to Melbourne.

Louisa Howqua, married Harry Harrison, a Braybrook foundryman, at Seymour in 1908. Harry had arrived in Australia about two years earlier. His grandfather, James, arrived in Australia around 1864 settling in Cardigan, Ballarat. Harry's uncle John Robert Harrison at the age of 17 followed his father two years later joining him at the 'Two Bridges Hotel' that James had built in Cardigan. Unfortunately, James died the following year.

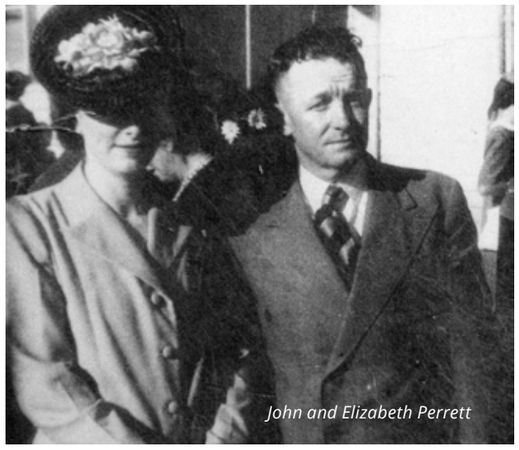
In 1914, Louisa and Harry moved from Braybrook to the nearby, growing town of St. Albans. Harry had purchased the general store and the post-master duties which had been performed by the station master were transferred to Harry at the general store.

Harry Harrison's St. Albans store

Over the coming years, the couple moved away from the house attached to the store in Main Road West to live in

Victoria Crescent on one of the five properties they had purchased. Harry had become an entrepreneur and acquired four other properties in what was to become the central business district of the town – The Circus, Alfredia Street, East Esplanade and Albert Crescent. As well as a good businessman, he was happy to help other English families arriving in St. Albans during the 1920s by lending them money to build their homes.

My grandfather James Turner arrived in Australia during 1923, to build a new life for his family in Australia before his wife and daughter joined him. He followed his good friends James and Martha Mayo to St.Albans. Harry had already lent them money to build their house, so when James Turner arrived, he too borrowed money from Harry to build his house in Main Road West, St. Albans. Once built, my grandmother and aunty joined him to start a



John and Elizabeth Perrett

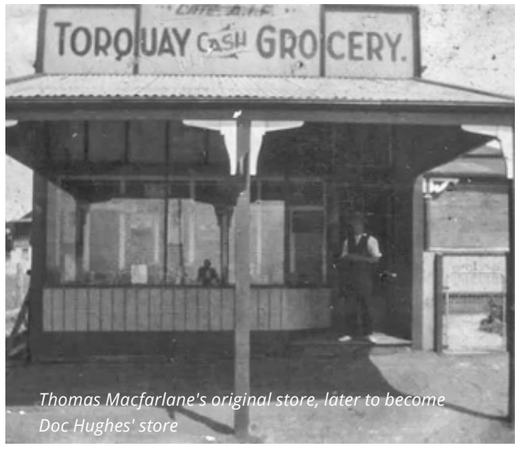
new life in what was a country town then.

Harry transferred his St. Albans store and post office to John Perrett and his wife Elizabeth in 1923. Their son Eric was an assistant in the store. Apart from a confectionary shop, Perrett's store was the only general store operating in St. Albans. At the time there was no official mail delivery, instead letters were delivered by the Perrett family with bread and groceries, three times a week. Eric married Effie Clara Boadicea Hughes in 1933. Effie was Harry's niece and sister to Caradoc Llewellyn Hughes. Upon the death of his father in 1938, Eric took over the duties of postmaster. The post office continued to operate at the general store in Main Road West until 1955 when an official post office was built. Eric and Effie lived a few doors down from the shop and next door to my family and me. The two families sold to Total Australia Limited during 1959, and my dad built Effie and Eric's new house, but sadly Effie died just before they were due to move in. Eric was a very prominent member of the community; he is a Life Member of the football club and after retiring became

more involved in his love of horse racing and breeding.

Back in Torquay, Thomas Keddie Macfarlane, an electrical engineer, could see the value in providing the increasing number of Torquay holiday visitors with more comforts during their visit. He wrote to the Torquay Reserve Trustees with the notion of providing a kiosk on the bathing beach to provide refreshments. The concept was approved in February 1914 under the following conditions – yearly rent of £2-0-0, the design of the building to be submitted for approval of the Trustees, the right of removal or purchase at valuation by the Trustees and the site must be approved by the Trustees. The kiosk was erected during the year, but was nearly lost to a fire in December 1915. Thomas had joined the AIF a few months earlier and had left others in charge of his kiosk.

Thomas Keddie Macfarlane returned home from the war in July 1918 and purchased the house and land on The



Thomas Macfarlane's original store, later to become Doc Hughes' store

Esplanade from Martha Pride on 7 July 1919. Thomas built his general store at the front of the house to complement

his kiosk located across the road on the foreshore. The Macfarlane's were known for flying the flags of all nations on the flagpole next to the kiosk during the holiday season. At the base of the flagpole was the figurehead from a shipwreck initially believed to have come from the ***Joseph H Scammell***, later identified as coming from the ***Inverlochy*** wreck. During 1920 Thomas made some additions to the kiosk, causing Mrs Rice, owner of the accommodation Two Bays to write to the Torquay Park Trustees complaining about the effect the additions had on her view. John Harrison who was one of the Trustees moved the motion that 'no action be taken'.

John Robert Harrison (Harry's uncle) had moved to Torquay after retiring from his Albert Foundry in Ballarat. He was involved in the community as Scout Master, committee member of the Torquay Improvement Association,

Lifesaving Club bell from Harrison's factory

committee member of the Life Saving Club and a Trustee of the Torquay Parks. Through his foundry business, he was able to build the lifesaving warning bell for the newly erected life-saving clubhouse in 1922. He accumulated property on Pride Street, Price Street and The Esplanade.

The Macfarlane's were a hard-working couple keen to make the business work for locals, themselves and the visitors to Torquay. In 1922 they made the business decision to put the title of the property in Catherine's name while Thomas focused on establishing a transport/ carriage service from Geelong. She pushed for the business to expand and in 1923 she dismantled the old kiosk building and erected an entirely new and up-to-date refreshment rooms, at her own cost. The Trustees of the Torquay Reserves granted Catherine a lease for 20 years, and at the end of the lease the building was to go to the trustees. The new refreshment pavilion accommodated

1926 Frontbeach Kiosk Photo: K.G. McIntyre

150 people and Mr A. A. Austin, M.L.C. formally opened the kiosk.

Toward the end of 1925 with Catherine's health failing, she and Thomas moved to Moolap. Harry Harrison purchased the shop and kiosk license for £2000 (equates today to around $3.5m). Harry and Louisa (nee Howqua) moved from St. Albans to Torquay. Harry, excited by these new business opportunities by the sea, wasted no time in advertising that he had tents, rooms, a bungalow and kitchen for rent over the Christmas vacation. There was plenty of room because the property extended from The Esplanade to Price Street. He also applied on 12 May 1926 to the Geelong Court of Petty Sessions for a 5-passenger stage carriage license to transport people between Melbourne and Lorne. The license was approved.

At the same time, John Henry Dunn, who may have operated a store from his house "Melrose" in Gilbert Street, paid a record price of £9 per foot to John Pettitt for the land on the corner of The Esplanade and Price Street to build a modern shop. John was originally a taxi driver from Colac then Geelong before he moved to Torquay in 1925. In February the following year, John applied to the Trustees of the Torquay reserves for the right to cater at Point Danger and to erect a kiosk there. His request was

Gilbert street house bought by John Dunn Photo: Barb Robins

Shop after the fire and the rebuilt shop on The Esplanade Photos: Barb Robins

approved with conditions – ten-year lease with ownership reverting to Trustees at the end of the lease, approval of building and location by the Trustees. This approval was rescinded in July, notifying him that tenders would be called for at a later date. Harry Harrison was assigned the rights shortly after

On 28 August that year, Dunn's new shop burnt down just before it opened. The police questioned town folk, including Harry Harrison, who was devastated at being questioned. They claimed they never accused Harry of the crime but did say they would return for more questions. The next day Harry drove into Geelong for business and was found the next day slumped in his car with a razor on the floor. His wife claimed that Harry had a considerable amount of money on him when he left home but this was not on him when the police arrived. The cornoner found Harry died from a self-inflicted wound to the throat. In his pocket there was a note: "***Having been accused of causing the recent fire at Torquay (of which I am entirely innocent), the thought of perhaps being unable to clear myself of this monstrous charge has so worried me that I cannot stand the strain any longer – H. Harrison."*** The town gathered all the resources they could and soon the shop was rebuilt in time for the summer holidays.

John Henry Dunn sold the shop after those summer holidays to Peter Ball and moved back to Geelong working in sales. Louisa was left to deal with the loss of her husband and the management of his extensive estate. Fortunately, Caradoc Hughes, Louisa's nephew, was there to help her run the shop. Louisa sold nine of the ten St. Albans properties from Harry's estate before her death; two were sold to her nieces and one to my father-in-law Wal Baulch. On her death in 1953 she bequeathed money for her local charities and distributed the rest of her assets to most of her nieces, nephews and their children. Her nephew Caradoc (Doc) acquired the store from Louisa's estate in July 1954.

Caradoc (Doc) Llewellyn Hughes was born in Percydale, Ballarat during 1898. He was working in the Torquay store in 1928 when he married Ruby (Pearl) Gogoll of Mt. Duneed. Doc played some games of cricket for Torquay and had a love of jazz music. The kiosk which could accommodate over 100 people was a popular gathering place, used for church services in the 1940s and entertainment for many years. In 1929 Doc asked for the rights to the Pt. Danger kiosk be extended to him after Louisa Harrison had relinquished her rights to a lease for a kiosk. He proposed that a kiosk be erected to the value of £230 during 1929, giving him three kiosks to operate over the holiday seasons. It is unclear where the third kiosk was located. A possible explanation could be a kiosk on the back beach established when Edwin Molyneux moved his operations to Bell Street in 1918. It was possibly too early for the kiosk at Fisherman's Beach.

Doc & Pearl Hughes

In 1929 there were complaints that the main focus of the loud music on the foreshore was jazz music coming from the kiosk gramophone. There were also formal complaints to the Trustees of the Torquay Reserves about the dancing at the kiosk, but no action was taken.

Doc Hughes, joined with other Torquay businessmen to challenge the long-term Torquay Reserve Trustees for a place on the committee in 1931. There was considerable dissatisfaction at the new appointments and the Lands Department would not endorse these new appointments citing the election was flawed. Consequently, another public meeting had to be held. It is unclear how many of the 'new guard' stood for re-election, but the result was that the old committee was eventually endorsed by the community and the Lands Department.

Many of the weekend visitors to Torquay were young men from the Brighton Surf Lifesaving Club. With that connection and the time they were spending in Torquay, they decided in December 1945 to form a Surf Lifesaving Club in Torquay. The meeting attended by the local council, Foreshore Trust, several locals and many interested surfers was held in the open at the camping ground. Clive Evans, the local publican, chaired the meeting. The Torquay Surf-Lifesaving Club was duly formed with Doc Hughes elected onto the committee.

The TIA and Trustees of the Torquay Reserves were mindful of making improvements around town to continue attracting holiday makers, especially during the war when petrol rationing affected visitor numbers. They planned a bigger kiosk with change rooms for Cosy Corner. Doc saw a commercial opportunity with the potential increase in holiday makers, so he purchased the vacant land next door to the shop, including the laneway from the Pride family in 1942. Four years later Doc put or built a building on the property and turned it into Tea Rooms. That same year Doc held the tender for only two kiosks. Could one of the kiosks have been moved to the block of land for the tea rooms? We know that there was a kiosk on the front beach opposite the shop during the 1960s, so was the Cosy Corner kiosk moved to The Esplanade? Doc's son John took over the tea rooms and converted them to the 'Beachnik' restaurant. Later it became ***Micha's Mexican Restaurant*** and today it is known as ***Growlers***.

The foreshore kiosk was an essential part of community life and continued to operate as such until the foreshore was redeveloped in the late 1960s. Doc continued to run the shop until his death in 1972.

Pearl and Doc had two children, Myrle and John. Doc's love of music and surfing influenced the pathways his children took.

JOHN HUGHES was a competent classical pianist. His first love was the rambling traditional jazz born in the heart of Dixie. Many older locals remember John Hughes blowing trumpet out the front of Owen Yateman's Jazz band at surf club dances. Both were members of the Torquay Surf Lifesaving Club where other members were also musicians, so a band evolved. John played with some of the nations biggest Jazz names. By trade, John was a wool classer but was happiest

John Hughes and Owen Yateman Photo: Leonie Vrymoet

Photo: Lyn Farrar

following the beat of his music rather than the shearing circuit. He played with the Downbeat Jazzband and Geelong City Brass Band and had his own band called the John Hughes Quartet during the 60s. He is known to have played trumpet with the Southcoast Stopmers and Bruce Clark Big Band in 1973 when they recorded The Needle. John died at an early age and was survived by his widow Marie and daughters Justine and Vanessa.

MYRLE HUGHES met and married Vic Tantau, one of the young surfers who would visit Torquay regularly.

VIC TANTAU

CONTRIBUTED BY BRETT @ RARE SURF TEES

HTTPS://WWW.RARESURFTEES.COM/

PHOTOS: LEONIE VRYMOET

Vic Tantau was an early Victorian surfing pioneer and one of a small group of Torquay surfers that discovered surfing back in the late 1940s, long before surf shops, surfboard makers and highways to our favourite surf breaks. He was also a well-known surfboard shaper credited with shaping one of the first balsa surfboards out the back of the old Esplanade kiosk in Torquay, Victoria. Vic was born on 24th April 1928 and grew up with his sister Beryl in Brighton. He went to Elsternwick State School then to Brighton Tech. During World War Two, when his father was serving overseas, Vic, aged 16, quit school, advanced his age and joined the army. Once his mother found out, she had a fit, stormed the Broadmeadows camp at morning muster, and frog marched him home.

On leaving school, Vic secured an apprenticeship as a boilermaker/engineer with Centenary Woollen Mills, Moorabbin. It wasn't long before he had wheels and the trip to Torquay changed his life forever. It was at Torquay beach where he met his future wife Myrle whom he married in 1957. His early surfing alliances contributed to the formation and development of the Torquay Surf Lifesaving Club which lay a foundation for the establishment of surf lifesaving in Victoria.

Vic had many friends including Torquay Surf Club members Dick Knight, Ken Pollard, Dick Garrard, Sprint Walker and Rex (China) Gilbert. Rex was a great board rider and champion competitor. He had competed at the Australian Championships and brought back the latest S.L.S.C training techniques. Vic embraced these methods as well as developing his own. This resulted in him dominating club and state competition on 16ft, hollow ply, toothpick boards. He was Victorian longboard champion from 1952 to 1956, Southern States champion in 1954 and made the final of the Australian Championships in 1952, 1953 and 1956.

Vic was greatly influenced by the short 10ft American balsa boards introduced by the visiting American and Hawaiian surfers at the Torquay International Surf Carnival in November/December 1956. He started shaping okinuee and balsa boards in the backyard shed at his house in Grandview Grove Moorabbin before setting up his factory in nearby Chesterfield Rd, Moorabbin in early 1957. On weekends and holidays Vic also shaped boards at Myrle's parents' general store and kiosk on The Esplanade Torquay. He was heavily influenced by the balsa shaping of Gordon Woods and Denny Keogh (Keyo). Vic was very clever practically and worked out all the details on board making by himself, even making his own tools to perfect shaping balsa. He purchased balsa blocks from Arthur Milner in Springvale that were sourced from Ecuador.

When foam came along he saw how others were making blanks so he made his own moulds to blow blanks and glue them together shaping polyurethane foam 9', 10' and 11' boards. It was in this period he shaped over 900 surfboards. A close bond between Peter Troy and Vic was evident when they produced a limited number of surfboards under the 'T Boards' brand (Tantau and Troy) in the early 60s. Vic also formed a brief alliance with well-known 1960s surfboard manufacturer, George Rice, producing Rice Tantau boards. Vic also managed the burgeoning surfboard department at Parkview Marine Brighton around this time.

He later took over his father's taxi cab business and moved to Geelong. It wasn't long before he was back shaping and glassing a range of watercraft at Fred Pyke's Torquay factory.

To understand the importance of Vic's past, you have to go back to 1949 when getting to Bells Beach was like going down south to Johanna. Only 8 kms from Torquay, there was an old track heading toward Bells, but it stopped abruptly and a 45-minute walk to the break was required. The land was owned by the Bells, the John Calvert Bell pastoral family. It is well documented that in 1949 the first Torquay surfers to understand the true potential of the surf in the Bells area were Vic Tantau and Owen Yateman. That year Vic and Owen rode their motorbikes along the old Geelong Road to the Anglesea Cobb and Co. stagecoach track. It was a hot day and the clutch was slipping on Vic's bike so they left the bikes to cool off and trekked down to the beach. Owen commented that there was not a bad sort of wave here and sometime after that bike ride they packed a lunch, placed it on the front of Yatey's ski, paddled around to Bells and cracked a few waves.

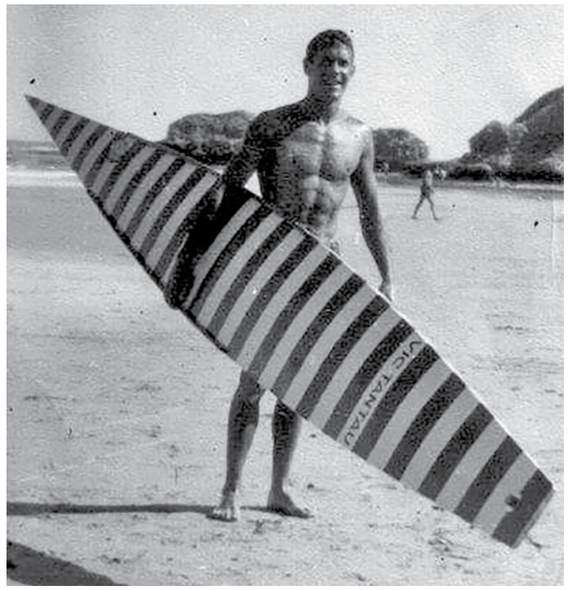
In 1958, with the development of shorter, more manoeuvrable surfboards, Bells was becoming increasingly popular. The local

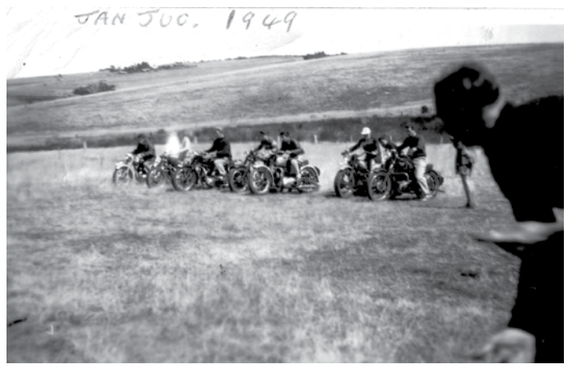
surfer boys negotiated access to Bells with the owner of the land. However, this led to problems with farm gates being left open and cattle wandering out. In 1960, well known Torquay surfer and 1956 Olympic Games wrestler, Joe Sweeney hired a bulldozer and graded a track along the cliff tops to Bells. He charged 30 surfers £1 each to pay for the bulldozer. Vic Tantau, along with other early surfing pioneers including Marcus Shaw, Bryan Poynton, Peter Troy and Terry Wall readily contributed their dollar for better access into Victoria's most famous surfing location.

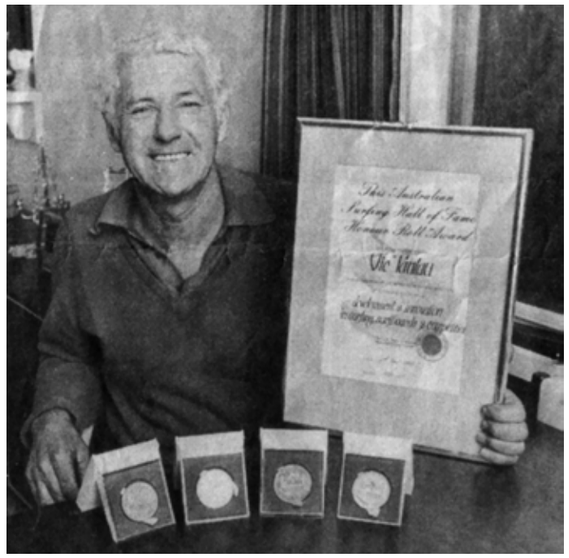
In January 1962, the first Bells Beach surfing competition was organised by Vic Tantau and Peter Troy. Vic and Peter moved the rally to Easter 1963 when it is still held today. Little did they know that this event would become one of the premier, international, world surfing contest sites. The Bells contest is now a favourite fixture on the world A.S.P. circuit and the longest, continuous running surfing contest in the world. In 1962, the small group of keen surfers competed for 'the wave of the day' 1 pound prize, won by Torquay S.L.S.C. member George 'Ming' Smith, a far cry from the substantial prize money today.

According to Vic the competition was much simpler back then and the aim was to have fun. It was easy to put together, with Peter and Vic spreading the word that they would hold the comp on a day when the waves were of considerable size. A card table on the beach, a megaphone, old tee shirts with sewn on numbers, Vic and Peter judging and organising and the rally was up and running. The Bells Beach contest celebrated its 50 year anniversary in 2011.

Vic passed away in 1993 and is survived by his wife Myrle and two daughters Leonie and Sonya. The family is well respected in the local surf industry and Vic's legacy continues in our rich surfing history on the west coast (especially at Easter time when the Bells contest rolls into town). At the start of The Great Ocean Road a bronze plaque recognises Vic's contribution to surfing and the development of Torquay as a surfing destination. There is also the naming of the Vic Tantau Room in the Torquay Grant Pavilion, the Vic Tantau Walk located in the community and civic precinct of Banyul-Warri Fields, which in Wadawurrung language means Hills and Sea.







FRONT COVER

"Very occasionally, Bells Bowl waves will reform into the shore-break corner and create a hint of a left-hander on mid-tide. Rarely will they turn into a very good left-hander! So it came as a surprise one day when Wayne Lynch turned off the end of a typical right-hander in the Bowl and back into a perfectly reforming left-hander. Thankfully I'd been following Wayne on the wave through the Bowl and had him in my sights, and was able to capture this shot. It all happened so quickly I was only able to get one shot just as Wayne came out of a bottom turn at high speed into the top of the wave and my focus realm. Because of the angle there was beautiful back-lighting to give the photograph an edge with really nice tones.

In early 1970 I was approached by Bakers Barn for a photograph to use on a poster for the World Titles at Bells Beach in May that year. They'd managed to secure the refreshments and food contract for the event. Bakers Barn made the most delicious ice cream, operating from a roadside shed on the Torquay Road at Mount Duneed. The 'Barn' was a 'must stop for an ice cream' destination for surfers and beach-goers travelling back to Geelong and Melbourne. It was always packed late Sunday afternoons on warm sunny days. I met with one of their daughters to go through some prints I'd recently made in the darkroom. She liked the Wayne Lynch one, and we proceeded from there. All I asked for was for my name to be on the poster. It was my contribution towards helping the World Titles in a sponsorship sort of way. Well, they produced 100s of posters and distributed them throughout Torquay and along the coast. They forgot to put my name on them! I managed to keep two which to my knowledge are the only surviving ones. Torquay's National Surfing Museum has one (on loan), I've got the other one! The Barn shed is still there, a few hundred metres on the left towards Geelong, from the Armstrong Creek traffic lights."

MARGARET GANLY

In early January this year Torquay lost a real treasure, when we learned Margaret Ganly had passed away. Margaret, who was 104 was the descendant of one of our earliest settlers, William Pride. I doubt there is anyone who had seen more change in our town.

Photo: RACV

Margaret lost her father in World War 1 when she was just 2 years old, and as a child she spent her summer days at the Scammell House with her extended family. Margaret and her cousins would explore the beaches and the little town with wonderful freedom. They were so free to roam that her mother would stand at the door and ring a big bell when lunch was ready and they would scurry home. She loved it when the tide was very low and the children would go out onto the rocks and collect buckets of Cowrie shells.

The Scammell house was built from the deck of the ***Joseph. H. Scammell*** which was wrecked off Point Danger in 1891. The enterprising William Pride bought the remnant of the wreck from the salvage sale and dragged it up the foreshore with the help of block and tackle and six horses. Two rooms were added to the top of the deck- house for sleeping quarters, one big room for the girls and a smaller one for the boys. It became a much loved holiday house for six generations of the Pride family,

The family would always start the day with a swim before breakfast, something Margaret kept up for much of her life. She was a regular daily swimmer at the front beach until well into her 90s.

Margaret's memories of her childhood in Torquay were quite remarkable. She remembered going to dances and tennis afternoons. There were only a few permanent homes, but in summer the holiday houses would be full of visitors. Many families had a large flagpole in the yard and the owners would fly a flag when they were in residence. Margaret recalls coming to Torquay with her uncle just after the 1940 bushfires. She had a lasting memory of the flagpoles still glowing red as they drove into town. When she arrived at the Scammell House the fences were still burning but thankfully the house had been saved.

By virtue of her long-life Margaret was a wonderful resource to all interested in local history and was always generous with her time and happy to share her stories and photos. Margaret loved to repeat the story of the shipwreck and the stories and myths that surrounded it. The day after the wreck there were 2000 people on the beach and frantic looting of the cargo which had washed up along the shore began. She loved to tell amusing stories of the locals hiding the loot including kerosene drums and boxes of tobacco in the sand dunes and their back yards before the customs officials arrived.

These stories are such an important part of our history they make up the fabric of our past. We will miss seeing her around town and we will miss her wise counsel, but we are thankful we had her for such a long time.

Rest in peace Margaret Rose.

ANZAC DAY, POINT DANGER

Not yet dawn
And the ranks
Roll in.
Wave on wave,
Deep sea green.
They attack the shore
With foaming crests,
Then disband
Making way
For the next.

While on the bluff above
The crowd assembles:
The bands, the pipes,
The banners and medalled chests
And marching feet.

The duffled figures
Stand silently.
The remembrance ceremony
Takes its course
While solemn words
Fade away in the wind

Or drown in the crashing
On the rocks below.

The sky in the east
Is lightening,
The clouds splashing
Blood red.
Now the fiery ball of the sun
Slides up from the ocean
And tints the foaming crests.

Three aircraft fly overhead,
Three sharp salutations of rifles
Are echoed in the thud of cannon.
Sharp commands and the assembly
Merges into a moving body
Which marches in ceremony
And heads back to the town.
"..... and in the morning,
We will remember them."

Margaret Ganly
25/4/99
Photos: from the Estate of Margaret Ganly

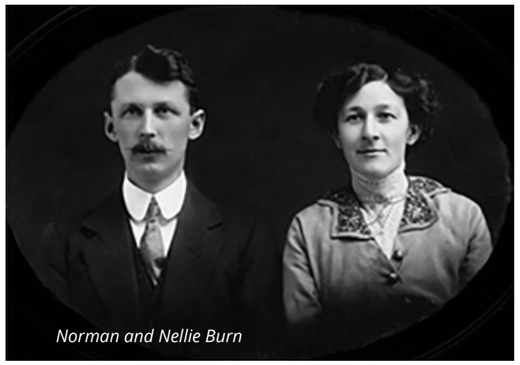
Norman Burn before leaving for the front.

Norman (3rd from left) at Officers Training Camp, Codford

Norman on the transport ship as it passed Cape Town

MY FATHER NORMAN

Story: Margaret Ganly
Photos: Estate of Margaret Ganly


Norman and Nellie Burn

What do I know about my father? I have no memory of him. But memories can deceive, and I am glad to make the most of information gleaned from old letters – so old – from many old family photographs and from traditional stories of family relationships of which I have been told down the years, as well as from personal attitudes of older cousins who remember him. I do not have and emotional attitude towards the man who was my father, but I can fall into imagining what he may have thought about things. How else can I know him?

There are some things I cannot understand. My mother was devoted to Norman. To her he was a wonderful man – I never heard of any faults. She was shattered when he was killed in the trenches in France, before he had had time to do any killing himself, and she would never contemplate a second marriage. She had him on a pedestal and kept all his letters, and those from friends about him, for the next sixty-five years. Some of her siblings grew a bit tired of her grief and loss and as children growing up my brother and I took it all for granted and were uncurious.

Norman had his own picture-framing business and seems to have worked long hours. He was also a clarinet player in an orchestra, a member of the Civil Defence Force, Secretary of the Military Band and had time for sketching.

In those days, before 1914, families made entertainment together. They played cards, they made music – singing and instrumental- and they made country visits and enjoyed beach walks. Many family photographs show Norman and Nell together in these latter activities. Nell was often at her married sister's home on a sheep property at Anakie, 15 miles from Geelong, and Norman went out at weekends. He must have cycled there as he comments about getting back to Geelong about 11pm on Sunday nights. Once he had forgotten his music – would Nell bring it in?

All the amusing stories about him came from relatives. He frequently came home at night with a stray animal in his pocket. He was great friends with brother-in-law Bill, and always up to tricks – like grabbing Bill's hat when passing the undertakers and throwing it into the mortuary, or upsetting the draughts board when he was not winning, but in devilment not spleen. He must have been overawed by all the seven sisters in Nell's family, but apparently he soon stopped being shy and entered into the family circle as a friend. Two little girls at least cried for their 'uncle 'when he was killed.

I was told that Norman was very keen to go away with the forces – the great adventure – but I don't know how he felt about leaving Nell with one young child and a "bun in the oven". I don't know if Nell objected or not, but they had one "trying" day as mentioned in one of Norm's letters after

Norman and Nellie Burn wedding at the house of Bill and Aggie Pride

Norman, Nellie and Margaret.

home leave, shortly before he sailed. Much letter writing was usual then and Norm was no exception. His letters are always loving and reassuring. They began this way in his early courtship which went on for ten years! I was always curious as to why this was so long. Was it lack of money? My mother would never admit any fault and would only say that she did not want to "lose her girlhood".

They were married in 1913. I was born in 1915 and Norman left Australia in 1916 and was killed within six months.

Letters from England, where Norman spent maybe two months at training school, are interesting social documents. Norman worked hard and did well, as letters from his friends testify. Even with this background, promotion had to be earned out in the field – that is in France. At the training school there was still time for pranks. He came back to barracks late one night and sounded a mock reveille, galvanising everyone out of bed.

Three of Norman's brothers were also serving in France. His letter home, censored as usual, commenting on the death of the youngest, "Buz", is strangely devoid of emotion. I feel he would not have wished to upset Nell, but by then all the boys would have realised it was no picnic. Grim living conditions in France were mentioned, but the emphasis was on how they were making themselves more comfortable. Norman said he was not afraid of anything he had to do, and he was anxious to earn promotion.

I wonder what this man was really like. If he had lived would he have been very correct, a strong church-goer, as one of his brothers was? Or more pragmatic, a little stern – scary to me as a young girl – as another brother was. Or perhaps gentle and easy going as yet another? Would he have approved of a fifth brother living with his housekeeper and not marrying her until after the birth of her second child by him? But most importantly, would he and Nell have continued their loving relationship?

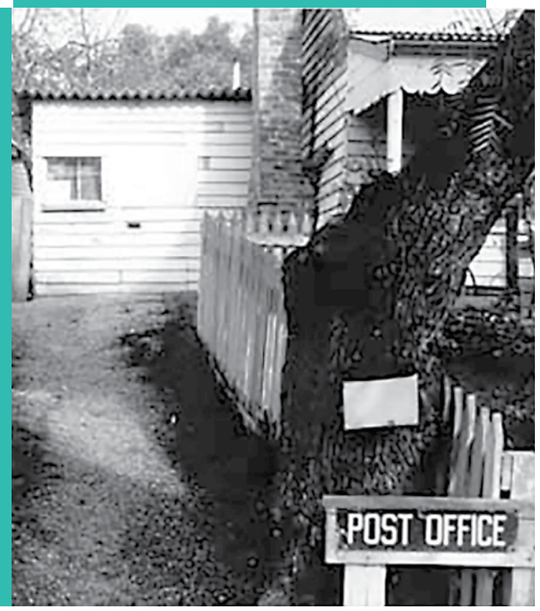
I like to picture the easy going, joking image, confirmed by his close friendship with Bill, who was himself the epitome of an easy-going nature. Early pictures show Norman as shy or even weak or timid, but manhood ones show him as dapper, tall, well-dressed wearing a straw boater on his head, standing confidently with legs apart. By then he wore a moustache, tailored with waxed points, giving a look of distinction.

This seventh son happened to marry a seventh daughter and their first child was born on the seventh day of the seventh month. This I can be sure about. The rest seems a fair picture and I am content with that.

Margaret Theresa and George Burn with their seven sons. Norman back right.

Norman and Nellie at Torquay while courting

BELLBRAE POST OFFICE



By Martin Hooper

The Bellbrae area was settled by pastoralists in 1843. It has a much longer history of occupation by our indigenous Australians. The village had a post office for 121 years from 1862 to 1982. Across the life of this post office it shifted location five times and had seven Postmasters. It was called originally Jan Juc PO before the name of the village was changed to Bellbrae in 1922.

In country areas, the role of the post office went far beyond the mail. Often the post office was also the local store. It was a meeting place where people shared the gossip. It was where, a visitor would drop in to find someone or some place in that area, or to get information on local roads and tracks.

For the early pioneers, one of the great occasions was to receive mail, news from family and friends back in their 'old home country'. During the earlier years across the 1840s and 1850s, mail was collected when someone visited Geelong. (Ref. 1)

Old Jan Juc gets a Post Office

On 25th January 1862, the Jan Juc Post Office was established with William Cook, the local school teacher, taking on the role of postmaster. The number 384 was assigned to this Post Office. For his service to the Jan Juc Post Office, William Cook received an annual salary of £10 in 1862. With its establishment, mail was delivered under contract by courier out of Geelong to the Jan Juc Post Office for individual collection by intended recipients. (Ref. 2, 3, 4)

The post office operated out of the school residence, which was then located down on Spring Creek, next to the primary school. (Map POS1) Today this site, 51 Woods Road, is a residential home. William Cook relinquished the role of postmaster in 1876. He retired as the Head Teacher of Jan Juc Primary in 1878.

At that time, George and Susan Cunningham had a store in old Jan Juc on the road to

MILESTONES: BELLBRAE POST OFFICE

1840
Geelong
Geelong's first Post Office opened

1862
JAN JUC SCHOOL
25th January 1862 Jan Juc gets a Post Office operating from the School Residence on Spring Creek.

William Cook
William Cook, teacher at Jan Juc school appointed first Post Master.

1877
George Cunningham
1877-78 and 1910-1914
George Cunningham was Post Master at Jan Juc.

ANGLESEA ROAD
1877-1882
Post Ofice located on Anglesea Road at Bridge crossing Spring Creek.

Susan Cunningham
1879-1910. Susan, George's wife, took on the role and became Jan Juc's first Post Mistress.

1882
SCHOOL ROAD
1882 - 1945
Post Office located in School Road opposite the current Primary School

E. A. (Annie) Hooper
1914-1940
Annie was Post Mistress

1921
TELEPHONE OFFICE
27th August 1921
Associated Telephone Office opened in Jan Juc

1923
NAME CHANGE
1st July 1923 Jan Juc Post Office change name to Bellbrae Post Office.

1940
Ethel Seiffert
1940-1943
Ethel L.M. Seiffert operated the Post Office.

1943
9 SEIFFERT ROAD

William & Lena Cunningham
1943-1973 William and Lena Cunningham operated the Bellbrae PO and Telephone Exchange.

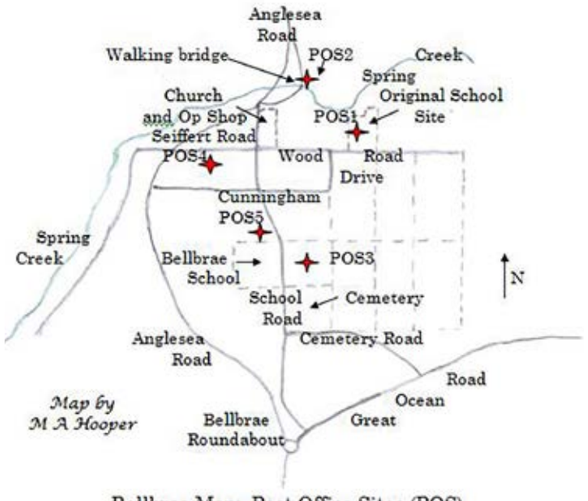
1973
42 SCHOOL ROAD

Rayma O'Neil
1973-1982 Rayma O'Neil was the last Bellbrae Post Mistress.

POST OFFICE CLOSES
30th June 1982 the Bellbrae Post Office closed.

Geelong. (Map POS2) George took over the role of postmaster in 1877. The National Archives of Australia has some limited records of the level of business transacted by the Jan Juc PO across these Cunningham years.

For 1909, there were 234 mails received and the same number dispatched. This represents 5 mails per week in the summer and 3 per week in winter. There were 3251 letters, 219 newspapers, 305 packets and 2 parcels posted. There were 89 postal notes issued to the total value of £30. A postal note, a little like a cheque made out to cash, was a simple way of sending money to some organisation, company or person. The sender paid a small fee for this service to the post office.



Bellbrae Map: Post Office Sites (POS)

THE POSTMASTERS OF BELLBRAE POST OFFICE

Name	Period	Comments
William Cook	1862 to 1876	School teacher at Jan Juc Primary School
George Cunningham	1877 to 1878	The Cunninghams had a small store in Jan Juc
Susan Cunningham	1879 to 1910	Susan, wife of George, became postmaster until her death in 1910
George Cunningham	1910 to 1914	The two Georges[1] looked after the P.O. until the younger George married
Elizabeth Ann Hooper	1914 to 1 May 1940	When George Hooper married in 1911, his wife 'Annie' stepped into the role of postmaster
Ethel Lilian Maude Seiffert	1 May 1940 to 6 Nov 1943	Seifferts decided to go back farming and the young William J G Cunningham became postmaster
William John George Cunningham	6 Nov 1943 to 31 July 1973	Grandson of George & Susan. Lena, William's wife, attended to much of the PO business
Rayma O'Neil	Aug 1973 to June 1982	30 June 1982 was the last day of operation of the then Bellbrae PO

One or other member of the extended Cunningham family was the postmaster from 1877 to 1973 apart from two and one half years in the early 1940s. This was over three quarters of the 121 year life of the Bellbrae Post Office. (Ref. 5)

1. George Cunningham and his step-son George Hooper

SUSAN CUNNINGHAM POSTMASTER 1879 TO 1910

Susan Cunningham took on the role of postmaster in 1879 and remained in this role for over 31 years. Susan migrated to Melbourne, Australia in 1857 with members of the Gundry family, the prominent pioneering family in old Jan Juc.

When her husband Sergeant Oliver Hooper of the 40th Regiment (out of Somerset) died in Melbourne in 1864, she moved with her infant son, George Hooper, to live with Edward and Sarah Gundry in then Jan Juc. They helped her establish a small store on a corner of their land just north of the current footbridge over Spring Creek. (Map POS2). (Ref. 6)

A government survey party passed through old Jan Juc in 1869 and one member remained. George Cunningham and Susan Hooper married in St Paul's Church, Geelong on 8 July 1869. They had one son, William Cunningham, born in 1870.

With the retirement of William Cook as the postmaster, the post office moved from the school residence to the Cunningham store.

In March 1870, George Cunningham bought an allotment in old Jan Juc at a government land sale. This site is downhill from the Bellbrae Cemetery opposite the current Bellbrae Primary School. In 1882, George and Susan relocated their Jan Juc Store and Post Office to this site whose address today is 53-55 School Road. (Map POS3) When Susan Cunningham died in 1910, her husband George again became the postmaster.

Susan's two sons, George Hooper and William Cunningham, married in 1911 and 1902 respectively. George Hooper, in his quiet way, had been courting the lovely Elizabeth Ann (Annie) Musgrove for a number of years and in 1911 they married. George and Annie Hooper lived on with George Cunningham at the Post Office.

ELIZABETH ANN HOOPER PM 1914 TO 1940

Annie Hooper increasingly took over the running of the store and post office after her marriage. When George Cunningham died in 1914, she became the official postmaster, a position she held until 1940.

In the photograph below, taken in the late 1910s, Postmaster Annie Hooper is shown handing mail to her uncle, Charles Albert Musgrove. The words 'POST OFFICE' can be seen on the facia board at the RHS.

Photo: Linda Smith

During the early 1910s, there was considerable agitation for a telephone service to this area. Perhaps the war years intervened as it was sometime before old Jan Juc got its telephone service. An associated telephone office was opened on 27 August 1921. In those early days of the telephone, calls went through a manual exchange operated by the postmaster (or a family member). There is an old much damaged photograph of this building which shows the words, Telegraphic Services, below the Post Office sign.

In May 1940, Mrs Annie Hooper retired as the postmaster and the Hoopers sold their PO business and land holdings in Bellbrae to Mrs Ethel Seiffert.

THE SEIFFERT PERIOD 1940 - 1943

The tenure of Mrs Ethel Lilian Maude Seiffert, as the postmaster at Bellbrae, was for a relatively short period during World War II.

In an interview in 2018, Lester Seiffert (born 1936) recalled this period of his mother's tenure. In 1940, when he was a small boy, his family shifted to this Post Office site in Bellbrae. His mother, Mrs Ethel Seiffert, had come into a small inheritance and the Seiffert Family bought George and Annie Hooper's place and Ethel took over as postmaster, a role she held for about two and a half years.

Lester's mother didn't take well to working in the Post Office as she found it involved too much socialising and chatting with customers, something she did not overly enjoy. In late 1943 the Seifferts decided to give up the Post Office. The PO business was transferred to William John George Cunningham, a grandson of George and Susan Cunningham.

THE CUNNINGHAM PERIOD 1943 - 1973

In late 1943 as the NAA records indicate the Bellbrae Post Office was relocated to the home of William and Lena Cunningham at No. 9 Seiffert Road where it remained for almost 30 years.

At that time the Torquay News reported there were 'only 5 telephone subscribers, 3 private bags, mail was given out from 9am to 5pm, also postal notes and stamps were sold. (Ref. 7)

Photograph: Bellbrae Post Office, 9 Seiffert Road

Reference: Image from National Archives of Australia B5919 177

The Post Office was approached along the east side of the house and a red telephone box was located outside the entrance on the nature strip.

Ray Cunningham, the elder son of William and Lena, formally began work in the post office in 1950. It was some time in the very latter years of the Cunningham period that the exchange became automatic.

Mr and Mrs Cunningham on 31 July 1973 officially handed over to the new postmaster, Mrs Rayma O'Neil. In the following photograph, William Cunningham retiring postmaster hands a postal article to incoming postmaster, Rayma O'Neil. The postal article was a posted copy of the Geelong Advertiser. (Ref. 8)

THE O'NEIL PERIOD 1973 - 1982

In August 1973, the Bellbrae Post Office moved from 9 Seiffert Road to 42 School Road and Mrs Rayma O'Neil became the post mistress. The site shared a boundary with Bellbrae Primary School. (Map POS5) The opening hours were 9 – 12 noon Monday to Friday and 9 – 11 am Saturday.

The tenure of the O'Neils was relatively short as in 1982, the post office closed. This was despite much opposition by local residents. The Minister for Communications, the Honourable Neil Brown, made the decision to close the Bellbrae Post Office primarily on the basis of the low volume of business turnover.

Image: William Cunningham hands the baton to Rayma O'Neil 1973

Bellbrae residents gathered to lament and protest the passing of the post office in July 1982 (Ref. 8)

Geelong Advertiser Newspaper clipping from Mrs Audrey Batson)

THE LITTLE RED POST BOX

As part of the closure of the Bellbrae Post Office in 1982 a delivery service to individual mail boxes around the town was introduced and one of the much loved red post boxes was installed outside the Bellbrae Primary School. It remains today with mail pick up at 6 pm Monday to Friday.

One cannot but wonder how much longer the red post box will be there!

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(1) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Geelong_Post_Office:
(2) NAA Jan Juc Post Office Records at http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/
(3) http://www.stampdomain.com/country/victoria/History
(4) http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/Cobb-and-co
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(6) Shire of Barrabool Rate Books, Geelong Heritage Centre, Geelong City Library, Geelong
(7) The Torquay News No. 34, 16 August 1973.)
(8) Geelong Advertiser, 1 August 1973), Geelong Advertiser (Vic. : 1859 - 1929) http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-title558
(9) Martin A Hooper, 'Bellbrae Post Office', ISBN 978-0-9871256-6-8, Beach Shack Publishing, 2019

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In gathering and writing local history, the researcher cum author depends on many people who are willing to share their knowledge, their experiences and their collected memorabilia. These include photographs and old newspaper cuttings, often some that have been handed down from earlier generations. I take this opportunity to acknowledge further and to thank those many people for their generosity. (Ref. 9)

SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR ALL

Contributed by Gwen Threlfall
Mt. Duneed History Group

A subgroup of the Mount Duneed Progress Association

History meetings are at 7:30 pm on the second Thursday of the months of February, March, May, August, October and November.

http://mdpa.weebly.com/blog

During 1954 I had applied to attend Geelong High School the following year. Geelong High School was being swamped by the rapidly increasing population following World War II. We knew that not all hopefuls were going to be lucky and if unsuccessful we would probably be going on to seventh grade at Geelong West or Swanston Street State Schools. These schools were the only ones left in the Geelong area that still had seventh and eighth grades.

On 10 August 1954, the Public Works Minister Mr Merrifield let a contract for £35,652 for the erection of the first section of Belmont High School, Geelong. The school was to contain four general classrooms, rooms for science, art, woodwork, needlework, stores and an administrative section.

Towards the end of 1954 we were told that we would be going to the new Belmont High School which would be finished by the beginning of 1955. We were very disappointed not only as it was further away, but also because the hills made bike riding much more of a grind.

Director of Education, Alan Ramsay opening the school

On 28 January 1955 The Argus made the following announcement:

RESHUFFLE FOR HIGH SCHOOLS

First official signs of the 1955 school "classroom squeeze" came last night when the Education Department announced that alternative accommodation had been arranged for pupils enrolled at a number of new high schools. The new high schools are not yet completed so pupils will be accommodated at either existing schools or in public buildings...

Our instructions were to meet at Swanston Street State School at 9 am on Wednesday 1st February. About 200 students and nine staff assembled that morning. Most of these students had left the school by the time the final year's study had commenced. It was impressed upon us that we were the "Foundation Students" of the new school. At our first Speech Day later that year, we were issued with "Foundation Certificates" with our names neatly handwritten and signed by the first President of the Advisory Council, the first president of the Ladies' Auxiliary and the first headmaster.

There were three classrooms and a staff room at Swanston Street and two portable classrooms at Geelong High available to them. They decided to divide us up into five groups. Form 2 was made up of students who had completed seventh grade the previous year and the form 1 students were divided into four groups. Two form 1 groups were marched over to Geelong High. We would meet during sports times at Eastern Park or during summer at Eastern Beach for swimming. We had no uniform, no facilities and few rules. One of the first rules was that we were not permitted to eat in the street. In winter, we conducted crude science experiments on an open fire in the absence of a bunsen burner.

On 26 September, which was the first day of third term, we took possession of our new domain at Belmont. The one thing that no student forgets about the first months was the MUD. It stretched around the building area and all the way up Hill Street. The residents living in surrounding streets complained that it was so bad that even the milkman refused to deliver. Anyone who had rubber boots could fill a bottle with tadpoles to take home. We would enter the school by cutting through the gate at Roslyn State School and could dodge most of it.

I remember students who came from Norlane, North Geelong, Lara, Gheringhap, Lethbridge, Lorne, Anglesea, Torquay, Winchelsea, Grovedale, Marshall, Newtown and Geelong West. Buses needed to be arranged, one going over Princes Bridge to Church Street, and another up Vines Road. A uniform in bottle green was chosen for the girls. The trammies were tickled pink that we were wearing the same colour as them. Tunics were given a miss and the latest style of pinafore dresses was chosen. It was a very poor choice for girls who were growing in all directions. The bottle green soon faded to olive green. A crest was designed using an eagle on a hill and the motto "Strive for the Highest" was very modern as it was not in Latin. This crest is still in use today.

Competitive sport was regularly arranged with Ballarat East, a school which began at the same time as us.

One year later history repeated itself with over a hundred more students moving into Swanston Street for the first two terms while waiting for the extra classrooms to be finished at Belmont. Once a week each form travelled by chartered bus to Belmont for a full day, so that woodwork, needlework, art and science classes had proper facilities for teaching these subjects, and so that the Belmont students at Swanston Street would feel that they were an important part of Belmont High School. Exactly twelve months later we all came under the one roof for the start of third term when the second section of the building was completed.

At the end of 1956 the first issue of "Summit", the school magazine was distributed. It was a 32-page booklet containing photos of school teams, student contributions and lists of students and teachers.

The school continued to grow with cookery rooms and music rooms added in 1957.

The following year during education week the Director of Education officially opened the school on 20th August. In his speech he said:

"When I went to school there was only one High School, and to get into that one High School, Melbourne High School, you had to win a scholarship. Most young people of your age left school when they reached the sixth class at something like what we would call the eighth grade to-day, and that was the only chance that many people had. To-day, there is a High School or a Technical School or a Girls' School for everybody, and just to give you an indication, in the last six years the number of our High Schools has grown from 58, until in February next, I believe, there will be just over 130 throughout this State of ours.

Now there is a great opportunity for you young people; I do hope you will seize it."

Torquay Museum Without Walls

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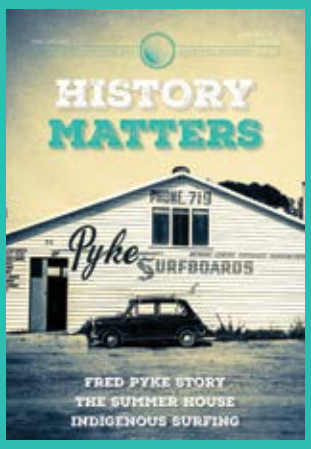
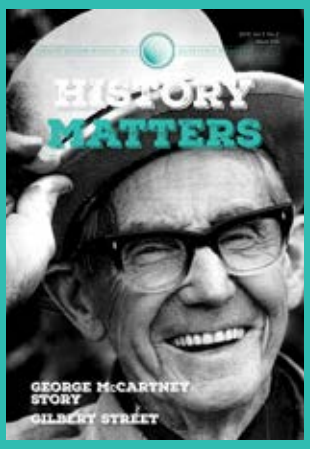
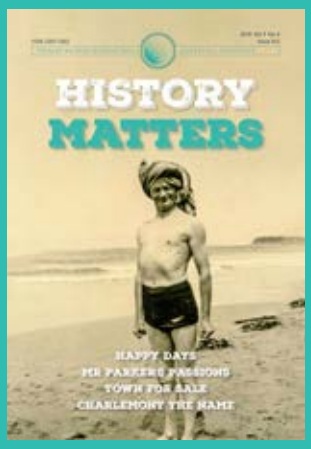
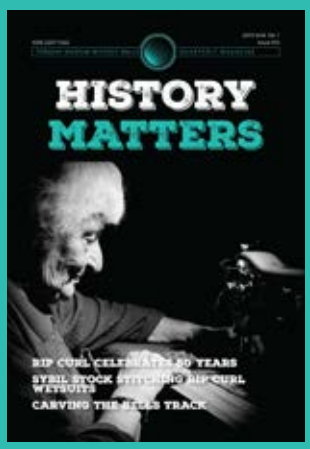
Where The Past Meets The Present

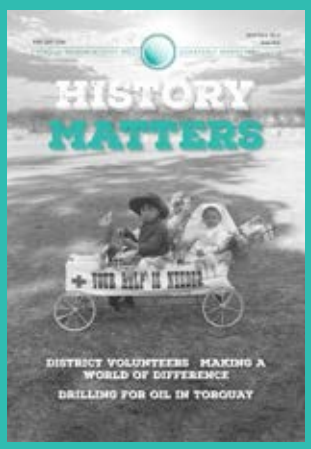
PREVIOUS ISSUES

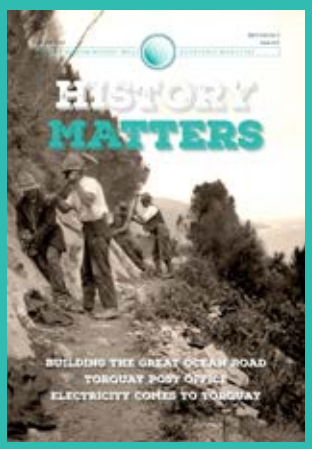


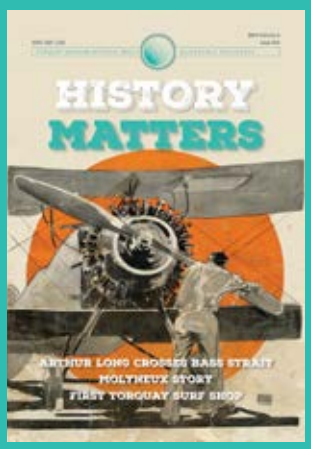












$10 RRP