



Colac & District
Family History Group Inc.

Coladajins

Inc. No. A0022664A ABN 29618437272

Spring 2018 Issue 106



1914-1918



KILLED IN LAST MONTHS OF WAR

John Arthur Bowen (third from the left back row), was born and raised in Beech Forest, the son of Alfred Bygrove Bowen and Ann Callan. There were seven children born in eleven years, four boys and three girls. Growing up in Beech Forest, John experienced the harshest of weather conditions. There were cold, wet winters with around 75 inches of rainfall and occasional snow, with weeks on end spent trudging through mud. Summers came with the threat of bushfires and when John was just five years old, the family lost their home, stock and a steam separator. The school John attended was one room, 60ft x 80ft and accommodated about 80 children. It was unlined with an iron roof, no ceiling and no fireplace and the teacher made the students run around to stay warm.

John was 17 years old when war was declared in 1914. His older brother Daniel enlisted the following year and after two years service returned to Australia. John, who had been a member of the local rifle club, enlisted in February 1916, a few months after his 19th birthday. Less than three months later, as a member of the 39th battalion, he departed from Melbourne on the HMAT *Ascanius*. Edward Ross, also a resident of Beech Forest, was in the same battalion and both men were killed in 1918, shortly before the end of the war. It was a particularly sad time for the Bowen family. While John was on his way to the front, his father had died and in 1919, the year after John was killed, his mother suddenly died at Beech Forest where the family had lived for more than twenty years.

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Contact Information

Colac History Centre COPACC,
Gellibrand St Colac,
PO Box 219, Colac 3250
Phone: 0352315736

Email: media@colacfamilyhistory.org.au

Website: www.colacfamilyhistory.org.au

Facebook: www.facebook.com/colacdistrictfamilyhistory

Committee

President: Liz Spence

Email: president@colacfamilyhistory.org.au

Secretary: Norma Bakker

Email: secretary@colacfamilyhistory.org.au

Treasurer: Merrill O'Donnell

Email: treasurer@colacfamilyhistory.org.au

Research: research@colacfamilyhistory.org.au

Almost Forgotten Project

Email: almostforgotten1900@gmail.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/almostforgotten1900

Opening Times

Monday & Tuesday 10:00am to 2:00pm

Thursday, Friday 1:30pm to 4:30pm

Sunday 2:00pm to 4:00pm

Closed Public Holidays

Out of hours opening by arrangement

Dates to Remember

Wednesday 31st October - Membership Due

◇ 2018 – 2019 Membership

Wednesday 14th November - Meeting

◇ Camperdown Historical Society

◇ 10:30am - 12pm

◇ See page 7 for details

Friday 30th November - Newsletter Items

◇ Contributions welcome until this date

Tuesday 4th December - Christmas Dinner

◇ Baronga Motor Inn 6:00pm

◇ Booking essential

◇ RSVP secretary@colacfamilyhistory.org.au

Or ph 52315736 by Friday 30 November

CHRISTMAS BREAK

Sunday 16th December - Centre Closes

◇ History Centre Closes 4pm



Thursday 17th January - Centre Re-opens

◇ History Centre reopens 1:30pm

If you are in Colac during this period, arrangements can be made to open the centre. A \$10 fee applies.

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PRINTING OF THE NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is kindly printed by the staff at the office of Richard Riordan MP, member for Polwarth. We appreciate the support.

FAMILY HISTORY ROAD TRIP



Judy Newman's family has only known of their Colac connections in the last decade. After their recent visit to Colac, we asked Judy to write about their quest to learn about their ancestors. This is her story.

We knew our paternal great grandparents' names but nothing about where they came from. Our sister Mary spent a lot of time researching our origins and it was she who discovered that our great grand-parents Philip and Abigail Brumm and their children had lived in Colac from 1849 until 1853.

Philip and Abigail Brumm moved to Colac from Sydney to be closer to Abigail's sister Elizabeth who was married to Michael Kerwin Lyons, proprietor of the True Briton Hotel. Abigail and Elizabeth were two of the seven daughters of Denis and Mary Lyons (same surname but not related) of Melbourne.

Philip Brumm, a baker from Wale, Baden Wurttemberg, Germany, worked for Michael Lyons at the True Briton until they had a falling out and the family moved to Hobart. But not before two more Brumm children were born there – William in 1849 and Charles in 1853. Because our time in Victoria was limited, I contacted Dawn Missen of the Colac and District Historical Society before we left and through Dawn, I set up a meeting with Dawn Peel. Dawn was enormously helpful, especially in relation to

Michael Lyons, as he was an early businessman and land owner. Dawn was able to show us on maps where the True Briton hotel had been located. While visiting Dawn Peel we became aware of the Colac Family History Group and I returned later and worked with Merrill O'Donnell. Merrill knew of Elizabeth Lyons as she is part of the Family History Group's *Almost Forgotten - Pre 1900 Burials* project.

Elizabeth qualifies for the project because she died in 1860 in Colac and we learned that she was buried in the Colac cemetery.

Unfortunately, we were not able to find much about Philip and Abigail Brumm, as their footprint in Colac is limited. They were not landowners and they were there in the very early days before formal record keeping.

Eight of us travelled around Victoria in a hire van and our time in Colac was the highlight. We are so grateful for the support we received from those mentioned.

Photo: L-R Judy Newman, Bob Brumm and Dorothy Healy in Geelong Eastern Cemetery at the grave of Mary Lyons (d. Colac 1849), her son-in-law Michael Lyons (d. Rokewood 1857) and his son John Lyons.

There is a memorial to Elizabeth Lyons although according to her death certificate, she is buried in the Colac Cemetery. The actual location of her grave is unknown.

A Special Project of the Colac & District Family History Group

Almost Forgotten

Pre-1900 Burials in the Colac Cemetery



FRANCES COOMBS

There are a series of goals for the “*Almost Forgotten*” project, both short-term and long term. The ultimate aim being to produce a comprehensive, accurate database of all of the people buried in the Colac cemetery before 1900 as well as their family histories and stories.

The first short-term goal that we are focused on is to complete the research on all of the 1899 burials, collate the information and include some of their stories for a publication. But every now and again we receive a document or photo or snippet of information which just needs to be investigated, even if it doesn't fit in with the current stage of the project.

Although Frances Coombs died in 1854, much earlier than the year we are researching, the 24 year old dressmaker's story sparked our interest and she has “jumped the queue” - so to speak. Recently, Dr Dawn Peel OAM, pre-eminent Colac historian, shared some notes she had taken for research for her masters degree some 20 years beforehand. Knowing that Frances had died in Colac in 1854, Dawn thought the information might be helpful to our project.

This is the content of her note:

Letter James Hills 16 December 1854 re clothes of Miss Frances Coombs who died at Colac 21 December 1854. The deceased lived with us for the last 8 years. Myself and Mrs Hills have been her guardians during that period. I am married and I have 5 children. The deceased left my house on a visit to Mr and Mrs Harker about two miles from the township to improve her health. I am sorry to say she died there, Mrs Jane Harker having known her for the past ten years. [she wished her clothes to go to Mrs Hills]. Her father died in Launceston about six years ago. Her mother died when she was an infant. Her father, a wheelwright in Melbourne and its first settler up to the time he left for Launceston. And I promised him I would protect her and give her a home and so did as one of my family. [request granted if deceased had no debts]

A quick check revealed that we had a copy of

Frances' death certificate which confirms her burial in the Colac cemetery and gives her time in Victoria as seventeen years. Eight of those years were in Colac according to James Hills.

The cemetery have no record of the burial, therefore the actual location of her grave will possibly never be known. With a desire to learn more about poor Frances' life, our researchers are leaving no stone unturned. We now know that Frances was a child of the second marriage of convict Thomas Coombs, wheelwright in Brisbane Street Launceston and Mary Stanbury. The family were among the early white settlers to come to Melbourne and Thomas purchased land in Collins Street between Elizabeth and Queen in the first land sales in June, 1837.

Thomas returned to Launceston, in 1848, accompanied by his new “wife” and Frances, who was a dressmaker by trade, was left in Colac and lived with James and Louisa Hills and family. There is a lot more to this story which will be written one day, but thanks to some research notes shared by Dr Peel, and the diligent detective work by our researchers, Frances Coombs, single, 24 year old dressmaker, originally from Launceston, will never be forgotten.

FIRST TIMER

by Tony Mahoney

We recently trekked to the lovely historic town Maryborough Queensland to a reunion of the Mahoney clan. Maryborough was the second port after Sydney where immigrants and taxable cargo could enter Australia. The gathering was organised by my first cousin Peter who, in retirement, is doing a PhD in History featuring Mr Tooth [of NSW beer fame]. One of this man's exploits was a meatworks and sugar mill at Yengarie near Maryborough. My great grandfather eventually bought the property and my father grew up around there.

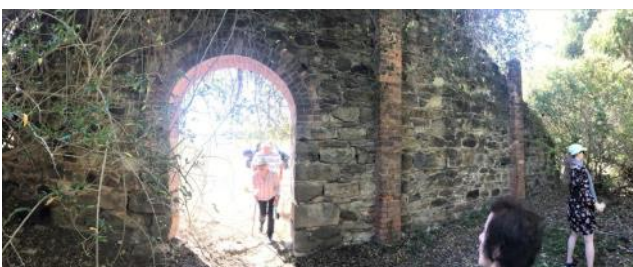


Tony, second from right, at a recent Mahoney reunion

Through email exchanges I now have a lot of written history dating back to Richard and Ellen Mahoney who arrived in 1831 as convicts. I also have the complete family tree from those two to our own grandchildren who we now realise are 7th generation Australians.

We spent two days with the extended clan of about 30 firstly at a presentation on the Yengarie mill works where 300 people eventually toiled and lived. The mill commenced in 1843 and petered out in the late 1890s. On the second day about 50 of us toured the ruins of the site – now a beef property still held by a Mahoney family.

The scale of the enterprise was quite amazing for



Ruins of the Yengarie township



The old school house is still standing and in private use

150 years ago and in such a remote location. Along with the sophisticated works, railway line, wharf, school, cricket pitch, library and street lighting were part of the Yengarie township – all now history but for some ruins.

Along with all the factual bits were a lot of introductions and getting to know a few of the relations. Some of the keener ones were not blood relations but had married a Mahoney. I have four Mahoney first cousins left living and three were there. Two of these live in Melbourne and we all shared common guilt at not having been in touch. We have vowed to rectify this as soon as possible.

I got a few “you’re obviously a Mahoney” comments but I fail to see strong family looks; I think we all have abilities in recognising looks. We certainly all share a common enjoyment of a nice meal and drink or two – we shared several jolly meals over the weekend.

Whether it’s a trait of our lot or not, I found that all were in for a good chat. Another weird fact I found was that my grandfather, cousin Peter, our son Patrick and I all share the same birthday 1st November. Peter has a daughter in law born the same day.

Strangely my father wrote a history of my maternal grandfather’s trip from Ireland to Perth, but it has taken this trip to complete the knowledge of my ancestry.

Editor’s note: Tony mentioned that there is a bit of work needed to preserve what is left of the ruins at Yengarie and in his usual inimitable way, he immediately suggested a working bee with his newly found relatives.

Thank you Tony for a lovely insight into the impact that a family reunion can have. Hopefully your story will inspire others to get together and organise their family reunions.

SHARING YOUR DNA STORIES

MILLS OR MOORS – DNA CASE FILE By Margaret Nixon

The first certificate I brought was of the marriage between Copeland Skene and Catherine Mills, my great- grandparents. They married on 14th April 1897, at the Presbyterian Church, Colac. Copeland stated he was aged 28, born in Lismore, his parents, George Skene, Blacksmith and Elizabeth Nelson.

Catherine Mills stated she was 24 born in Cressy and her parents were Robert Mills, Labourer and Catherine Bolger. Copeland and Catherine both resided in Camperdown. Catherine's mother Catherine Mills and E. Dickie were witnesses.

I drew a blank when I searched the microfiche for Mills, born in the Cressy area. The *Pioneer Index Victoria* came out on CD and it was searchable by mother's name. I then found Catherine Bolger had nine children, with the births all registered in Cressy - the father's name was James Moors.

I ordered the 1872 birth certificate of Catherine Moors. The informant, was James Moors who stated he was 'father of the child' and he was born in Podimore Somerset. Catherine Bolger the mother came from Kilkenny.

Catherine's siblings attended the Cressy school and were registered under Mills, and married as Mills or Moors.

In 1990 my parents moved to Donald. A few years down the track, Dad met a lady who announced she was his cousin Mary and did he know his great- grandmother, Catherine Bolger,

was buried in the Donald Cemetery. Mary had done some family research. Dad forgot to tell me. In 1996 I took Dad out to the Donald cemetery to visit my mother's grave. Mum died in 1991. While at the cemetery Dad showed me Catherine Wilson's grave and to my surprise announced that she was his great- grandmother.

Mary only lived across the road from Dad and was on the lookout for me that day. She gave me a stack of papers and photos and said Catherine Bolger's husband, Robert Mills, died in 1888 in Cressy and ten years later Catherine married James Wilson in Colac and moved to Donald. What happened to James Moors?

I took an *Ancestry.com* DNA test at Christmas in 2016 and I matched up with several third cousins on the Bolger-Moors/Mills tree.

The breakthrough came when Sharon, Raejoy and I downloaded our DNA onto *MyHeritage*. We all matched up with a person named Beth Pickard. Presto!

Beth had posted on the 'Family First Project' in 2001 that her first ancestor to arrive in Australia was Jemima Moors from Podimore Somerset. We exchanged emails and wondered if my James Moors from Podimore could be related as my Catherine had a sister Jemima, hoping one day to find a link. We found that link in 2018 through DNA. Now I can say my great-grandmother was a Moors not Mills!

The mystery remains - Who was Robert Mills?

LOST RELATIVES - By Liz Spence

My DNA test has connected me with some new family members and their interesting stories. I am now connected on facebook to Lyn, a 76 year old cousin from Queensland. Lyn has shared her family history research and stories about some relatives that I never knew existed. Lyn's grandmother was married to a man 16 years her senior. They had four children and were living on a station near Deniliquin when she had an affair with a young jackaroo.

After the birth of their fifth child, her husband learned of the affair and would not accept the baby as his. He forced her to leave and, faced with a massive dilemma she told the jackaroo that

the baby was his first born son. There had been no plans to marry, but honour forced him to inform his parents of their first grandchild.

Because of the shame, they were exiled to Western Australia, by his well-to-do parents, with an annual allowance, and told to make his own way in the new Colony of WA, which was as far as he could go from Victoria. After living a privileged life, this was a bitter pill to swallow.

Four more children were born, however over the years the relationship deteriorated. It was a tough life, contrasting with the life of privilege of her husband and four children she had left behind. I now have more family to add to my tree.

We recently appealed to our readers who have done a DNA test to tell us about their experiences. Thanks to Margaret and Liz we have two quite different stories to share. Do you have a DNA story? It can be anonymous and names can be changed to protect privacy.

MEETING & VOLUNTEERS

NEXT MEETING - Visit to Camperdown Heritage Centre

Members and volunteers of Colac & District Family History Group are invited on a visit to our neighbours, Camperdown Historical Society, on Wednesday November 14, 2018.

We will travel by private cars and arrive at the Centre at 241 Manifold Street by 10.30 am. Because this event is the day after a scheduled members' General meeting we will combine the two events on the Wednesday. Hence there will be **no meeting on Tuesday Nov 13, 2018**. We will have a short General meeting at Camperdown and then have a tour of the newly renovated Centre, spending time there until about 12pm

After visiting the Historical Society, participants are invited to share lunch in Camperdown. There are many choices! Some may like to bring a picnic lunch and have it up near the Botanic Gardens, or others may like to walk next door and buy lunch at the Snout in the Trough (booking recommended) at 243 Manifold Street, or any of the other eating places in the town.

After lunch, members may like to wander along the avenue and read the award winning stories explaining the history of Camperdown, a project with the Camperdown Lions Club.

For more information, or to indicate your intention to take part in the activity, please RSVP to our secretary, Norma, by November 7, ph: 52315736 during opening hours or email secretary@colacfamhistory.org.au. Please indicate if you will need a lift or have available seats in your car.



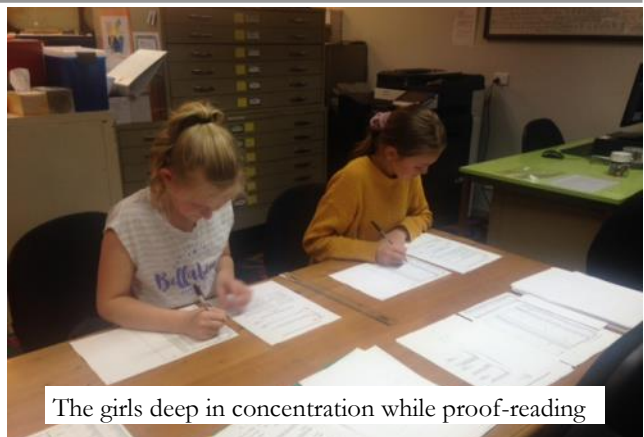
JOBS FOR EVERY VOLUNTEER

School holidays brought us the unexpected help of two young volunteers, Paige and Brooklyn. It is the second time that the girls have been to the centre, and they were keen to offer their assistance again for the day.

The first task was labelling our shelves in the storeroom. This has been an ongoing job and made more urgent since the audit. It looks great. When they finished with the shelves, the girls began proof reading court records that have been digitised ready to be entered onto the database.



Paige and Brooklyn labelling the storeroom shelves



The girls deep in concentration while proof-reading

Brooklyn and Paige spent several hours checking every name on every page, picking up typing or spelling errors on the spreadsheet.

Proof reading is an important, but not necessarily exciting job yet Brooklyn and Paige refused to go home until they had finished.

The few errors that were found have been corrected and the names are now loaded into the database. The records are from the 1850s and provide valuable information on the people and events in Colac at the time. The girls did a fantastic job and we really appreciate their work.

BITS & PIECES

NEWSLETTERS AND PERIODICALS

Our diligent librarian, Robyn, has not only tidied, sorted and catalogued the books on the shelves; she has also provided another display area for the periodicals and newsletters of other family history groups and societies around the country. Over the last year or so, we have been encouraged to browse these, and I have done so from time to time.

It was here, whilst perusing the SAG&HS (the South Australian Genealogy & Heraldry Society) magazine; I read a review of a family history account written by a descendant of the Wagner family, entitled, "The Wagners from Tucheim". The title caught my interest, as this is the same village in Germany from where my father's ancestors emigrated in the early 1870's. I obtained the book via an inter-library loan and through our local library, and have not been disappointed. It is a handsome volume with many clear photographs and readable text, including a great deal of early history of the Tucheim region of Germany, ie Saxony-Anhalt.

The author was fortunate enough to have a local German lady in the village do research from the church archives for him to obtain the early family records. What a boon that was!

To my surprise, I found two connections (previously unknown) to my ancestors' family amongst the marriages in the Wagner family, since their settlement in South Australia.

Included in the early history account are several local maps and beautiful photographs (inside and out) of the old Lutheran church, built in the 1750's, where my ancestors would have been baptized and married.

There was also lots of other interesting information pertaining to the area, and the lives of the early farming settlement and village life of the time. So what a find!

You never know what you will discover, and I encourage other members to have a look through the periodicals and newsletters any time you are at the History Centre. With Robyn's encouragement, I have been inspired to delve deeper - thank you Robyn. *Diana McGarvie*



NEW WEBSITE

If you have tried to log onto the Family History Group website recently, this temporary screen would have appeared. We are sorry for the



inconvenience, but believe our members and visitors will be very happy with the outcome. The sub-committee has been working on the new design of the website for most of this year. The group have spent hours researching hundreds of sites from similar organisations, comparing features and refining the wording etc. A web-designer has now been engaged and has commenced setting up the new website. We don't



Robyn, Deb and Jill discuss the webpage design. Raye, the other sub-committee member is missing from the photo

have a definite date that it will be launched yet, that announcement will be made soon.

All of the website sub-committee members took on the role in addition to their usual voluntary commitments. Robyn is the librarian and research co-ordinator and provides some IT support; Jill is the senior researcher for the "Almost Forgotten - Pre 1900 burials" project; Deb has been working on a large indigenous project and Raye has very recently completed a full audit of the family history group collection.

We know how seriously these ladies have taken their role and we are very grateful for their work.

BITS & PIECES

SPRING GENERAL MEETING - AND VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION



The recent General Meeting saw an excellent turn up of past and present volunteers, and members and friends of the family history group. Liz Spence presided over a short meeting which was followed by an acknowledgement of the work of the founding members of the group, and all volunteers of the past three decades. There were also a series of examples of how the early work of the group is still important today. Liz talked about some of the early projects that members undertook. One example was members walking around the Colac cemetery with pen and pad in hand, they recorded information from every headstone in the Colac Cemetery then the

notes were collated, hand-typed and made into a book. The cemetery date base has now been digitised, but the “green book” as it is fondly referred to, is still a vital resource in the family history group collection.

Liz individually acknowledged past and present volunteers, including those who contribute from a distance. She highlighted their contribution to various projects, many which are still part of the daily activities of the group.

Photographs of the group working and socialising over the past thirty years were projected onto a large screen before the meeting commenced and during the afternoon tea that followed.

2018-2019 MEMBERSHIPS ARE DUE PAYABLE BY 31ST OCTOBER



Colac & District
Family History Group Inc.

Membership of the Colac & District Family History Group helps to ensure the preservation of the history of the people of Colac and the surrounding district.

Membership is just \$20 per year and you will receive quarterly newsletters, special offers and access to the research resources when you visit the centre. Some limited research assistance is available for remote members. Please complete and attach *renewal form with your payment. Thank You.*

Memories...



John Dalton was born in Long Island, New York and following in his father's footsteps, learned the coach building trade by undertaking a wheelwright apprenticeship in Brooklyn. He emigrated to Australia in 1852 and three years after his arrival in Victoria, married Sarah Watson, at St Pauls Anglican Church, Geelong. Twins were born in Geelong in 1856 and five more children were born after the family settled in Colac East where John established his business. As the business grew John hired local men to help, later employing and training his own sons. His workmanship became well known and he won prizes at the local shows. John died in 1897, having "succeeded in putting together a fair share of this world's spoils" as reported in his obituary in the Colac Herald.

Thanks to organisations for their ongoing support



Colac Otway Shire
2 - 6 Rae Street Colac Ph: 03 52339400



Colac Otway Performing Arts & Cultural Centre
Cnr Rae & Gellibrand Streets Colac Ph: 03 5232 2077



The Colac Herald
37 - 41 Bromfield Street, Colac Ph: 03 52315322

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