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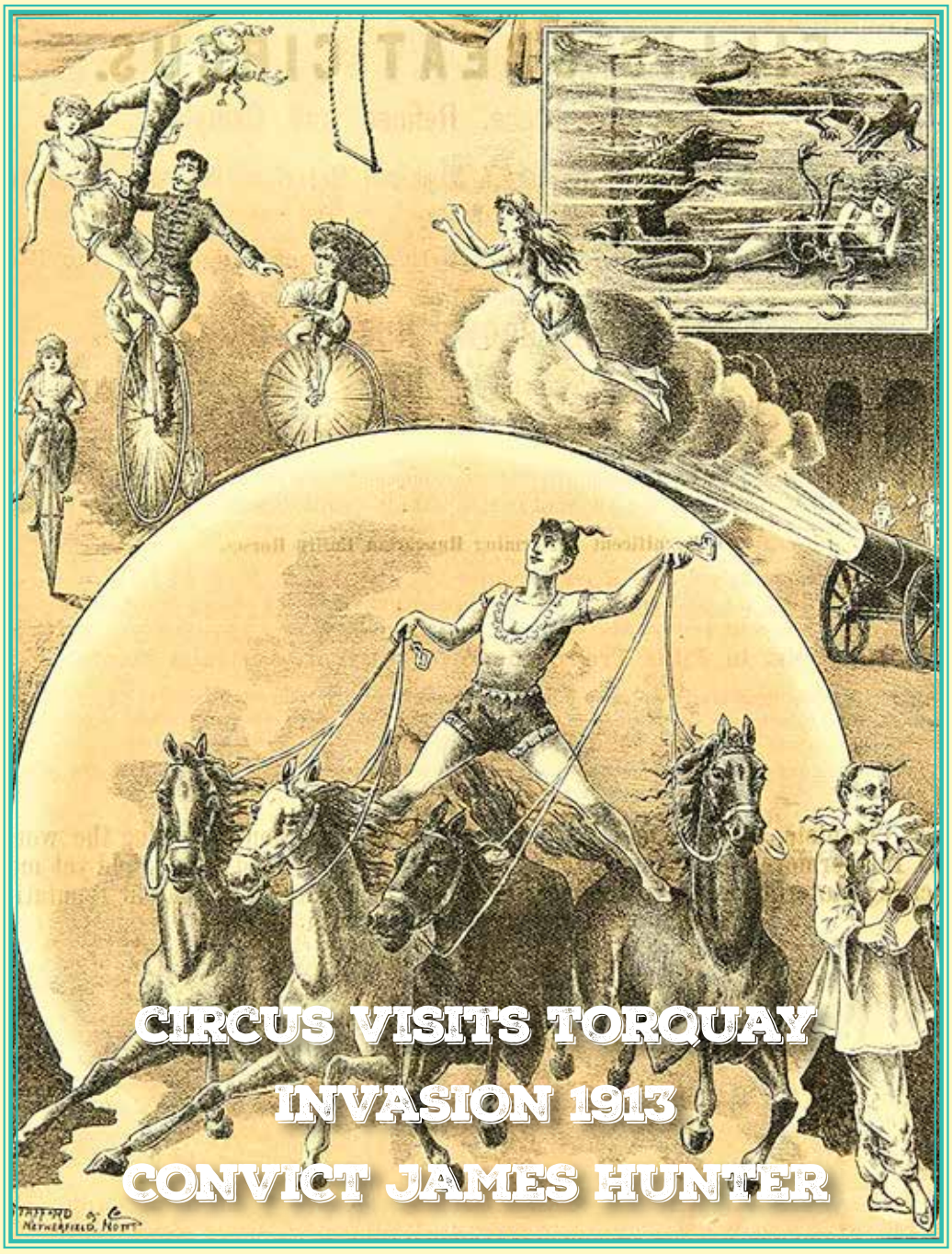

CIRCUS VISITS TORQUAY

INVASION 1913

CONVICT JAMES HUNTER

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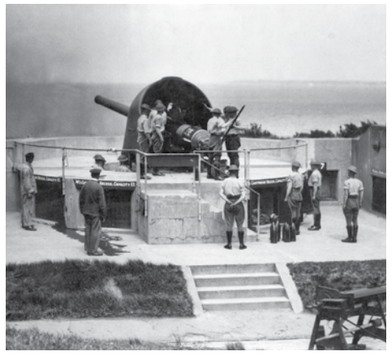

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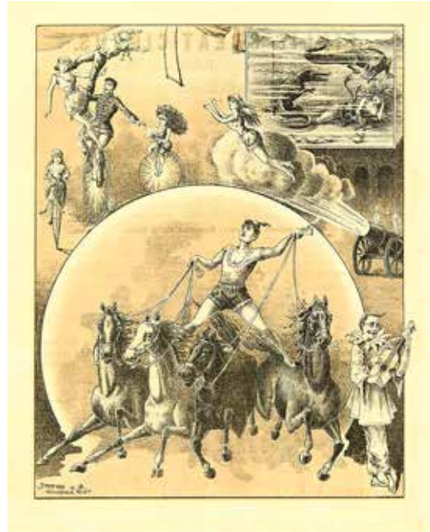


ABOUT US....

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.

CONVICT FOOTPRINTS

JAMES HUNTER

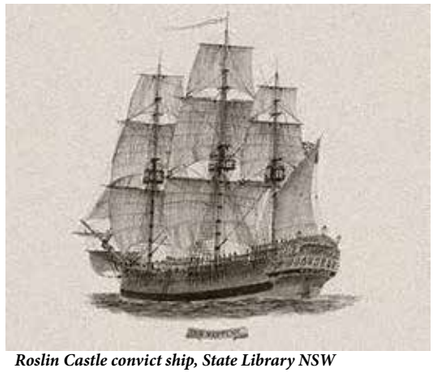
AGAINST THE GRAIN

«CHERYL BAULCH»

In the village of Darton, South Yorkshire, England, James Hunter was born to Sarah and Thomas on 2 February 1808. The area was known for working coal and stone. Like his father Thomas, James was to become a nail maker.

Making nails by hand was a widespread cottage industry, mainly further south of Darton. The trade was always domestic, with the nails being made in small workshops either attached to or close to the nailer's house. These nails were made one by one by a blacksmith or nailor from a square iron rod. It was an important trade, as the hand-wrought nails typically fastened the sheathing and roof boards on building frames.

On Christmas Day 1828, at the age of 20, James married Mary Sidebottom. By 1830, machine-made cut nails were being produced in Birmingham, causing hardship to their little industry. Stress was further placed on the family finances with the birth of John (1831). The Hunter family felt the effects of this downturn in the nail trade, causing James to look for other ways to support his family. James was yet to see the worst of it. During the 'Hungry Forties', people in the nail trade suffered terribly, and by 1842 many of them were dying of starvation. Regrettably, late in 1833, James was charged with stealing a bushel of wheat from James Gouldthorpe of Darton. He was convicted of felony at the Pontefract Sessions for the West Riding of the county of York on 8 January 1834, and sentenced to transportation for seven years. His daughter Jemina was born a few months later.



Roslin Castle convict ship, State Library NSW

James arrived in NSW on 15 September 1834 aboard the convict vessel Roslin Castle (3) with 232 other male convicts; three had died during the voyage. The barque, built in 1819, was a merchant ship that made five voyages transporting convicts to Australia.

On arrival in the Colony of New South Wales, a convict

CONVICTS IN AUSTRALIA

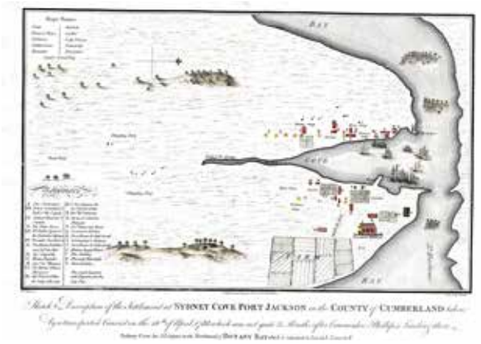
Between 1788 and 1868 more than 162,000 convicts were transported to Australia. Of these, about 7,000 arrived in 1833 alone.

From 1788 to 1842 about 80,000 convicts were transported to New South Wales, with approximately 75,000 convicts having served time in Van Diemen's Land between 1803 and 1853

The convicts were transported as punishment for crimes committed in Britain and Ireland. About 85% of the convicts were males, and 15% women. In Australia their lives were hard as they helped build the young colony.

On 9 January 1868 the convict ship *Hougoumont* arrived at the port of Fremantle in Western Australia. It carried the last convicts to be sent to Australia. The ship's arrival marked the end of 80 years of penal transportation to Australia.

1788	1803	1850	1868
NSW	TASSI	WA	END



Convict ships arriving Sydney Cove, State Library NSW

was either retained by the Government or assigned to a settler. Assigned male convicts were generally employed as field labourers or tradesmen; women became domestic servants. The private employer was responsible for their discipline and provided lodging, food and clothing in return for their labour.

Fortunately, James was assigned to Michael McAlister of Argyle, a J.P. and commandant of mounted police at Goulburn Plains, previously a Paramatta magistrate. Goulburn Plains was founded in 1833 as a garrison and convict town in southeastern New South Wales, lying at the confluence of the Wollondilly and Mulwaree rivers. McAlister was a magistrate of the colony since 1823 and an officer in the army. McAlister provided his convicts

with a ration of food and clothing as set out in official regulations. He also had a reputation for providing his convicts extra provisions, favours, free time, or even money to encourage 'good' behaviour. By the time James arrived, there had been more crime in the district of Argyle and fellow magistrates believed that McAlister was promoting insubordination by being too soft. In contrast, he believed the prisoners' behaviour at Argyle had not worsened.

After serving his seven years as a convict, on 16 July 1842 James was given his Certificate of Freedom, which was still waiting for him to pick up from the Melbourne Police Office in 1845.

Life as a convict in an Australian penal colony was very harsh. Still, James had the advantage of raw physical strength and determination to become an independent person working on the land under McAlister. James learnt many new skills, and by the time he received his Certificate of Freedom he was able to establish himself further south on the Goulburn River. He possibly worked at the *Doogallock* homestead near Yea in Victoria, where his fourth child, daughter Ellen was born.

The three eldest children, Sarah, Thomas and Betsy were baptised at St James Church in Melbourne in 1849.

In the early years, very few convict wives were able to follow their husbands to the colonies. Convicts who arrived without their spouses, as was the case with James, often entered into bigamous marriages in the absence of adequate records. James had met Eliza Herd and they simply cohabited without formal marriage until 1849. There was a general, if erroneous, belief in England and the colonies that if one party were transported, both parties were released from their marriage and free to marry again.

Believing he was free to remarry, James married Irish woman Eliza Herd on 25 September 1849 in Melbourne. Eliza, born in Belfast, Ireland in 1823, arrived in Port Phillip Bay in 1838. It is believed by some that she married Henry Joseph Grimaldi (aka Robinson), a convict with his 'Ticket of Leave', the following year. . The issue from this union, Mary Jane Grimaldi (Robinson), was born in 1840 at North Melbourne. The couple grew apart. Henry moved to New Zealand, and Eliza developed a relationship with James Hunter.

James and Eliza had lived as man and wife in the Goulburn River region. Sarah was born in 1843, Thomas in 1846, Betsy in 1847 and Ellen in 1849. Seven other children were born after the marriage, six in the Winchelsea / Wurdiboluc area. They had 12 children in 23 years.

James had settled down as a grazier in the Wurdi Boluc area, particularly Tutegong next to the Wurdi Boluc Swamp, acquiring a considerable land holding until he died in 1896 when it was then passed onto his wife. In 1929 the land became part of the Wurdiboluc Reservoir when it became an “off-stream storage” facility becoming a popular fishing spot with the locals and home to a population of water birds with kangaroos hopping around the surrounding grassland.

While most of James and Eliza's children stayed around the Winchelsea district, James and Eliza's second eldest son George, who married Connewarre girl Margaret Matthews moved to the Jan Juc (today Bellbrae) area, starting a local Hunter dynasty. George and Margaret's union produced twelve children, with James, Moses, and Thomas raising their families in the area.

James died on 8 May 1896 in Winchelsea, having lived a long life of 88 years and Eliza died five years later. Both are buried at Winchelsea Cemetery.

ELEPHANT WALK

The circus has enthralled, mesmerised and inspired people worldwide for over 255 years.

The modern circus crystallised in London in 1768 when riders used to give open-air displays of trick horsemanship. Former cavalryman and veteran of the Seven Years War, Sergeant Major Phil Astley (1742-1814) gave the first performance with his acts of horsemanship. He later established the first permanent circus beside Westminster Bridge in London. Astley's shows consisted only of trick riding exhibitions until 1770 when he hired a clown (‘Mr. Merryman’), musicians, ropewalkers, tumblers and gymnasts for his show to provide spectators with diverse entertainment. Seeing how much money could be made, other showmen opened circuses and competed to put on the most spectacular and daring shows. In 1812 the first elephant was exhibited in a circus before other exotic animals were added.

In the latter half of the 19th century, major local tented circus companies such as Burton's National Circus, Eroni Bros, St Leon's, Fillis and FitzGerald Brothers regularly visited Geelong.

There were also frequent visits by large American companies such as Chiarini (the first in 1873), Cooper, Bailey & Co. (the first in 1877), and Sells Bros (1892). The visits of these large American circuses were remembered for many years, especially for their lavish street processions.

From the early 1900s until the early 1960s, the dominant Australian circus, Wirth Brothers Circus, visited Geelong almost every year. Other local companies such as Bullen Bros, Sole Bros, Perry Bros and Ashton's frequently visited Geelong and Torquay in the postwar period.

Long-term locals have recalled the days in the 1950s/60s when Ashton Circus and Perry Bros Circus pitched their giant tents on the top of Yellow Bluff, and later on Torquay Common. The elephants always caused excitement in the town. In the early days to mark their arrival they would parade up Gilbert Street, back along a track to Yellow Bluff where they were tethered. Sometimes they stayed on vacant land on Zeally Bay Road, opposite where Woolworths is today. On top of Yellow Bluff the animal wagons and elephants were gathered in a half circle. The area became known as Elephant Walk, although today it is labelled as Torquay Play Park, still for kids' entertainment with the extensive play equipment donated by the Lions Club of Torquay.

In 2014 the Surf Coast Shire banned circuses with caged wild animals from performing on council-owned land. The Great Ocean Road Committee (GORCC) soon adopted a similar policy. It followed a report on Perry Brothers Circus in 2010 by the *Herald-Sun* that Australia's last living circus elephant *Saigon* had been living out of the back of a truck for ten months of the year, travelling from town to town with Perry Bros Circus and Zoo. Three months earlier, the last of her female friends had died. At 55 years old and too old to perform tricks, she was still on the road with the rest of the animals.

The report included a story on the circus stay at Point Cook for a few days on a dustbowl of vacant land. Similar to a recent visit to Torquay Common, *Saigon* was surrounded by an electric fence with a few bales of hay, shuffling from foot to foot, slowly swaying, and with no rain or nearby pool, idly blowing dust over her broad back to filter out the sun. The report described her as cutting a massive, unhappy figure. The poor treatment of a circus elephant visiting Torquay in that same period sparked outrage among locals. Despite protests from the Perry family that if *Saigon* was returned to the wild, she would probably be killed, Animal rights groups such as PETA and Animal Liberation condemned the elephant's alleged ill-treatment as equivalent to being "sentenced to life imprisonment". The RSPCA called on Victorians to boycott any travelling or touring group that featured them as an act. The Surf Coast Shire was one of the 35 councils around Australia that responded to the call to ban circuses with animals from pitching their tents.

Animal protesters rally at circus, Geelong Advertiser, 2/4/2017
They gatecrashed the opening night of Eroni's Circus at Spring Creek Reserve, with horses and dogs among its performers.

Saigon (1958-2022) arrived in Australia with several young elephants when she was 3-5 years old and was eventually retired to the family farm in 2010 after all the publicity. For many years the owners searched for a new home before they decided in 2019 that the purpose-built habitat at Sydney Zoo was the perfect place for *Saigon*. In December 2020, *Saigon* was reunited with her own species for the first time in over ten years. Two bull elephants, Kavi and Ashoka joined *Saigon* at Sydney Zoo, allowing her to form a new social group and finally become a matriarch.

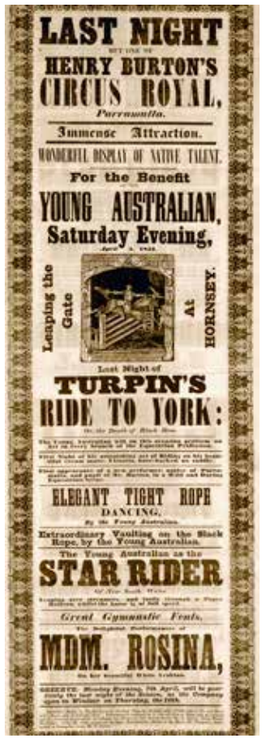
In Australia the first recorded circus entertainments were given in Sydney in 1833 by two tightrope walkers, one of whom was a former convict. It was however Radford's Royal Circus which opened in Launceston in 1847 that had the most significant impact on the Australian circus scene. Radford eventually became insolvent, but the development of a colonial circus industry had been set in motion. Two of his equestrians, Golding Ashton (1820–89) and John Jones (c1826–1903), eventually established colonial circus dynasties in the tenting tradition under the professional names of 'James Henry Ashton' and 'Matthew St Leon' respectively. As a result of their efforts the history of almost any Australian circus of note, including several in existence today, can be traced, directly or indirectly, to Radford's pioneering circus enterprise.

Ashton had success as a 'bold and fearless' equestrian at Radford's Amphitheatre, Launceston. His talent and interstate recognition provided him with the experience and reputation to form Ashton's Royal Olympic Circus in 1850, and for the next thirty-five years he toured eastern Australia.

James Henry Ashton, Sydney Uni

Ashton was born in 1819 at Baddow, Essex. At 14, he was convicted of stealing a donkey and on a second offence of stealing a brooch, resulting in a sentence of 14 years' transportation. He arrived in Van Diemen's Land in 1837 from Portsmouth on the Frances Charlotte. He was imprisoned at Point Puer Juvenile Penal Station near Port Arthur until 1839 when he was assigned as a servant to Thomas Reibey II. After eleven years of good behaviour, James was given his ticket of leave in 1846. As an active but short man, at only 5'3", he secured a position as a trick rider in 1848 at a Radford's circus in Launceston. Two years later, as Radford dealt with his financial troubles, James founded the Ashton Circus, having purchased a circus from Thomas Mollar who was selling up to leave the Colony.

It was 1859 when the Royal Australian Circus applied for permission to erect a circus in Market Square, Geelong, much to the objection of Alderman Bell. He was concerned about the vagabonds "who used all sorts of language and were a nuisance to the neighbours" coming to the town. Since Elizabethan times, the travelling entertainers of England's fairgrounds, such as ropewalkers and acrobats, carried the legal status of 'rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars'. Some of England's circus performers, falling foul of the law, were transported to Australia. Their enforced



relocation contributed to the foundation of an Australian circus industry.

Burton's Great National Circus also applied in January 1859 to perform in Geelong. Henry Burton (1823-1900) trained as a ringmaster in England before arriving in Adelaide in 1849. After touring as a tambourine man, he started his own circus the following year. By 1851 he opened a touring season and became well known for touring the Victorian gold fields. His circus performed in Geelong until 1875. During the year, more circuses visited Geelong, such as American Hippodrome, Davies and Leith's Royal Australian, and Worrell & Co's Great North American.

Later in the century, itinerant Australian circus proprietors borrowed the American idea of attaching menageries of 'wild beasts' to their travelling companies.

Most early Australian circuses were built based on the family, skills and experience accumulated and transferred to each new generation. The family-based circus sought the bush's freedom, informality and quietness rather than the cities' and suburbs' noise and bustle. With their irrepressible tenacity to travel and entertain, the more capable (and wealthy) circus families – such as the Ashtons, Perrys and St Leons – survived the economic tides to build dynasties and reputations that lasted a century and more.

By 1890, the 'greatest shows on earth' were regularly performed to Geelong audiences. In a time before film and television, animal rights awareness and mass travel, a parade through Geelong and other towns in the district announced the arrival of the circus and gave glimpses of a wider world. Children and adults gazed in awe at the dazzling array of acrobats, clowns, horses, wagons and many mounted elephants prancing past them. And, in a giant big top on the edge of the towns, a heavy velvet curtain lifted to reveal trapeze artists soaring through the air, a ringmaster in a red tailcoat and top hat twirling round the ring, lions jumping through hoops and sawdust thrown

in the air by the thundering hooves of galloping horses. And, as magically as it appeared, the circus disappeared overnight – but not before it had cast its spell.

In 1892, Frank Fillis arrived in Queensland with a troupe of 40 performers and various exotic animals. Frank, a Londoner, went to Cape Town, South Africa, where he joined the circus of Richard Bell before he began his own circus around 1883. He became renowned across the globe for his extravagant productions that included man and beast alike, including the world's first human cannonball, and he was a regular visitor to Geelong.

Wirth's Circus, also known as Wirth Brothers' Circus, was Australia's largest and most prestigious circus company for eight decades. Billed as Australia's own 'Greatest Show on Earth', the travelling circus held an international reputation. The company started with the children of brass musician and German-born Johannes 'John' Wirth (1834–10 July 1880) and his English-born wife Sarah. John's parents had arrived in Australia in 1855 and worked as itinerant musicians, including with Ashton's Circus. Commencing as a small travelling band of the Wirth family members, they formed a small circus by 1882. Established in Ballarat, the brother's first provincial tour commenced from Ararat in 1885.

Their bitter rivals were the FitzGerald Brothers Circus, another regular visitor to Geelong. The rivalry subsided in 1906 on the death of the FitzGerald brothers. At this time, the Wirths acquired the FitzGeralds' circus.

During World War II, Wirth's Circus was one of the few circuses allowed to operate and then only on a limited scale. Denied the use of rail services needed for the war effort, Wirth travelled by road on a much-reduced scale, its daily progress severely restricted by petrol rationing. Philip Wirth's children continued to run the circus until its closure in May 1963. Although the Bullen Brothers circus competition started impacting the Wirth family operations, the decline of their circus was principally attributed to rising transport costs and the introduction of television.

In 1945, with the end of World War II, the circuses of Australia could once again commence operations unfettered by the petrol, lighting, manpower and transport restrictions of wartime. New circuses emerged to accommodate the public's hunger for entertainment after wartime deprivations. It was a time of growth in the Torquay district and the circus became a holiday feature at Torquay.

The original Silver's Circus was organised in 1946 by Mervyn King and the Hardie family of tentmakers in Sydney. The professional name of 'Silver' was chosen for the circus, inspired by the neon sign King saw flashing one night outside a Sydney restaurant, 'The Silver Grill'. Within five years, Silver's Circus was Australia's largest roadshow, touring every state of the Australian mainland. The company was dissolved at the peak of its success in 1953, but other companies revived the name 'Silver' in the following years.

Another major circus to prosper in the post-war period was Bullen Bros. Alfred Percival Bullen and his wife Lilian, jointly with Alfred's brothers, ran a travelling Circus Carnival in the mid 1910s, of which the main attraction was a merry-go-round and lion-taming exhibitions. With their hard work and ability to dream, by the 1920s, it grew into Bullen's Circus. In the 1940s to 1960s, Bullen's Circus was counted as one of the most prominent among Australian circuses.

State Library of NSW

With the arrival of television, circuses were bidding farewell to the entertainment world and Bullen's followed suit with their last performance on 25 May 1969. The Bullen family refocused its commercial interests on a wildlife safari park at Rockbank and Wallacia, west of Sydney, and the regular importation of the Great Moscow Circus in partnership with entrepreneur Michael Edgley. When Bullens Circus went off the 'road' they had seven elephants. One went to their African Lion Safari in Rockbank for about twelve years before joining others from the herd at the family's Animal World at Wallacia. The last Bullen elephant died in 2019.

After selling their hotel in Western Queensland, the WG 'Bill' Perry family started their own circus in 1889, eager to return to the family's roots as variety show entertainers. Later, they assumed the promotional name of Eroni Bros. As early as 1914, the Perry family began to fragment when James Perry, one of the younger sons of WG Perry, left Eroni Bros to form his own circus. Reverting to the original family name, his Perry Bros Circus was, by the late 1920s, Australia's largest after Wirth Bros and a frequent visitor to Geelong and Torquay.

For all its popularity, the circus had gradually lost ground over the course of the twentieth century to alternative forms of popular entertainment, cinema from the 1920s, television from the 1950s and, more recently, from the rise of new forms of electronic media such as the internet. Overall, the circus in Australia, as elsewhere in the world, has been forced in recent decades to redefine itself in order to remain relevant. Perhaps the most innovative trend in circuses at the turn of the 21st century was the establishment of companies such as the Cirque du Soleil. Such companies employ no animals in their performances and instead emphasise traditional acts of human skill and daring; contemporary music and dance are integrated into the production.

So, gone are our visits to Torquay's circus, but the memories still linger fondly with our older residents - local boys wandering around the site and sometimes being hired on the spot to help set up. Their payment for their hard work was a free ticket to the show. Others remember peeking under the circus tent to avoid paying the admission fee. 'Housie, Housie' games were an attraction, and buying sweet corn was enjoyable. One resident remembered his brother getting too close to the lion cage and the lion licking his face.

The circus was gone as quickly as it arrived in town. Yellow Bluff returned to being an empty lot but will always be called Elephant Walk by those who enjoyed the times at the circus in Torquay. They remember a place where they would hear the sounds of elephants trumpeting and the roar of lions and tigers amongst the sounds of the sea and, in the minds of the young, they would fantasise of running away with the circus.

SOURCES:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JXDmRsN-Xr0&t=235s
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFircfURe9A

IMAGES:
Richard Greenhough
State Library NSW

TORQUAY HOUSES

WOODEN TREATS WE HAVE SEEN

CHERYL BAULCH

31 COWRIE ROAD

The world was on edge with European hostilities when Geelong couple Kyna Mary Callahan and Alan Curnow Burrage married in 1939. A few months later the world was at war, and closer to home, a fire nearly wiped out Torquay. As an engineer Alan belonged to an industry that had the highest number of enlistment exemptions, so he continued his work at International Harvester. In 1942 Alan enlisted in the Voluntary Defence Force, a part-time volunteer military force. He was attached to the Geelong Battalion.

Kyna and Alan continued to live in Geelong, and despite Torquay beaches being patrolled and closed with barbed wire across the entry points, they chose Torquay as the location for a holiday house. They purchased land at 31 Cowrie Road from Thomas Spowart in 1944. Two years later in 1946, they built their holiday home on that corner allotment, but sold it at the end of 1947. It had many owners in the following years and it stood firm for just over 70 years before a more modern home replaced it.

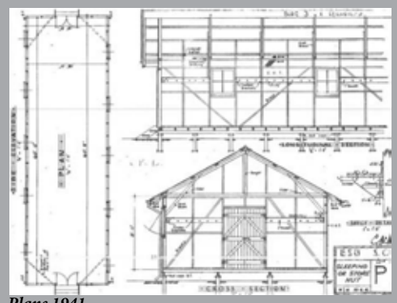
ARMY HUTS

12 PRIDE STREET

The logistics of finding neat and inexpensive accommodation for military personnel during the Second World War was found in two types of huts. The 'P1 Type Hut' was designed as a standard type, and these were far more numerous and more functional than the better-known prefabricated buildings like the semicircular Nissen/Quonset Huts.

The P1-type huts were designed to be built by civil contractors in a style familiar to all Australian builders using readily available building materials. Although designed as temporary accommodation their adaptability and inherent strength had made them the backbone of military accommodation for 50 years in Australia.

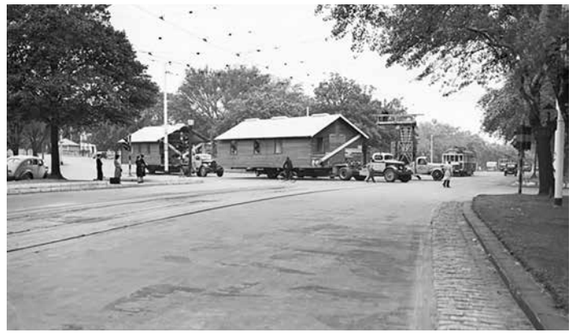
The Australian' P' series was designed to cover all the personnel accommodation requirements of the military. The series was centred around a basic module - the 'P1 Sleeping or Stores Hut' - which was then modified to produce messes, guard huts, canteens, medical aid posts, dental surgeries, recreation huts, classrooms, and offices. Further modifications produced ablutions, showers, latrines, laundries, offices and stores.



Plans 1941

After the war the shrinking military force meant that some camps were closed but some like Bonegilla and Benalla became transit camps for the post-war immigration program and only Puckapunyal, Balcombe, Bandiana and Broadmeadows remained as major military facilities. The remaining war-time buildings were still used for national service, reserve and cadet training.

In the late 1950s and into the 1960s there was a building program which sought to replace the wartime timber and corrugated iron buildings with newer solid brick, multistorey barrack blocks as the new accommodation standard.



So, with the end of World War II and a permanent building program undertaken by the military, a large number of Army huts were either demolished or sold as military surplus. Subsequently many found their way to be repurposed for various civilian uses, such as farms, sporting clubs, community facilities, churches, storage facilities, businesses, and even homes. The huts' affordability and practicality made them popular for these purposes. Locally the P1 distinctive profile could be spotted at 12 Pride Street for over sixty years.

When John Best purchased 12 Pride Street from William Richardson in 1897, the block went from Pride Street to The Esplanade. John Best owned the vacant land until his death in 1933. His children Minna and John inherited the property and subdivided it before selling The Esplanade side of the land to Dorothy Bucknall, and the Pride Street side to brother and sister, Marjorie Reeve and William Henry McGie (known as Henry) in 1953. Three years later Henry and his wife Wilma, known as Billy, became the owners. The McGie family were local Geelong residents and were keen to have a holiday home in Torquay.

Henry enlisted in the RAAF toward the end of WW2 as an eighteen-year-old and served in Canada. After demobilisation he returned to Geelong and worked as a bookkeeper before running his own business in the 1960s. His father, Reginald, a World War 1 veteran, who had been assigned to the Pay Corps, purchased two army huts and had them transported to Torquay during 1955/56 in time for the Olympics coming to Torquay.

While details of Rerginald's purchase remain a mystery, we do know at the time Melbourne was gearing up and cleaning up ready for the Olympics in 1956, so there were many army huts for sale. The Gherang Miliary Camp had already been cleaned up, but in Melbourne there was still work to be done to remove Camp Pell, located at Royal Park. Post war the old huts became home for around 3,000 people experiencing the post-war housing shortage in Victoria.

William and his family moved overseas before eventually settling in Western Australia. Consequently, the property was sold to M. C. Herd P/L in 1970. The company made the huts available to the executive staff of the business until they were sold in 2017 and later demolished.

LOLOMA

10 THE ESPLANADE

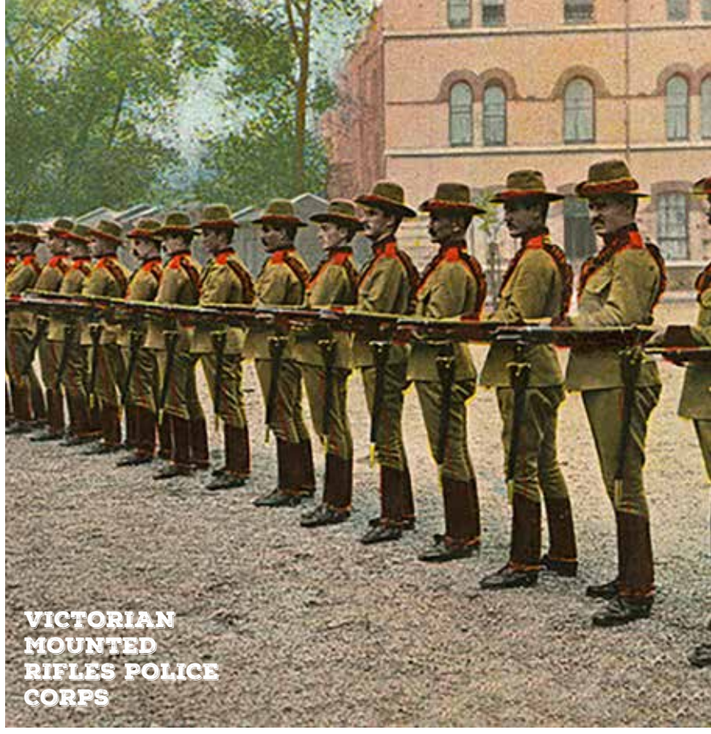
In 1921 Isabel and Frederick (Arthur) 'Pop' Taylor purchased the eastern section of Lot 7 from Lillian Watson for £40 and Percival and Mary Wood bought the house facing Price Street for £550. The Taylors immediately started to build their holiday house on Ocean Parade, which later became The Esplanade.

After Isabel's death Arthur purchased the other half of Lot 7 facing Price Street and sold his holiday house on The Esplanade to Emily Wood in 1934 before Helen & Elizabeth Sage bought it in 1936. Frances and Archibald Anderson then purchased the house in 1953, and it stayed with the family for generations until its recent redevelopment.

Tracing the transactions of Lot 7 is confusing as the owners – the Wood and Taylor families – seem to have sold to each other at times the adjoining blocks. However, the name of the house Loloma originated with the Wood family, whose home in Western Beach was also called Loloma, which was their Torquay bathing box.

FORT NEPEAN GUNS

FORT QUEENSCLIFF



VICTORIAN MOUNTED RIFLES POLICE CORPS

INVASION 1913

«CHERYL BAULCH»

For most locals, the first time that war came to our shores was during WW2 when 5,000 of the Light Horse Regiment camped here. Barbed wire filled our beaches and trenches littered the foreshore.

However Torquay featured much earlier than World War2. When the new 1910 Defence scheme was introduced, military experts questioned its effectiveness, and Torquay was identified as a potential backdoor to an invasion of Melbourne!

The Colony of Victoria separated from New South Wales in 1851 around the time of the discovery of gold. In the 1850s clipper ships made Melbourne Australia's busiest port. In 1853 more than 300 ocean ships were anchored in Hobsons Bay. This surge in Melbourne's population and wealth forced British authorities to send four companies of the 40th Regiment to Victoria in 1852, to despatch the sloop Electra in 1853, and to transfer the military headquarters from Sydney in 1854. In that year Victoria became the first British colony to order a warship, and the sloop Victoria became the first Australian warship. Victoria Barracks, which housed the troops on St. Kilda Road, was built as a permanent home and later became the headquarters of Victoria's military and naval forces.

With its valuable gold and wool exports, Melbourne felt vulnerable whenever Britain went to war. Melbournians were alarmed on several occasions in the 1850s and 1860s by the possibility of attack. Britain's confirmed enemy, Russia, was the main fear.

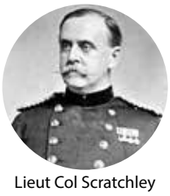
In 1860, Victoria applied to the British Government for the services of an officer of the Royal Engineers to manage the erection of defences. Captain Peter Scratchley was appointed and advised the provision of batteries in Hobson's Bay and at the Heads.

The building of Fort Queenscliff on Shortland's Bluff in 1860 resulted from this advice to defend the entrance to Port Phillip. The Fort, which underwent major redevelopment in the late 1870s and 1880s, became the headquarters for an extensive chain of forts around Port Phillip Heads. Its garrison included volunteer artillery, engineers, infantry and naval militia, and it was continuously manned as a coastal defence installation from 1883 to 1946.

Victoria's Royal Commission on the Volunteer Forces in 1877 found the volunteer force ineffective. At the end of that year the governors of Australia's eastern colonies jointly asked the Colonial Secretary in London to appoint an expert military engineer to advise on their defence. As a result, in 1877 Sir William Drummond Jervois and Sir Peter Scratchley drew up defensive schemes for major and outlying ports. Colonel Jervois had perfected a scheme of torpedo defence for harbours, and Sir Peter Scratchley had advised the government on a coastal defence system of batteries a decade earlier.

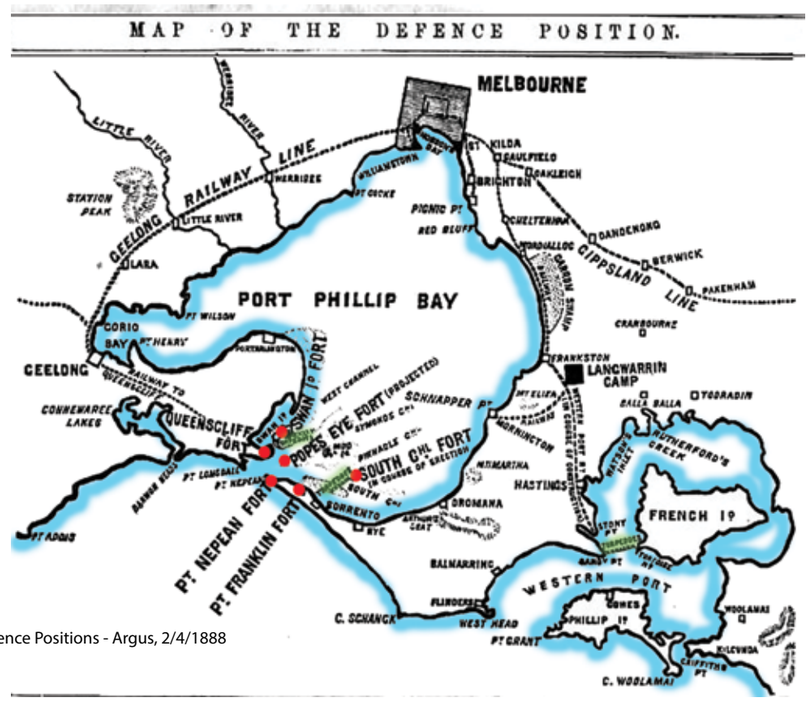
Sir William Jervois

In July 1877 Colonel Sir William Jervois and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Scratchley recommended that Port Phillip be defended by a battery at Queenscliff, a fort at Point Nepean and batteries at Swan Island and South Channel Island, with mines in the South and West Channels.

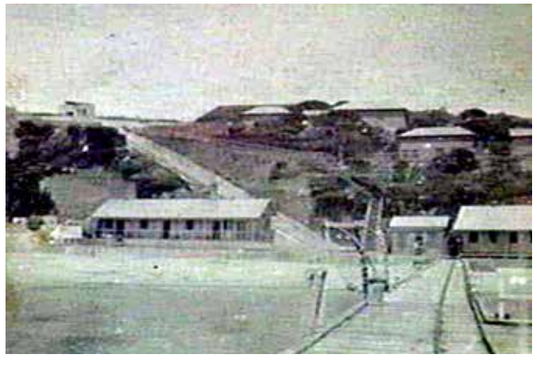


Lieut Col Scratchley

The importance of this planning was reinforced when, towards the end of 1878, a report was circulated by the Australian press that the Russian Government had contemplated making a raid upon some of the Australian ports. Then again by the European crisis in 1882, when it seemed that Britain would become involved in a major war. These events further encouraged Victoria to build defences. Following the 1883 election, Victoria set up its own Ministry of Defence, a step not taken by the other states.



Map of Defence Positions - Argus, 2/4/1888



Victoria wavered in its determination to provide adequately for its own defence, but the 1880s provided enough incentive and prosperity for it to complete its fortifications at the Heads by 1890. The topography of Port Phillip Bay formed an integral part of its defence. From its narrow mouth at the Rip, an arc of shoals separates the deep water inside the Heads from the deep water of the bay beyond. Covering the main entrance were forts on both shores – Fort Nepean and Eagles Nest battery on the eastern side, with Crows Nest battery and nearby Fort Queenscliff on the opposite side. These works comprised an inner defence of a minefield protected by guns and illuminated at night, and an advanced defence of guns and lights covering the approaches to the inner system.

Federation occurred when Australia became a nation on 1 January 1901 after the six British colonies united to form the Commonwealth of Australia. Consequently, a new Constitution was required so that the colonial military forces could be combined, and the creation of Australia's first Defence Act 1903 provided for Australia's naval and military defence. The Act empowered the Commonwealth Government to call up 'unexempted' males in times of war for home defence, but not for overseas service. When Parliament passed the Defence Act 1909, it paved the way for Australia's first universal training scheme, which occurred in 1911, requiring Australian males aged between 18 and 60 years to perform militia service within Australia and its territories.

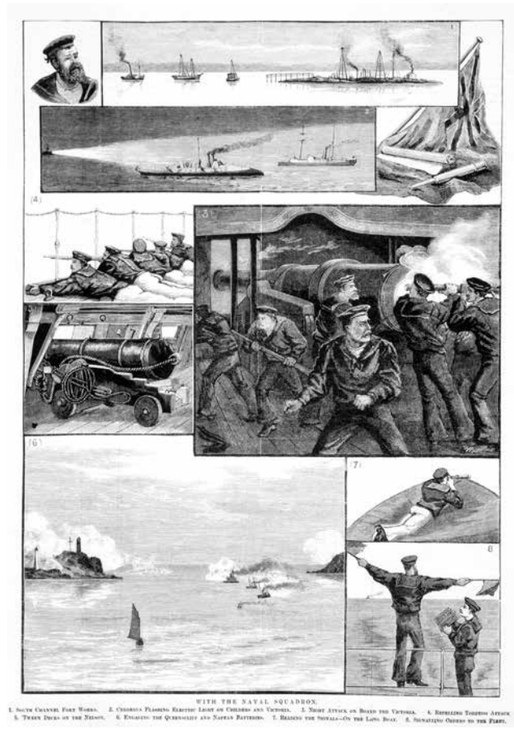
In 1910 Lord Kitchener toured military camps looking to develop a national approach to defence. Locally, he assessed whether a line of forts could protect Melbourne from an enemy that might establish a base in Western Port or at Torquay.

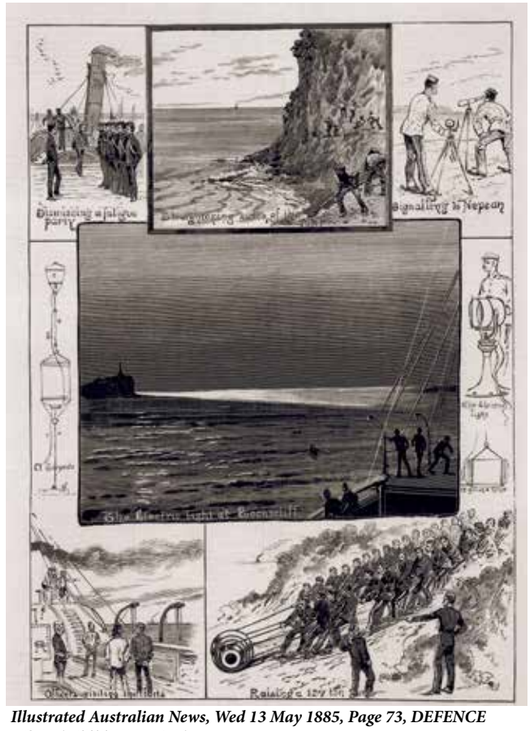
Other military experts put forward their view on how an attack in Victoria might be met. In developing his scenario for a hypothetical attack, Colonel McCay, head of the Intelligence Corps, reconstructed what was expected to occur at Port Phillip Bay when he delivered a lecture to military officers at the Naval and Military Club. He set the scene by proposing that in the middle of 1913 (four years into the future) war would be in progress between Great Britain and a German-Japanese alliance. The scenario was described in the Geelong Advertiser at the time:

> No attempts had been made to mobilise the Australian troops because the United States had provisionally guaranteed the protection of the Commonwealth. On 25 August 1913, however, it was learnt that cable communication between Australia and the rest of the world had ceased, and this, taken in conjunction with several other significant facts, resulted in an order being issued for the immediate mobilisation of troops throughout Australia. The scene was further set by identifying that the 2nd Infantry Brigade was camped at Royal Park, the 3rd Light Horse Brigade on the bay's eastern shore and the 4th Light Horse mobilised around Geelong. Invasion appeared imminent based on an overheard remark, "when we take Geelong" at the Pacific German coaling station. The 4th Light Horse on patrol between Barwon Heads to Torquay noticed hostile vessels in the distance. Shortly after the Germans landed two battalions of Infantry, a couple of batteries, a few cavalries and a few transport vehicles. If they seized Geelong they had the choice of moving on to Melbourne or enter Queenscliff by the back door to seize the Fort.

The scenario stimulated discussion about both sides' tactical strengths and weaknesses. While the objective of the lecture was to show how much more than regimental work was required to make an army effective in the field, Torquay was seen as an essential area to strengthen in case of an invasion.

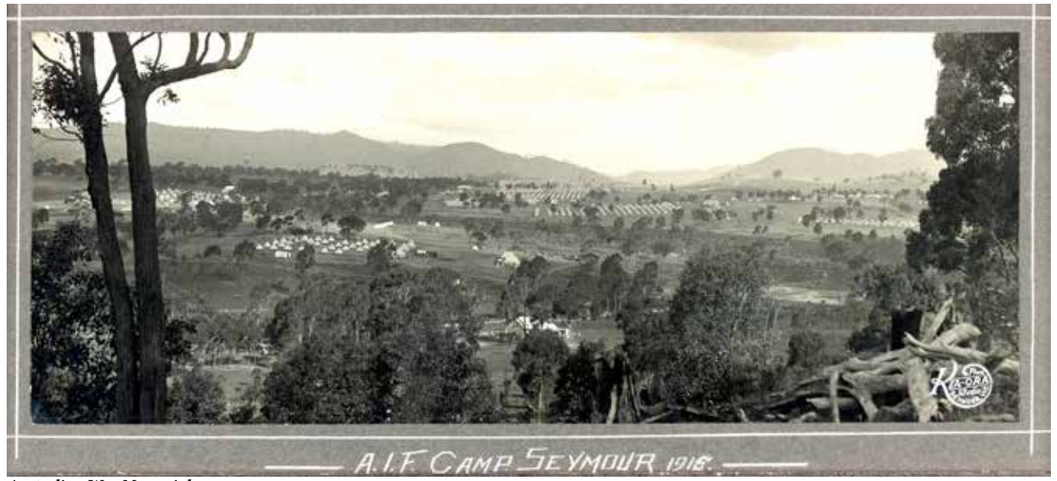
Lieut Colonel Rashleigh (commander of Garrison Artillery – Geelong, Drysdale, Queenscliff, Footscray and Williamstown batteries) made similar comments on the


WITH THE NAVAL SQUADRON.


Illustrated Australian News, Wed 13 May 1885, Page 73, DEFENCE WORKS AT THE HEADS

new 1910 Defence scheme and identified that there was still a need for more military support around Geelong. He explained that for over 50 years Victoria had a military system, but no policy. First, there was a volunteer force, then the militia, but neither met the nation's needs for something permanent. While he believed the Bill would produce a robust military force, such as the cadets and compulsory training, he felt that not including those between 18 and 25 would be a waste of resources. He opposed Lord Kitchener's recommendation to raise the mandatory age to 25, as it would reduce the number of men available. Melbourne had plenty of infantry corps into which the senior cadets could be drafted, but regional towns had little. The men would go to Queenscliff during the war, leaving Geelong practically defenceless. Lieut Col Rashleigh believed Torquay was Geelong's back door, just as Western Port was the back door to Melbourne. Troops could be landed at Zeally Bay without trouble if the enemy wanted to avoid Australia's navy. All the men would be at Queenscliff, and the nearest available Infantry forces would be at Ballarat, Bendigo and Castlemaine. He also pointed out that if ships did get past the Heads, they could easily come up Corio Bay.

The world was at war a few years after these observations and stated views. Through our membership in the Commonwealth, we were also drawn into the war in Europe. It might appear that it was no accident that a military camp was proposed for Torquay just after the beginning of World War One.



Australian War Memorial

AIF MILITARY CAMPS

Civilian men were rapidly recruited at the start of the war. Within days of signing up, the recruits were training in camps. The makeshift camps were set up at military bases, farms, parklands and sporting grounds around Australia. All soldiers received some basic military training before they left Australia.

TORQUAY CAMP

It was considered that the seaside was better for training. The principal aim was to improve the rank-and-file military skills of the 69th Battalion cadets and recruit Geelong and district civilians. The proposed daily schedule was that training would begin at 6.30 am until noon, then from 1.30 pm till 5 pm. The morning parade would be compulsory, but evening attendance at activities would be optional. Participants were to meet costs and pay £1/head with fundraising to help toward the costs. Over time, enthusiasm for establishing the camp diminished as logistically, there were challenges in setting up the camp, particularly regarding access to fresh water.

During World War 1, the Nepean garrison's numbers of artillerymen and engineers increased. The engineers at Point Nepean were responsible for the searchlights directed at the stretch of water at the Rip to show up enemy ships.

First Shot by Allied Forces - *SS PFALZ*

The first British shot of World War I was fired by the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery at Fort Nepean.

The German merchant ship *SS Pfalz* was caught in enemy territory on the other side of the world when war broke out in Europe. It departed from Melbourne's Victoria Dock with a Captain Robinson of the pilot service on board early on 5 August 1914. At Portsea, the vessel was halted by the *S.S. Alvina*, an Examination Service vessel protecting the Port of Melbourne, and inspected by the crew, who had not been advised that war had been declared, so the *Pfalz* was allowed to proceed.

Soon after, the Royal Australian Navy telephoned the message to Fort Queenscliff on Port Phillip Heads. There was no phone connection to Fort Nepean on the opposite headland, so a signal was sent telling soldiers there to stop the *Pfalz*.

Signals were hoisted at Point Nepean, calling on the German ship to stop, but there was no response.

A second order was sent from Queenscliff to stop or sink the *Pfalz*.

In an Australian War Memorial interview before his death in 1980, Colonel John Purdue described his part in the drama.

> ''They told us to engage, and the tide was flowing very fast when we had the word to fire, and I pressed the electrical trigger and saw it [the shell] land with a splash in the water,'' he said. ''The splash went right up over the bridge of the ship. We had to fire.''
>
> With difficulty, Captain Robinson convinced the *Pfalz* captain that the next would hit the ship. It took a second shot before the German vessel halted and Captain Robinson had to ''manhandle'' the *Pfalz*'s captain, Colonel Purdue said.

The vessel was returned to Portsea, where both ship and crew were arrested.

The *Pfalz* was refitted at Williamstown and renamed the *Boorara*. She served as an Australian transport for the duration of the war.

A gun crew stationed at Fort Nepean fired the British Empire's first shot of WWI across the bow of German cargo steamer SS Pfalz.
Australian War Memorial

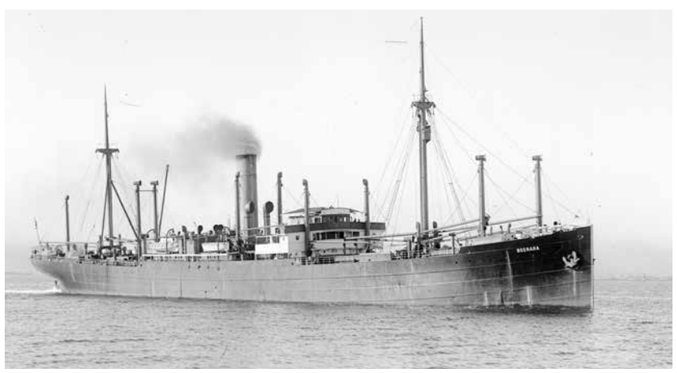
AUSTRALIA'S FIRST GUN

GERMAN STEAMER FIRED AT WHILE LEAVING MELBOURNE

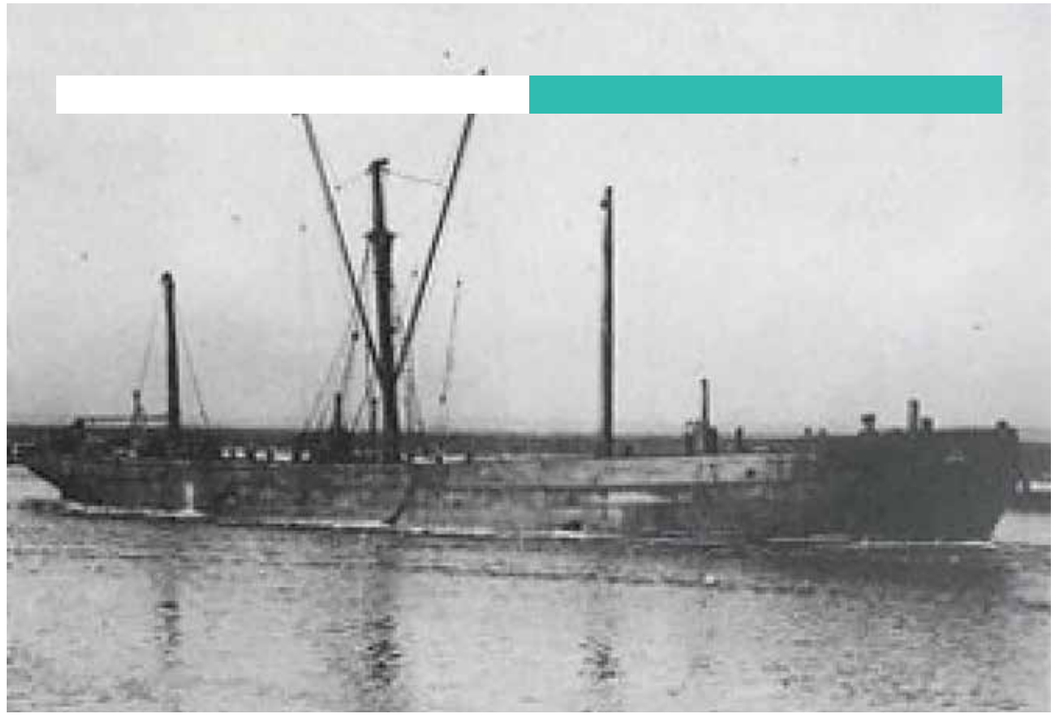
SHOTS SENT ACROSS BOW

VESSEL AT ONCE RETURNS

The Herald, 5 August 1914, p12



HMAT Booraara previously SS Pfalz
State Library of Victoria



Coal Hulk Dunloe, Royal Australian Navy

DUNLOE SHIPWRECK

SURVIVOR OF SAIL

Cheryl Baulch based on a story by Des Williams
Marine Archaeology Association of Victoria (MAAV).

During the twentieth century, remarkable scientific progress fulfilled the desire for speed and economic growth. Oil, fuel and the motor ship had outnumbered the old ships of sail, many sailing vessels serving out their final days coal-hulking and waiting out their days when 50lbs (23kgs) of gelignite would send each one to the bottom of the sea in the ship graveyard near Torquay.

The *Dunloe* had been built in Glasgow during 1870 by Dobbie & Co. Early in her life, the *Dunloe* traded from New Zealand to Australian ports, but her principal work had been done in the East India trade freighting sugar. In 1875, the *Dunloe* also helped the officers and crew of the American ship Pocahontas, when it was destroyed by fire at sea. However, the *Dunloe* was known for surviving wild storms and crew misdemeanours onboard and on land. On one of her last trips to Fremantle the *Dunloe* lost a large quantity of her rigging during a severe storm.

In 1908, she was purchased in Sydney by *James Paterson* and Co. to convert to a coal hulk servicing the Port Phillip area.

To get the *Dunloe* from Sydney to Melbourne she had orders to wait for the collier *Alabama*, which was enroute from Newcastle, to tow the old sailer to Melbourne. However, the *Dunloe* Captain took advantage of a splendid northeast breeze, enabling her to spread her wings for the last time. Still bowling along with the wind abeam and with the smoke of the *Alabama* a smudge on the horizon astern, she kept her course and speed, ultimately arriving at Port Phillip Heads at the same time as the collier that was to have towed her. She had completed the run around the coast in four days, a very creditable performance demonstrating her reputation as a very fast clipper of her day for the last time.

In 1947, the 77-year-old *Dunloe* sailed for the last time as dramatically as she had during her journeys on the high seas. Captain Hartley Watson, a tug skipper in Port Phillip for 40 years, was called from retirement to advise on taking the doomed ship through the heads to the Torquay Ocean Graveyard. "The proud old *Dunloe* just refused to die – and gave me a few more grey hairs," he said to the Geelong Advertiser. "She gave trouble right till she went beneath the waves."

Harry F Chadwick, a well-respected diver with the Commonwealth Maritime Salvage Commission, wrote in his diary. . . . . .

> "Taking the coal hulk Dunloe outside the heads to be sunk off Torquay. The job had been holding fire for three weeks owing to weather conditions being unfavourable. All gear lined up ready for favourable weather."

With a favourable weather report Harry went down with his gear to Gellibrand Pier, Williamstown where the coal hulk *Dunloe* was tied up. There was no sign of the tug or crew when he arrived. He located the tug *James Paterson*, tied up at another pier and upon investigation it appeared there was trouble amongst the crew, and they wouldn't put to sea. The explosives truck arrived in the meantime, so Harry held it until the trouble aboard the James Patterson was settled.

After a delay of several days by gale weather the tug *James Paterson* left Williamstown towing the hulk. Because of the *Dunloe*'s barnacle-encrusted hulk slow progress was made up the Bay and it was late afternoon when The Rip was entered. Here the good weather changed, and a strong ebb tide, a fresh south-easter, and rising seas began to cause trouble. Capt. Watson took the two vessels toward Point Lonsdale so more room would be available if the 300 ft low-line snapped.

He had just taken the new course when the hawser-end (a thick rope used in mooring or towing a ship) lashed to the *Dunloe*, slipped off. Immediately, the tide caught the hulk broadside and swept out at more than five knots. There was a danger of the explosive-charged vessel running aground on the rocks at Point Nepean.

"The seamen's union was called in and the trouble was cleared up, so I got the explosives aboard the hulk while the tug prepared to tow. We left the Gellibrand Pier at 10.30 am, seaman Rewi Caines and myself stopping aboard the lighter, the idea being that we could get all the charges made up and ready on the way down to the heads. Arrived off Queenscliff at 3.30 pm picking up the surveyor from a motor launch and proceeding to the Rip. Just out of the Rip we ran into a squall with rough weather and the tow line (steel wire) started to render around the steel bit on the forecastle (the forward part of a ship below the deck, traditionally used as the crew's living quarters) of the lighter. We signalled to the tug, which stopped, but as we had no stoppers etc to prevent it rendering any more, the tug master decided to chance it and proceeded towing. The sea really came up and at 4 pm the towline rendered and went overboard leaving us adrift."

With the two men on board, the hulk rolled and pitched in heavy seas, with the danger of the gelignite exploding.

Marooned and helpless, Rewi and Harry clung on in the rolling and pitching unprotected decks, with the 65ft mainmast threatening to fall on them. The *Dunloe*'s keel was visible as she jerked and bucked with only fifty tons of ballast to steady her in the vicious cross seas. A

1000-gallon water tank set amidships came away and crashed through the deck into the hold below.

Risking a collision, the *James Paterson*, after an hour of manoeuvring was able to get within 30 ft of the hulk. A light 150 ft line was thrown aboard, caught by Caines and fastened to a bollard.

"A considerable time passed before the tug could get anywhere close to us to send over a heaving line. In the meantime, we managed to get the lighter's bow around and ran with the sea. We pulled a small wire aboard (2.5") from the tug and proceeded to try and get back through the heads, the wire being too small to exert any great pull on. The dinghy we had in tow was battered so much by the seas that it filled with water and eventually snapped its tow rope, losing itself in the seas."

By this time the vessel had drifted more than two miles from the Heads. The Paterson slowly dragged the *Dunloe* back to shelter at Queenscliff against the tide and was hampered by rain. Only the skill of the tug's crew prevented the new tow rope from parting in the treacherous waters.

After two and half hours, the ships had made little headway but eventually reached Queenscliff in the dark at 9.30 pm.

Harry recorded in his diary that he had another job the next day and had to catch a plane. After informing the tug master he couldn't wait any longer, the Swan Island Naval Depot arranged for someone to take his place in handling the explosives and sinking the hulk, provided that Harry had all the explosives charges made up ready and would give them a wiring diagram and instructions on his method of sinking, which he wrote out and gave to the tug master to give to the rating when he arrived.

After sheltering all night, the Paterson took the *Dunloe* out through the Rip the next day. Even though the weather was better, there was a rising south-easterly swell. When they reached the graveyard, the seas were difficult and the wind troublesome, but they got the job done. The stern of the hulk was blown clean out by the explosion which was detonated from the Paterson's deck. Coal dust, smoke and planks were sent high into the air. The hulk sank in a few minutes on 2 July 1947.

Captain Watson of the tug was quoted in the Herald: "The proud old *Dunloe* just refused to die and gave me a few more grey hairs. She gave trouble right till she went beneath the waves. When she finally sank, I muttered. 'Thank God she's gone!'"

HARRY CHADDICK

Harold F. Chadwick passed away in late 2000. He was a salvage diver during and after the Second World War, working with the Commonwealth Salvage Board and later, the famous Melbourne salvage company United Salvage, headed up by Captain Sir John Williams. Harry was a master standard dress diver and highly skilled boilermaker/welder. He has left behind a most magnificently detailed set of work diaries and photographs covering about 20 years of his remarkable career. A rich vein indeed of our maritime heritage. His daughter Gail, has approved snippets of those diaries being published in serial form for the Marine Archaeology Association of Victoria (MAAV).

SOURCES:

- Williams, Des http://home.vicnet.net.au/~maav/diary2.htm
- Harry Chadwick diary excerpt, published http://home.vicnet.net.au/~maav/diary2.htm
- Herald, Dramatic battle in Rip with gelignite-charged hulk adrift, 5/7/1947, p3

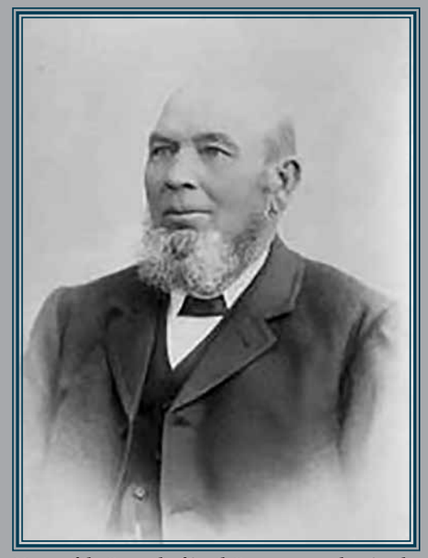
IMAGES: Gail Chadwick

SHARP BREARLEY

Contributed by Gwen Threlfall

Mt. Duneed History Group

https://mdpa.weebly.com/blog



Mayor of the Borough of South Barwon, served on South Barwon Council for 9 years

SOUTH BARWON COUNCILLOR

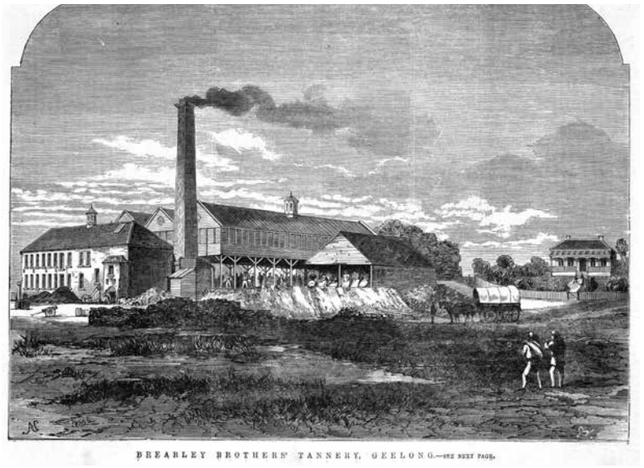
In 1848 three Brearley brothers, Joseph, aged 25, Sharp, aged 20 and William, aged 37, were transported to Australia on the Anna Maria arriving on 23 June. All were sentenced for stealing. William, who was married with six children, may have returned to England at the end of his sentence. Joseph and Sharp became successful businessmen in the tannery business in Geelong. A younger brother, John, joined them in 1854.

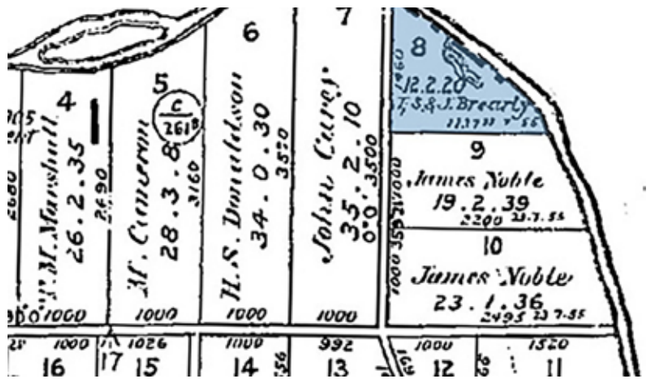
On 25 March 1852 Sharp married Jane Hillard at St James Cathedral, Melbourne. Jane was an Irish famine orphan who travelled on the *Diadem* in 1850 and was engaged by George Hirston of Russell Street Melbourne for twelve months for £8. Her sister Margaret, who had gone to the workhouse, came to Australia and married Joseph. They went to live on an allotment in Marshalltown where the tannery was later to be built.

On 21 July 1869 Thomas Adcock, mayor of the Borough of South Barwon laid the foundation stone for the tannery before 200 invited guests. The architect was RS Tuffs and the contractor Martin and Dowie. At the end of the formalities James McDonald, Henry Pearce, Will Watson, Fred Routly, Alf Varg and George Quarries gave an address on behalf of the 61 other workers.

On Sunday 9 July 1871 a tragic accident occurred when Joe Brearley junior and 17-year-old cousin George Dean and two younger cousins went duck shooting at Breakwater. Dean was accidentally shot in the leg when Joe shifted the loaded gun. By the time he arrived at the hospital he had lost too much blood and later died. He was the second son of Joseph Dean. At almost the same time Eleanor Brearley, daughter of John Brearley, broke her arm after falling off a seesaw.

Sharp became a South Barwon Shire councillor serving from 1863 until 1868, from 1879 until 1881 and from 1887 until 1891 and was mayor of the shire from 1864 to 1866. In December 1876, Joseph and Sharp's partnership in the Australian Tannery was dissolved. It was the largest tannery in the Southern Hemisphere. Sharp purchased *Englewood* at Inverleigh. In 1880 after a clearing sale at *Englewood*, a lot of 1214 acres was advertised for lease. Later that year, he proposed to estsblish a tannery at Western Beach fronting Victoria Terrace.





The tannery was in Jendes Lane, Marshall.

In 1884 Sharp left for Europe. In 1886 liquidators sold the Australian Tannery to George Brearley for £3,750. The following year the Corio Tannery was sold for £4,000 (cost £11,000). Sharp and Jane Brearley lived at *Calder Park*, Mount Duneed from 1887-1891. In 1888 he had a villa at Anglesea erected, costing £1,000. A street in Anglesea was named after him.

Sharp and Jane had eleven children:

- Annie — born 1853, married George Burnley Appleton on 26 May 1883, died 1942
- Alfred Hillard — born 1855, died 19 June 1862, buried at the Geelong Eastern Cemetery
- George Ramsden Carver — born 1858, married Blanche Stoneman on 14 August 1880, died 1929 at Warrnambool
- Robert Hillard — born 30 November 1860, married Mary Karen Peterson on 24 March 1885 at St John's Church Bairnsdale, died 1 September 1950 at Subiaco, WA
- John Albert — born 1862, died 21 March 1863, buried at Geelong Eastern Cemetery
- Arthur Edward — born 11 November 1863 at Connewarre, married Elizabeth Maria Tuffs on 22 November 1890, died 25 December 1900 at Inglenook, 3 Hope Street, Geelong West
- Walter Sharp — born 29 July 1865, married Carol Waycott in 1896, died 1940
- Alice Jane — born 1867 at Marshalltown, married Arthur Robert Consterdine on 23 July 1891
- Adelaide Mabel — born 11 July 1868, died 29 July 1868 at Geelong, buried at Geelong Eastern Cemetery
- Herbert Ernest — born 1869, died 1959
- Blanche Victoria — born 8 September 1872, died 25 October 1956 at Windsor, Victoria

Sharp who died at the age of 78 years on 26 April 1905 at 75 Swanston Street, Geelong was buried in the Church of England section of the Geelong Eastern Cemetery. Jane died on 15 November 1913 at the age of 80 years at Mordialloc, and was buried with him.

Joseph married Jane Hillard's sister, Margaret, on 25 March 1852 at St James Cathedral, Melbourne. Their children were:

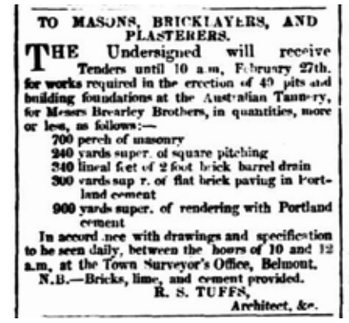
- Joseph Henry - "Harry" — born 1853, married Mary Elizabeth Gillot on 20 September 1881, died 29 June 1918 at 5 Crimea Street, St Kilda aged 65
- Hannah — married Johann Christian Richard Ohiff on 30 May 1881
- Rebecca Elizabeth — born 1857, married William James Joseph Gallagher in 1883
- Josephine Louisa — born 1859, married Robert Imray on 1 May 1882
- Annie Maria — married Conrad Kollmann on 22 December 1889
- Victoria — born 1862, married Ernest Castles on 19 May 1885
- Robert George Hillard — born 30 June 1864
- Margaret - "Maggie"— born 1866 at Hawthorn, died 18 November 1901
- John Frederick William — born 1868 at Kew
- Edna — married Alan Roberts
- Alfred — born 1871, died 29 July 1972 at *Clifton House*, Studley Park, Kew

Joseph was prominent in local sporting organisations and was elected a member of the Geelong Town Council, serving from 1864 until 1866. During the 1880s he left Geelong and moved with his family to Melbourne, where he went into the leather business.

Margaret had a severe stroke on 6 June 1885 and died at her residence in Waltham Street, Richmond the next day, aged 53. She was buried in the Church of England section of the Boroondara Cemetery. Joseph died on 24 May 1911 at Balaclava, his daughter Rebecca Gallagher's home, aged 88. He was buried with his late wife.

Grave of Sharp Brearley.
Buried with him are:
Jane Brearley, his wife — died 15 November 1913
Alfred Hillard Brearley, their son — died 19 June 1862
John Albert Brearley, their son — died 31 March 1863
Adelaide Mabel Brearley, their daughter — died 29 July 1868

Monument by Nathaniel Brown



TO MASONS, BRICKLAYERS, AND PLASTERERS.

THE Undersigned will receive Tenders until 10 a.m. February 27th. for works required in the erection of 40 pits and building foundations at the Australian Tannery, for Messrs Brearley Brothers, in quantities, more or less, as follows:—

700 perch of masonry
240 yards super. of square pitching
240 lineal feet of 2 foot brick barrel drain
300 yards sup r. of flat brick paving in Portland cement
900 yards super. of rendering with Portland cement

In accordance with drawings and specification to be seen daily, between the hours of 10 and 12 a.m. at the Town Surveyor's Office, Belmont.

N.B.—Bricks, lime, and cement provided.

R. S. TUFFS,
Architect, &c.

ADVENTURES IN MY WARDROBE

MARGARET GANLY

Story from 'The Writings of Margaret Ganly, The Complete Collection'
Nee Margaret Burn (1915-2020)

'd made my first dance frock. It was for the holiday dances at the Torquay hall. There was no other way but to do it myself. And I was really proud of the result and excited as I prepared for my first entry "on stage" in it.

It was actually on stage as at that time the girls cloak room at the old hall was up behind the stage. I'd worn a coat to the place (I can't remember if I went then with the boy of the season or met him there).

But when I emerged coatless and began to descend the steps to the dance floor, he was waiting for me. "Oh you wag!" he exclaimed. The dress was simply red taffeta with big white checks over it. I went in for pretty things after that.

The earliest dress I can remember was of white embroidered organdie. I hated it – it prickled and stuck out everywhere. It was made, I think, for me to collect a prize, my first, at school prize night. I had a big white bow in my hair, and my mother was there bursting with pride, along with my Aunt Ag who had made the dress and probably my Uncle Bill. I expect I wore it again to a party at a big home in Virginia Street (Buchan's) - again a thrill for my mother as she had to call and collect me.

School uniforms were uniformly monotonous – navy tunic and white blouse, green jumper, navy felt hat with navy band and white crest, navy gloves (an order mark if seen without them) and black shoes. But uniforms changed even over my years, and there were summer checked cotton dresses and fawn tunics and blouses, fawn blazers, green jumpers, fawn felt or straw hats with green bands and white crests. Prefects wore green blazers with monogrammed pockets.

Ladies mostly wore dresses – nothing distinctive in my memory – with cardigans. These were seldom washed, if ever, that I know about. They were probably sponged. Maybe I'm wrong here – I probably wouldn't have noticed. Adults always had big heavy "over-coats". This is the non-fashionable world I know of! Hats were important and were replaced seasonally if possible. Even if not affordable, they were a priority and a status symbol. It was very important to keep up appearances for some although not one of my aunts – Eva.

There was a habit, with my mother anyway, of running an account with a big store, resulting in headaches at rate times. On the other hand, my Aunt Ag, who made all my clothes, also made her own and just put fresh bands on her severe felt hats.

As I grew, I don't remember many new dresses, - they were mostly hand-me-downs. This is probably because I started learning dressmaking and made some of my own when my aunt stopped making them. She never really approved of my sewing. When I started work at 18 I had only one dress.

I continued making my own clothes, supplemented with skirts and blouses or jumpers. I indulged in a black Fletcher Jones pleated skirt, rather short, and within a few years had to give it to a child and wear something only 10 inches from the ground.

Older ladies still seem to wear mostly dresses. Gosh! I'm now one myself but seldom wear a dress in winter. It is all now pantsuits, loose and floppy tops. Comfort and practicality rule. Today the young often look sloppy - a bit tatty or grubby; it's the mode, while the older like to dress up to look attractive. (There is a difference between 'older' and 'mature' dressing.)

Looking back, dressing seemed to be a matter of who you were, where you lived and your occupation, and was a class distinction. Now it's not so narrow and insular – wear what you like, make your own statement.

Notes by Carleen Ganly, Margaret's daughter

> When we cleaned out mum's clothes after she passed away it took about five days and some twenty huge bags to remove it all. She had clothes in four wardrobes and more in a variety of cupboards and drawers. No clothing was ever discarded. We put some twenty bags out for rag collection at our church Op Shop, ten more bags for passing on to Geelong Uniting Church Charities and a few went on our own hangers in our Bellbrae Op Shop. I kept several of her later garments that I bought with her. She was so well-dressed right up until she went into care. Pink in its many varieties, turquoise, aqua and purple were her colours. She also looked great in yellow. Perhaps her childhood memory of clothes stayed with her through her adult life, and she determined to make up for it.

CEMETERY TALES

TALES FROM BELLBRAE CEMETERY

VICKI SMITH

LURLENE MAY NUNN

Images: Caroline Nunn

Lurlene's plaque for her ashes at Bellbrae Cemetery just has her name, date of birth and death and 'A Life Well Lived'!

Lurlene served in the AWAS as a Stenographer, having enlisted on 10 August 1943 until she was demobbed on 19 June 1946. Her Army number was VF512880.

In 1949 Lurlene married Hugh Alexander Nunn (23 Dec 1923 – 6 Oct 1991).

Hugh enlisted on 3 April 1943 and served in the 20th Pioneer Battalion until 15 August 1946. His Army number was VX138146. He had overseas service at Merauke in New Guinea.

FAMILY NOTICES

NUNN (nee Norton) - Lurlene May - Passed away peacefully on 22 February 2016 at Anglesea Aged Care and aged 90 years - Loving wife of Harry (dec). Much loved mother of John, Bruce and Greg. Mother-in-law of Louise, Julie and Caroline. Adored Grandma of James, William, Edward, Chris, Amy (dec.), Tim, Jacqueline and Rebecca. A Great Inning.

NUNN (nee Norton) - Lurlene - Much loved sister of Frank (dec.), sister-in-law of Rene (dec.) and aunt of Sue, Judy and David. Forever in our Hearts.

I joined the Australian Women's Army Force (AWAS) with my parents' permission at the age of 18. I completed my six-week recruit training at Darley Recruit School in Bacchus Marsh; I was then posted to the Legal Department of the Army at 339 Swanston Street, Melbourne, where I worked as a typist. I later transferred to the Guard Compound, commonly known as 'the boob' at Royal Park Army Barracks, where I worked for some time. Being the only female at the compound, I spent my lunch breaks with the girls working in the psychology section and made some very good friends. I lived at home with my parents in Melbourne until the end of my army days, when I turned 21.

During my time in the Army, my brother David Norton flew Spitfires in action. He was shot down over France and was listed as missing – presumed dead. We had many letters from him, but they were heavily censored. He had two Spitfire planes named the Lurlene I and the Lurlene 2 (photo below). It was a wonderful day when we heard via the Victorian Police that he was safe and well. He had escaped injury after being shot down in a paddock in France. He had hidden in a barn where the farmer and his family were very kind. Upon capture, he was then transferred to a prison camp in Germany, the Stalag Luft Three. He remained there until the war ended and he was returned home.

--- Lurlen Norton

Torquay Museum Without Walls

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Where The Past Meets The Present

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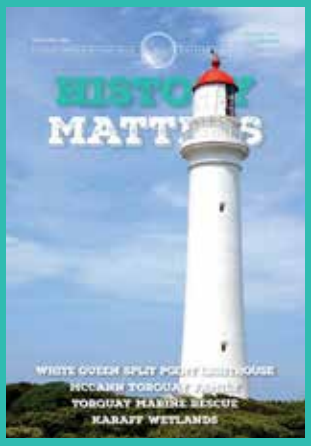

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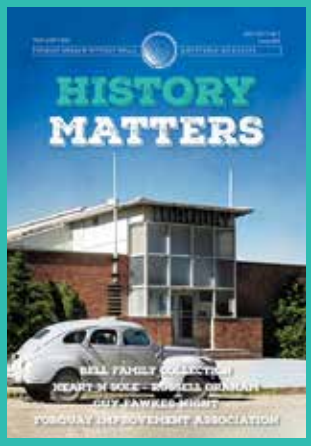

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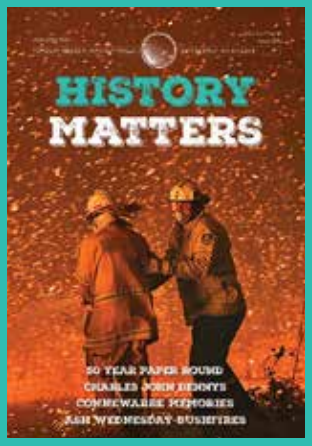

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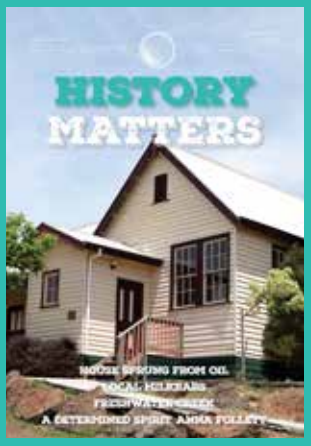

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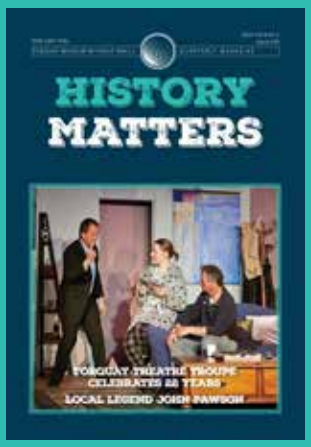

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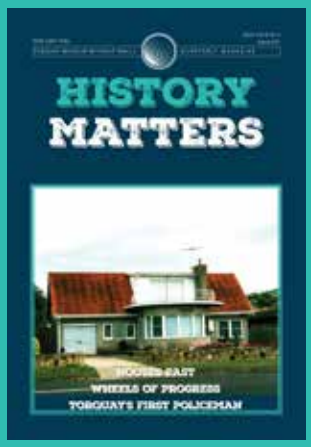

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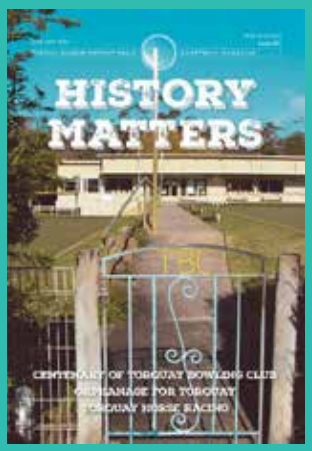

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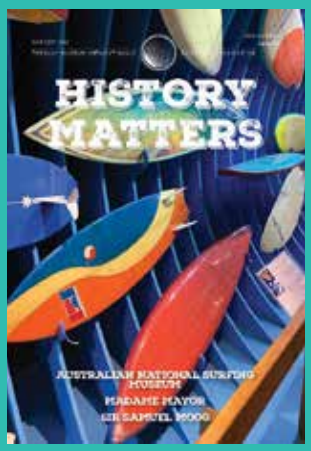

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