



The Kernel

Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society

"Love and Cherish the City in which you live"

Newsletter

June, 2019

President's Report

by Kay Hayes



Welcome to our winter edition of the Kernel, although at the time of writing winter has been a little absent!



As always the members who volunteer have been since our last newsletter, with a number of tour groups from areas including The Blue Mountains, Warringah, Padstow, as well as students from St. Thomas More Primary School. It is gratifying to see children excited by "how things were" and in particular to see our guide John Morthen in his uniform of the 73rd Regiment of Foot, very well received thank you, John.

Others especially Julie Crowley and John White have been busy with photographs for the upcoming Ivor G Thomas Annual Presentation, with some much appreciated assistance from Michael Sullivan at the Library. Marie Holmes continues with the many requests for research, particularly of families and properties.

While on the subject of volunteers, we will require help at the Presentation on August 17th. Anyone who is able to assist with setting up the hall or helping prepare afternoon tea, please contact me.

David Beddie applied for a volunteer community grant on our behalf from the Minister of Social Services. This was successful with almost \$3000 granted for the purchase of new computer equipment, a projector and much needed storage boxes. David and Greg Dillon have also spent many hours on an updated constitution, this will be mailed to all members in time for comments before the Annual General Meeting.

At a Bursill family function last year, a family member offered to donate two pieces of furniture and a mantle clock, all of which have been in Glenalvon during the time of the Bursill's residence. These are now available to us and as they are coming from Mittagong, transport has been organised to have them here mid-July. It is important to us to have these special items "come home" and we will have photos and details in the next Kernel.

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On Anzac Day, 25th April 2019, the Soldier Settlement Museum at East Campbelltown Public School opened its doors for the last time. The museum opened fifteen years ago in two classrooms of the school, giving students a “hands on” experience of local history. One room was dedicated to the military, and one to living on the Soldier Settlement. Open regularly to the public, the museum saw many local people pass through its doors.

The classrooms are needed to accommodate the growing numbers of students at the school, and despite the offer of a new building to hold the historic items, the museum committee reluctantly agreed that the time had come to close the doors on the popular museum. Karen Winch, Jillian Ludgate, and other committee members are to be congratulated for their dedication to the running of the museum.

Dates to Remember

Monday 1st and Saturdays 13th and 27st July. Open Days at Glenalvon
10 am to 1 pm.

Saturday 27th July. Members Meeting. Time: 1.30 pm at Glenalvon.
Speaker: Topic: Rookwood
Launch of the Grist Mills: *The Way We Were-Campbelltown 1901*
Afternoon Tea will be provided.

Saturday 17th August Annual Ivor G Thomas Presentation
'Reflections-How we came of age'

Saturday 24th August AGM and Members Meeting. Time: 1.30pm at Glenalvon



In the early 20th century horse transport and haulage were predominant and horses were still used extensively. Those of us who pass the horse trough at Glenalvon, maybe take it for granted. It is when we have visitors, particularly school groups, that attention is drawn to it.

Late last year the Wagga Wagga & District Historical Society included an article on Bills Horse Troughs in their newsletter. Verlie Fowler sent it on to us knowing we would find it of interest. This prompted some thought about our horse trough in the garden. It is not a Bills, but there is one in Ingleburn and another was in the Showground. Bills have a very distinctive design and from the photos we have seen are all built to this design, and many are against a wall, shop front or the like.

The story of George and Annis Bills is so interesting, that with Wagga's permission we would like to share it with you.

George Bills was born in Brighton, Sussex, England in 1859, the fourth of fourteen children. When George was about eleven the family migrated to New Zealand, and then two years later they moved to Echuca, Victoria. George and his brothers worked with their father who had a great love of the Australian bush and its wildlife. George developed a great love for all animals. The family later moved to Moama in New South Wales.

By 1882 George was living in Brisbane, involved in many businesses including a bird dealers shop, wire weaving and making wire mattresses with his brother Richard, on a machine invented by another brother Walter. In 1884 George was now in Sydney and until 1898 traded with yet another brother Henry as *Bills Better Beds*.

While in Brisbane George married Annis Elizabeth Swann who was born in Sheffield, England in 1859.

They were married in 1885 and did not have any children, but they both loved animals and were keen philanthropists. Having become quite wealthy the couple donated large sums of money to charity and needy individuals. They were Life Members of the RSPCA and George was made a Life Governor in 1924, but their main concern was with the well-being of neglected and ill-treated horses.

Annis died whilst on a trip to England in 1910 aged only 50. George returned to live in Hawthorn, Melbourne and because of his love of horses, he had troughs installed around Melbourne. George died in 1927 reputedly worth around £91,000. After personal bequests, some £60,000 was to "be used to provide troughs for horses in Australia, the British Isles and other parts of the world."

One of the first troughs was a granite memorial trough, hewn in one piece in Barton Street, Hawthorn. The troughs were manufactured by Jack Phillips, a relative of the Bills and dispatched throughout Australia.

Later Rocla Concrete Pipes took over manufacture, and using the original design, they supplied hundreds of trough throughout Victoria and NSW. The cumbersome steel and concrete moulds were later moved to a Rocla factory in Junee and eventually the moulds were transferred to Sydney where some 200 troughs were constructed.

By 1983 many hundreds, if not thousands, of these troughs were made in Australia and about fifty overseas countries – England, Ireland, Switzerland and Japan. Most were erected from 1930 to 1940 and provided employment in the depression years. Many are still in existence today.



Which brings us back to the Campbelltown and to Glenalvon. While our photo shows there was a Bills at the Cattle sheds in the showground, we do not know when it was moved and to where. Is it the one now in Oxford Street, Ingleburn? ***Do you know?***

Glenalvon's trough is inscribed "Campbelltown Incorporated 1882," and "Erected 1891 James Bocking, Mayor." It also has the green and gold

Campbelltown City Council Heritage plaque. The inscription on the one in the grounds in front of the Civic Centre tells us it was erected in 1890. This one was moved from the footpath in front of Mawson Park. So they both pre-date Bills troughs.



It is believe that our trough was originally to the side of Emily Cottage on Camden Road. But when did it come to Glenalvon? Was it for the sesquicentenary celebration of Campbelltown in 1970, during which the house was opened following the restorations? ***Do you know?***

If you know more about these water troughs please share with us, so we can let others in on the secret and also update our records.

Thanks to Sherry Morris and Wagga Wagga & District Historical Society for sharing the story.



Save the Date
For this year's
Annual Ivor G Thomas Presentation
at
St Johns Catholic Church Hall
Cordeaux Street
Campbelltown
on
Saturday, 17th August at 1.30pm

Anne Thomson

We recently had news that Society member, Anne Thomson has passed away. Anne has for some time lived at Mosman and while continuing her membership, has had no active involvement in the Society for many years. However, at the time of our 70th Anniversary she shared with us some of her memories. She called herself 'The last man standing' as she had actually been at the very first meeting of the Historical Society, held at Dr Thomas's home in 1947. She was 18 years old.

It was probably for this reason that she was not listed in the Journals as attending – a teenager who had come along with her Aunty and Uncle.

She had fond memories of Ivor and Mary Thomas, going on many outings with the Thomas family and was close friends with David and Deborah Thomas.

When we first moved to Wedderburn early in 1981, the old wooden bridge was still there. There was a load limit of 2 ton on the bridge but otherwise it was still working. The bridge was built in 1892.



Photo: Percy Marlow 1920

With the growth of orchards and vegetable farms, the growers needed to take their produce to the railway and to markets. Before then a natural ford was used across the river. The bridge was originally constructed for horse-drawn vehicles, but the growers needed to use trucks. Sometimes their trucks had to be unloaded on the Wedderburn side of the bridge and then transferred to bigger trucks on the Campbelltown side. Very time consuming for the growers. However, by 1935 the growers were worried about the state of the bridge and over the years the council repaired it.

In August 1978 Engineers found after tests that the supports were only 50% solid. In an emergency measure, the council decreed that cars only could use the bridge. Heavy vehicles were banned. A temporary bypass was constructed in two days for heavier vehicles. But warning was given to be extra wary using the new crossing. While waiting for the new bypass to be constructed, the school bus set down and picked up from the northern side of the bridge. This was a big inconvenience for parents who had to make arrangements to collect their children from the Campbelltown side of the bridge.

Around this time an alternate route in and out of Wedderburn was again addressed. However, as the private road past the airfield and the mines entrance was in the Wollondilly Shire, nothing was agreed upon.

In May 1979, the bridge was condemned by Council. Earth, pipes and a sandstone surface causeway was created. However this washed away each time there was heavy rain. In an article in the Campbelltown District Star on 9th May 1979, mentioned the several accidents that had occurred on the bridge including one where a car had gone over the side railing and down into the creek.

By 1981 when we moved to Wedderburn, the bridge was usable but in a poor state .

In August 1986 the area experienced major flooding resulting in extensive damage to the old wooden bridge. Newspaper reports of the day noted that this was the worst flood in history up to that time. Residents were left without access to Campbelltown. Of course this caused great concern, not just for commercial reasons as most of the landholders were still fruit growers, but for possible emergencies that might have arisen.

A temporary Bailey Bridge was hastily placed across the old wooden one by the army.



The bridge was removed later in the year and a temporary concrete causeway was constructed. Vehicles using the causeway had to proceed slowly as the backs of the vehicles would scrape on the road. We regularly had 4 or 5 people in our car and learnt to be very cautious when approaching and leaving the causeway otherwise those in the back got a nasty jolt. The causeway however was regularly submerged leaving the Wedderburn community isolated for days.



Some 32 years later, on 11th September 2018 work on the new Wedderburn Bridge officially started, with a ceremonial sod turning at the site on Wednesday 5 September. During construction of the new bridge traffic was reduced to one lane with traffic lights installed to keep the traffic moving.



In May 2019 the bridge was finally completed with two-way traffic. Further works on both sides of the bridge are continuing.

Photo: Kevin Rixon



On an historical note: Four original timber footings from the original bridge were discovered when work began on the new bridge. The beams are about 4 metres tall and will be kept as public art at the entrance to the bridge.

The bridge is a great improvement – albeit having waited for 32 years – but we still only have one way into Wedderburn. Flooding is now covered. But we need to look ahead for safety in the event of a bushfire. Perhaps if we have patience something will be done to address this important safety issue.

Photo: Kevin Rixon

A beautiful Calendar

to commemorate

Campbelltown Bicentennial **2020**

To be launched at
Annual Ivor G thomas
Presentation
Saturday 17th August

\$15

Campbelltown Bicentennial



2020

Do you know

- A place near Campbelltown called Rotherfield – In records for a child in the baptismal records of Denham Court church it gives his place of birth as Rotherfield. The Birth register gives Campbelltown as his place of birth in 1859. The father was working on the building of the railway.
- Circa 1965 Clyde Reeves and his wife Judith Margaret Dorothy Reeves lived on Raby Road on their farm. They sold the farm and house on Raby Road to developers. A grandson is trying to find the house that he believes is still there somewhere. Does anyone remember the Reeves?
- John Buckland had a land grant in the Douglas Park area in the early years (1829 -) and seemed to have a connection with D'Arrietta who owned Moreton Park. We are trying to find evidence of his daughter Anna Maria also coming to Australia from England or maybe Calcutta, India where John also lived. Do you know?

Marie Holmes

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Georgian Style Doll's House needs a home.



Eileen and Ken Cromey (front) admire their doll's house with Campbelltown East Public School's Karen Winch (left) and Gillian Ludgate. Inset: A living room in the doll's house. Pictures: Robert Pozo

Eileen and Ken Cromey created a 2.1m two-storey Georgian style doll's house like no other! The handmade mansion took eight years to finish and included more than twenty rooms with 108 working light bulbs. Into the interior they incorporated some of their family heirlooms, family portraits, even buttons from her father's clothes and thimbles belonging to her mother. They donated the house to the Soldiers Settlement Museum at Campbelltown East Public School.

Now it needs a new home.

If anyone is in the position to help – it will very likely be too big for your lounge room, as it is too big for us at Glenalvon – but you may well have the perfect answer. Please let us know as it is a unique and beautiful house.