

MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED BI - MONTHLY

Meetings : 3rd. TUESDAY of the month at 7.30 PM

OLD TOWN HALL , MORWELL

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Welcome to the July Newsletter

Well, at last we are getting our collection of photographs, artifacts, documents and books into order. Two workers from the Jobskills Program have been hard at work for the past few weeks, sorting, filing, and storing our many photographs and entering data about them onto a computer program.

A group of members has also been meeting regularly to decide on a collection policy, and to catalogue the rest of the material in the care of our Society. On July 18 a trainer from Museums Victoria will hold a workshop in Morwell to assist us in our efforts and hopefully the collection will soon be fully catalogued and much more accessible to members and to the public.

Our thanks go to Mrs K.Huffer of Traralgon Historical Society for passing on to us the writings of Mr Murray Thomson, the first extract from which is printed inside.

Another successful Heritage Walk was held on May 21, under the guidance of Mr Will McRoberts, with extra commentary from Messrs Lou Bond and Eric Lubcke. The route was along the old Princes Highway, from Collins St to McDonald St, and the lower part of Church St.

**OUR NEXT MEETING WILL BE HELD ON
TUESDAY JULY 18 AT 7.30 PM
IN THE OLD TOWN HALL
Guest Speaker will be Mr Denis Quinn**



TWO AUSTRALIANS REMEMBER

At our last two meetings, local residents **Tom Lawless** and **Natalie Roy** gave most interesting and entertaining accounts of their experiences during World War 2.

TOM LAWLESS'S WAR

Tom was a local boy, the son of a Soldier Settler at Hazelwood, when war broke out and, like most other young men at the time, his imagination was captured by the newsreels which showed the daring exploits of the R.A.A.F crews in the various theatres of war. As soon as he turned 18, he enlisted in the R.A.A.F., without, as he says, the least comprehension of what war was really all about. It was a big adventure - a chance to get away from milking cows! His mother told him later that it almost broke her heart to see him walking away so cheerfully to enlist. She knew what it would be like - her husband had been through the First World War.

It was 1942. The Japanese were bombing Darwin, there had been submarines in Sydney Harbour and invasion seemed likely. Many ships were sunk by submarines off the east coast of Australia, though little was heard of this at the time, and the job of the Gippsland air bases at Sale and Bairnsdale was to protect shipping in Bass Strait.

Tom spent the first six months of his service life in training at Adelaide and Sydney, then he was sent to Laverton, for a further six months. After this he was posted to a Repair and Salvage Unit, based at Werribee, which was being formed to go overseas.

It took another six months for the Unit to be assembled and during that time they salvaged thirty-one aircraft which had crashed between Bairnsdale and Melbourne. Tom reckons that there would probably have been as many in the six months preceding and as many also in the six months following. Most of these crashes didn't make the news. Most were training accidents - not surprising, as most of the crews were young and inexperienced and the aircraft had often been hastily designed or modified and were often unproven. Sometimes an aircraft would have to land with a full load of bombs which had failed to jettison. Other accidents occurred because of mechanical failure, engine failure, brake failure, or simply because the pilot lost his way. (There were few navigational aids).

When Tom's unit had salvaged an aircraft, it would be loaded onto the back of a big truck and taken by road to Laverton or Tocumwal, where it would be rebuilt or the useful parts salvaged. The trip from Bairnsdale to Tocumwal took four days and although the wing tips were removed, the extra wide load held up traffic on the roads for long distances. At night, hurricane lanterns would be hung on the wing tips but these did little to illuminate the rest of the load. Tom recalls that one night a farmer drove his T-model Ford under the wing of an aircraft in transit and had the top of it taken off by the engine, which, of course was lower than the rest of the wing and was not easily visible.

When the Salvage and Repair Unit was finally complete it was sent to Queensland. Tom and his mates travelled with the equipment - trucks, cranes etc - on open topped railway trucks on a 10-day trip to Townsville. They stayed three months in Townsville waiting to be sent overseas. As Tom says, war is mostly waiting - periods of intense boredom, interspersed with periods of intense activity.

Finally, they were posted to New Guinea, landing at Milne Bay then moving on to Lae, then to Nadzab, which had just been taken by the Allies. They set up camp there among the kunai grass but the war was moving quickly and the Air Force had to keep up with the American landings so after a couple of months they were off to New Britain, where they

were attached to the American Marines. The unit was with the 81st Fighter Wing which provided fighter cover for the American bombers.

Then it was off to the Dutch East Indies where they worked for about nine months, then to Morotai where they again met up with the Australian forces and were involved in serious fighting leading up to the invasion of Borneo. After this, the Unit was sent to Labuan, a little island within flying range of Singapore. It was the wet season, there was mud everywhere and the resulting poor landing conditions caused many crashes and much work for Tom and his mates.

Then, one night, word came of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and shortly after, the end of the war. Tom recalls thinking to himself "What will I do now? I'm out of a job!" Well, sadly there was still a lot of work for him to do. Aircraft still flew, but now on mercy missions, taking food to P.O.W. camps, mopping up etc; the crashes continued and more lives were lost.

Finally, before the Unit returned to Australia, Tom and his mates had the job of destroying many aircraft. The Air Force didn't want the planes to fall into the hands of terrorist groups and it was reluctant to bring them back to Australia where they would simply lie in paddocks and decay, so they were piled into heaps and burned.

Tom returned to Hazelwood, to farming and to public life, putting a great deal of time and energy into his work as a long-serving Councillor of Morwell Shire (and later Morwell City) and into the many organisations and committees on which he has served.

..... **NATALIE ROY'S WAR**

"The Land Army was raised to keep the farms going while men served in the Army. It was disbanded at the end of the war in 1945 and the saddest part of the story was that the entire records were destroyed as they were considered to be of no further use."

As Natalie says, these words sum up the lot of women since time began - underestimated, under-valued and over-ruled! Certainly they sum up the attitude of government to the women who served in Australia's fourth women's service during World War 2 and it is only recently that their contribution to the war effort is being recognised.

The Land Army was started by the C.W.A. early in the war, then, in 1942, the Australian Government announced that it would become the fourth Women's Service. Natalie joined the Australian Women's Land Army in March 1944, when she turned 18 and after a brief spell of training, she was sent to Benalla, to work on a mixed dairy and sheep farm.

Coming from a dairy farm, the cows were not a problem to Natalie and the farmer usually left her to milk them (a herd of about 35) on her own. The sheep, though, were another matter. Watching the farmer crutching the sheep, she remarked that some of the animals were noticeably bigger than others. The farmer said the big ones were wethers and the smaller ones were ewes. "Oh", said Natalie, "I wouldn't know one breed from another!" - a comment which caused much amusement to the farmer and his family.

She also recalls an embarrassing moment at Benalla when a parcel arrived for her from Land Army Headquarters. Quite excited at receiving something in the mail, she opened it, in front of the family, to discover a packet of sanitary napkins!

Land Army girls were provided with work clothes, boots and a dress uniform. They received £2 pay per week, plus their keep, which was not too bad for that time. Natalie

was lucky because, on the two farms she worked on, she was treated as one of the family, but some girls were not so lucky and some lived in very poor conditions. She also felt that the life was easier for her than for some of the city girls, unused to farm work. The girls were expected to do any work needed. At Benalla, Natalie could dig two post-holes to her boss's three, which she felt was pretty good going!

While Natalie was at Benalla, there was a drought, and consequently not so much farm work. Her boss told her she could go home for a few weeks so she headed off, calling at Land Army headquarters on the way to tell them what was happening.

"Oh" they said, "You can't do that. We'll give you another posting". She was asked if she had a preference for where she would like to work. At that time her two sisters were also in the Land Army, one at Fish Creek, the other at Drouin, so she asked to be sent as close as possible to one of those places. The knowledge of geography at H.Q. must have been rather sketchy because they sent her to Boolarra!

She arrived at Boolarra aboard "The Flea" (the rail motor) and found no-one there to meet her. The station master, hearing she was going to Fancke's, said "Oh, you'd better go and have a cup of tea in the cafe - they won't be in for quite a while." Eventually someone came to collect her and take her to the farm. On her arrival, Mr Fancke asked her name. When she told him, he said "That's a terrible name! What's your second name?" She told him "Yvonne". "That's worse!", he said. On hearing that, at Benalla, she had been called Judy (people always seemed to have trouble with 'Natalie'), Mr Fancke decided that that would suit him, so Judy she became. She thought to herself: "Oh, well, I won't be here for long." That was over 50 years ago and she's still here!

At Fancke's Natalie milked cows and did all the usual farm work including gardening and she stayed there until the war ended. She returned briefly to her former job of dressmaking, but returned to marry Charlie Roy, son of one of the neighbouring families, and she and Charliestill live at Budgerie in happy and active retirement.

From R.H.S.V. News - June 1995

Your Secretary is reading this book at present and enjoying it greatly!

BOOK NOTES

Bearbrass - Imagining Early Melbourne - Robin Annear
Publisher-Mandarin (Reed Books) pp.290 \$17.95

An interesting book right from the title 'Bearbrass' which is an anglicised version of an aboriginal name for the Melbourne locality. The contents are based upon 'facts' drawn by the author/ historian from news papers, diaries and letters of the period as well as relevant works of history produced by others. She takes these facts and imagines the qualities of individuals who are named or identified (in land transfers, general news, court reports etc.) She guesses at their character strengths and weaknesses. She imagines their living conditions (food drink and accommodation) their leisure (socially,

including sports etc) their environment (buildings, weather pattern and the geography of the area.)

She then talks of social problems such as alcoholism - with 100 hotels in the area this is understandable as indeed is the note of triumph in the newspaper report that there were no drink related cases in court for 30/12/1841. Law and order was another major problem with untrained Police who relied for part of their pay on a percentage of the court fines imposed in the cases that they brought forward or the payment of 2/6 for each tail presented for each unregistered dog that they had killed. And then there was the imbalance between the sexes - 7 males for every 3 females - which was worse as more par-

doned convicts were moved from Sydney to Melbourne.

She goes on to identify the physical hazards of the area - here her sense of humour as well as her archaeological experience come to the fore in such instances as the burial place of a bogged bullock dray, the location of the river Townend, the location of Lake Cashmore, the dense ti-tree in Swanston Street - living certainly required a fair degree of athleticism.

I find this a lively book - helped by the humour and the penetrating imagination of the author. Absorbing the text is greatly aided by the indexed maps at the beginning of each chapter. As well as being a worthwhile addition to anyone's library it would make a fitting gift to those who have affection for Marvellous Melbourne - but beware - it is a difficult book to put down.

L.W.C.

Jeeralang Junction

Written around 1977 by Mr Murray Thompson

Years ago an area of land was reserved at Jeeralang Junction for a township and duly surveyed into building allotments. This was possibly arranged in anticipation of the opening up of the coal deposits which are at the foot of the hills.

The mining of this coal never eventuated and no building was erected on this site until 1904 when Jim McNamara built a four roomed house, with large room attached, which he opened as a general store, on one of the blocks just over the road from where the Post Office now stands. He had in stock the usual grocery lines and it was rumoured that you could obtain 'a drop of the doings' from under the counter also. Jim eventually sold out and became the licensee of an hotel in Argyle Street, Traralgon. The new owner of the store was Jack Howard who owned a farm nearby. While he was busy with farm work the store was attended by his Mother. However the store was patronised more on an emergency basis than a regular one, and not very profitable. The cream wagon plied regularly between the hills and Morwell so most of the residents traded in the town, the carriers doing the deliveries when returning the empty cream cans to the roadside. The store was finally closed down about 1909. Some time later the house and shop were sold to Dave Hendry, who was a butcher.

About 1910 one of the blocks was purchased, a building erected and used as a school, also as a hall. It was known as the "Junction" school. The first teacher was Miss Frances O'Flynn, who took a great interest, not only in the children, but also in the social life of the area. She was responsible for starting a debating club called "The Lyre Bird Debating Society". There was a membership of over twenty, many an evening being spent in arguments, mock elections, and even a play was staged on one occasion. Did I hear someone say "Big deal!"? We had to make our own entertainment in those old days, so we enjoyed these meetings.

After some years a new school was opened, situated between the original South Hazelwood school and the one at the Junction, so they were both closed and all the children attended the new one. The Junction school building was still used as a hall where dances were held regularly, but after some years was unused, and removed about 1920.

It was about 1910 that Dave Hendry, with his wife, came to live at the Junction. They also bought 90 acres of timbered land nearby, and a few head of cattle were grazed thereon, but his main interest was in butchering. He built a slaughter house down towards Billy's Creek and opened the shop for business. Dave also commenced a meat delivery round, using what was known as a cutting cart. This was a two wheeled, horse drawn vehicle with a box type body in which the meat was packed. The tail was made of a solid piece of wood, hinged at the bottom, and when let down was supported by a chain at each side. This board was used as a chopping block and for cutting up the meat to the customer's liking. A hook was also fixed to the framework and was used to support the spring balance scales.

One of his rounds was about four and a half miles up the Jeeralang Road as far as Beales Hill. The roads in winter were wet and muddy with pot holes. When these conditions prevailed an extra horse was harnessed to the corner of the vehicle. The other round was through North and South Hazelwood and took place twice each week.

Jeeralang Junction - Murray Thompson. (continued)

Dave was of medium height and wore a well trimmed white beard, which made him seem much older than he was. He walked with a sweeping stride, his toes pointing outwards and some would refer to him as "old ten to two" - (behind his back, of course). His speech was sometimes a bit blue, as was customary at that time, but his favourite expletive was "My b...y oath!" Not inappropriate really, as he did his own slaughtering.

Dave was a handy man and was called upon often to assist with certain jobs. On one occasion he was helping a neighbour to build a sheep dip, made partly of bricks and cement. He was placing bricks in the bottom of the trench when he asked Paddy Walsh (who was assisting) to hand him a board so he would not tread on any individual brick. Paddy handed him the plank, saying "Dave, you could not stand on an individual brick however much you tried!"

Mr and Mrs Hendry were well respected and popular and were missed when they decided, in 1920, to sell out and return to Melbourne. With their leaving went the last prospect of a township at the Junction as no-one attempted to start another business there.

A new road had been made into the hills, on a much easier gradient than the original one. This cut off a strip of Jack Howard's farm and when later he sold the rest of it he built a house on the ~~cut-off portion~~. On these premises a post office and telephone exchange was established. Mrs Jack Howard became the Post Mistress, and a very courteous official.

Quite a lot of Jack's time was taken up in patrolling the telephone lines, locating faults, removing fallen limbs, keeping the phones usable. I don't know if he was paid for his time but he certainly did well for the subscribers. Jack later became the contractor for the Jeeralang mail round. Besides mail, Jack carried passengers at times, and was a boon to the hill people as he did much of their shopping. Papers, bread, groceries were bought for them in Morwell then delivered to their gates three days a week. Later on the post office was taken on by the Willaton family when the Howards retired to Dandenong.

The Junction Post Office was closed when Churchill became established and the postal business is now installed in this modern town.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE TIME CAPSULES GONE?

Many organisations, particularly schools, have, over the years, buried time capsules to commemorate a significant event in their history. The location of the capsule is usually noted in the records of the organisation, but what happens when the organisation goes out of existence, or the school closes and is perhaps moved?

At a recent ceremony to mark the site of the former Agnes State School (near Toora), it was planned to dig up two time capsules buried at the school, the latest one in 1950. However, when it came to the point, many people remembered the capsules being buried but no-one was quite sure exactly where. The school building was moved some years ago and the school ground is now pasture. Some said the capsules were buried near the flagpole but photographs showed that the flagpole had been moved several times during the school's existence! So, the capsules remain undisturbed.

How many other time capsules have met with the same fate? Perhaps there should be a central registry, operated by an organisation such as the Royal Historical Society, where details of the location of time capsules could be lodged, together with the date at which they are to be opened and any other relevant information. (A number seem to have been destined for opening in the year 2001 as a new millenium begins.)

MORWELL'S NATIONAL BANK

In 1958, the National Bank opened its present premises at 199 Princes Highway, Morwell and the Morwell 'Advertiser' published an article on the history of the bank. Following is a copy of the information supplied to the 'Advertiser' at that time by the bank. (The writer is unknown.)

.....
The opening of the spacious new offices of the National Bank of Australasia in this town is not only a sign of confidence in its future. It marks a step forward for a Bank which opened the first banking office in Morwell nearly three quarters of a century ago.

Morwell was a muddy main street in a forest clearing when Henry McIntosh came down the new railway from Melbourne in November 1884 to open a branch of his bank. He brought an iron safe, stationery, revolvers, cheque books, and of course, the cash, and opened for business on 26 November, 1884.

Scores of farmers in the following months entered the small banking office to deposit money, or to borrow money to buy land in the district, which was then rapidly opening up.

In those days the bank issued its own notes (there were no Commonwealth notes), and anyone could cash the notes at the bank for gold sovereigns. Moreover, any customer could withdraw his money in gold sovereigns.

McIntosh wrote occasionally to the head office of the bank in Melbourne and described the progress of the town. He complained in the 1880s that the train service was utterly unreliable; he complained in 1887 of the first signs of a rabbit plague in the district. For several years he regretted that there was not one Justice of the Peace in Morwell to sign documents. No resident seemed willing to take the office.

Morwell perhaps had 400 people, but it was a busy town on market day when poultry, fat store cattle, butter and cheese, were on sale.

'The township on what is called "butter day" has the appearance of a fair,' wrote one journalist. And on butter day a lamp burned in the window of the bank late into the night as the manager tidied up his day's business.

In the old files of Morwell's two newspapers of 1887, there is news of entertainment and progress. In February, Mr Jensen and Mr Breed had a horse race for a wager, Wirth's Circus visited the town, and the Morwell Agricultural Society was preparing for its first Show, to be held in April.

And at McIntosh's bank there were signs of activity in February, 1887. According to the Morwell *'Advocate and Boolarra and Mirboo Chronicle'* (long name for a four page newspaper) the bank was about to build a new office in Commercial Street. In May 1887, the newspaper had a further comment:

'Some steps seem likely soon to be taken to have this long-looked-for building erected, as the architect on Thursday last was engaged in making the survey necessary to enable the start to be made.'

A year later the present two-storied building was completed and at once it was acclaimed as one of the finest buildings in the backwoods of Gippsland. (*The building is now occupied by Rennicks-1995*).

The building had 14 rooms, marble fireplaces, venetian blinds, hitching posts for the customers' horses and a stable for the manager's horse. But the greatest luxury in the new bank, according to the Morwell *'Advertiser'* were the plunge and shower baths. J.F.Kinder was the builder and it was a proud day for Morwell when he brushed the last claret paint onto the outside paintwork. Morwell had a bank building of which any country town could be proud.

The bank in those days was known as the Colonial Bank, a purely Victorian institution. In 1918 it amalgamated with the National Bank of Australasia.

A LETTER FROM FRANCE - 1916

President of our Society, **Eric Lubcke**, has donated a copy of the letters written from overseas during the First World War by his two uncles **Tom and Charlie Koenig**, of Jumbuk, and also letters written to them by their sister **Tilly**. We will print some of this correspondence in our Newletters over the next few months.

A LETTER FROM TOM - France, Dec. 17, 1916

My dear Tillie

Just a few lines in answer to your most kind and welcome letter dated 29/10/16 which I received the other day and was pleased to see by it you are all quite well as it leaves us at present. We both got letters from you while we were up in the trenches and we both got a parcel from you dated 30/6/16 and as soon as we came out we got three more - one from dear Mother and two from my dear Ruby and I can tell you we enjoyed what was in them. Well Tillie my dear we are having terrible wet and cold weather lately, it is either rain or snow every day so you can guess what the mud is like.. Well one of our mates got stuck the other night coming out of the trenches and it took over an hour to get him out. We all have big high rubber boots when we are in the line. If we didn't have them I don't think we could stand as we would always have wet feet. Well dear Tillie we have had a pretty hard time these last few weeks but I suppose it cannot be helped, it is all in the game. We are both standing it well so far. I thought the cold weather would knock us out but I think we will stand it alright.

Well Tillie dear, the other night when we were in the front line one of fritys (*Fritz's*) men came over to our trench and gave himself up. He couldn't stand it any longer. When we got him in our trench he said Thank God he was so pleased to get away from his own lines. We gave him something to eat and drink. They must be having it hard when they come over and give themselves up. There has been a good few come over.

Well Tillie dear this is all this time so I will close with fondest love to all. I remain your ever loving brother Tom.

Goodbye Tillie my dear

Dear Tillie, when we send a cable to any of you don't reply to it as it won't come any quicker than a letter. Mother sent one to me and I haven't got it yet and I got the letter saying she sent it . **Tom.**

THE WAY IT WAS (CONT) - Arthur Fish

[Arthur leaves the merry town of Millicent and heads for Penola]

I turned away inland and looked towards the hills. A few miles along the way was the small sawmilling town of Mt Burr, wherein they had imported a big saw from Sweden which did wonderful things to the pine logs, and no doubt put some good men out of work. The way was hard and my shoes hurt, and I did feel hungry. And there was nothing to spare at Mt Burr. No sales, no money, no food. So there was just hope, and the road to Penola.

So I was very down and the higher I went up, the lower in spirits I got. Actually, all unknown to myself, I was about to enter into one of the most enjoyable experiences of my whole peregrinations. But that was a few hours into the future.

I climbed the ridge. I did not get very high as the range is but a couple of hundred feet above the plain. Laugh not, gentle reader - on the vast level which is most of South Australia any lump of dirt higher than an ant hill automatically qualifies for the title of "mountain". Later in life I lived at a place called Mt Light. But you had to bend down the bracken so you could see the mount.

Mt Burr was a hungry place and I left it as I entered, still hungry. However, a nice, kind lady did give me a pair of shoes that almost fitted. But this gift may not have been wholly altruistic. Maybe she reasoned that with a better pair of shoes I might make better time getting away from such an inhospitable place.

On the road to Penola I spent a night or two at a little whistle-stop called Kalangado. (I hope the spelling is right). It sounds like it might have been named by a bullocky while looking for some straying bullock. I spent the night in a railway box-car, high and dry and very cold. Next morning I was enterprising enough to suggest to the local bootmaker that he might put a patch or two on my new shoes. However he opined that it would only be throwing good money after bad. It always pained me to have the mercenary spirit come up so I replaced the shoes on my feet and, picking up the knot, I began picking my way to Penola.

Well, I did the few miles in style, riding in a spring cart drawn by a small grey pony and sitting upright on the cart seat listening to the yarns of the oldest inhabitant. So I reached Penola. Now this town deserves a special mention. I stayed here for two months and later often regretted having left it. The people were wonderful to me in their great kindness and really took me to their hearts. I bedded down, as was usual, in the local showgrounds.

Firstly I needed a good wash, but I could find no open tap or place where I could perform my ablutions, so I called on one of the local ladies and made a request for a dish of water and no doubt this made a good impression on the people.

However, I had to overcome the hostility of the local youngsters. This seemed in this town to be of a particularly virulent type. I wondered at this but accepted it and some days later found out it was because I had accepted kindness from one of the local businessmen, who was no friend of the boys. Matter of fact, they almost staged a mass assault on my camp and I had to wave the .22 in a threatening way, and this seemed to have a calming effect on them. It was some days before I broke through the ice and after that had no more trouble.

And this is the way it was. I noticed this young fellow, almost my own age, wandering around under the young gumtrees that grew along the fence, looking like he was trying, without success, to climb them. When he saw me watching he came over and then I saw that he was limping a bit and had some kind of strapping on his ankle. He told me that his name was Ralph Horton and he was home from school with a sprained ankle. He wanted to get some gum tips for his pet possum and could I help him. I was happy to oblige and so we struck up a friendship which spread to his mates and through them to the parents. I remember playing marbles with some of the boys and, while doing this exposed the whole - and hole - of my worn shoes to the compassionate gaze of Mr Marcus. He took me in and, in a few minutes, with a few well-aimed blows with the hammer soon tacked on a pair of new soles and built up the heels. His two sons Bob and Dick became good friends of mine and it was interesting to go through the town of Penola forty years later and find my one-time friend Bob still living in the town where he carries on a business in tyres. We had a good yarn over old times and he told me that his father, now in his eighties, was still living.

I met some nice people in Penola - the Horton family, the Blacks, the Marcus family and the Balnaves, who kept a small business. I spent some happy times at the home of the Marcus people, enjoyed some home cooking, was warmed by their hospitality and their fireside and often, when Mum and Dad went out, helped to keep the kids company whiling away the hours with card-playing. There was a girl, Beverly, about the same age as myself. The boys were a bit younger.

I did not make a lot out of wire-work in this town but as I became known I got a lot of other work - gardening mostly - and wood cutting. I know I cut up a great stack of pepper tree wood over in the school grounds. Because it was now mid-winter and the camp was cold and draughty and wet and I needed something better, the way was opened for me to quit the cold shed for something much better. The Marcus boys spoke to their grandfather - a man named Black - who kept a blacksmith shop, and he was kind enough to allow me to shift camp over into his carpenter and blacksmith shop. Here it was warm and dry and no worry about firewood, even if I did burn the bottom out of my billy by putting it on the too-hot coals.

Well, he was a fine, paternal sort of fellow, this old smith, and he thought he might even teach me something of the blacksmithing art, a thing that has always fascinated me. However, I was not a great success as a striker, as, when the smith drew the glowing iron across the anvil and I belted it with the hammer I had the unhappy knack of following the hot metal across and the result was that I was forever 'running out of anvil' and Mr Black out of patience. However, he used to often invite me round to his home and we would play a few games of cribbage.

There was also an elderly gentleman named Balnaves. He got me down to dig up his garden which was just behind a little cafe place he had in the main street. The pay was good, six shillings a day, and he fed me out of the shop, and there was lashings of 'drink' - soft stuff, of course, I never touched the hard stuff. So, I found the townspeople very friendly, even the policeman who used to look in now and again to see if everything was right with me. And thus passed some happy weeks.

(To Be Continued)