

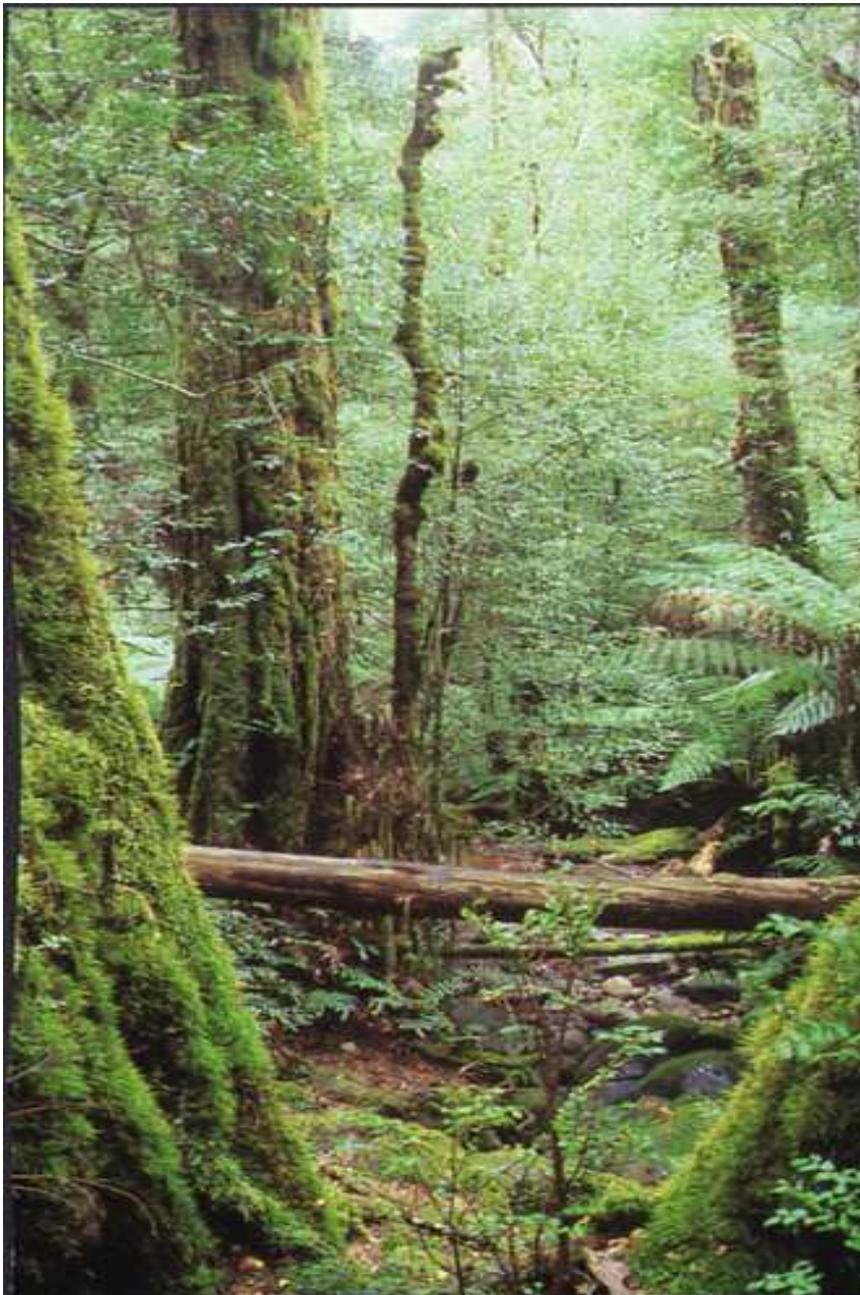


# GREENPRINT

Save the Dandenongs League Inc.

May 2006.

Newsletter No. 49



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## AGM

May 28th 2006

2:30PM

Kallista Community  
House

Guest Speaker:

**Jim Montgomery**

*will be presenting on*

[Ngintaka Heritage](#)

[Songline](#)

See last page for details

## About the League

Save the Dandenongs League is a not-for profit community based organisation that advocates for the protection and restoration of the Dandenong Ranges as a natural asset for all time.

## Committee Members 2005-06

President:

Betty Marsden

(03) 9755 2777

Secretary:

Margaret Kennedy (leave of absence)

Treasurer:

Louis Delacretaz

Minutes Secretary:

Margaret Kennedy & Ross Whitford

General Members:

Jo Tenner

Ross Whitford

Carolyn Ebdon

Robert Stephen

Newsletter co-ordination Carolyn Ebdon

## What the League Stands For:

To work for the orderly development of the Ranges in the interests of residents ( including primary producers and others gainfully employed), holiday makers, hikers, overseas and other visitors.

To preserve as a national asset, for all time, the beauty of the Ranges, by:

- Control of subdivision in relation to need and nature of each specific area, with building regulations to suit the needs of the home builder, while conforming to needs of the district.
- Preserving all natural beauty spots, stands of timber on mountain tops, steep slopes and roadsides.
- Maintaining in natural state, watersheds and banks of streams.
- Advocating provision of adequate tourist accommodation and recreational facilities.
- Co-operating with other groups with similar aims.
- Asking the government to legislate for the official implementation of these plans, by creation of a democratically-elected trust to co-ordinate the work of all who share in the administration of the mountain area.

The League is a non-sectarian, non-party, non-profit making organisation.

# PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Firstly I apologise that the League only managed to produce one newsletter last year (No. 48). We are hopeful that this situation may improve later this year. We have a fairly small Committee and most of its members are still in the work-force which makes their time to help us very limited. Nevertheless we have met fairly regularly during the past year and continued to monitor Shire Council agendas, local papers, respond to letters, telephone calls, e-mails etc. and attend meetings on behalf of the League. I wish to thank most sincerely the office-bearers and members of the Committee for their support and various contributions over the year.

## Birdsland 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday Celebration

On 5<sup>th</sup> November last year, the Shire of Yarra Ranges and the Birdsland Environmental Education Centre Advisory Committee hosted a Birthday Party to celebrate the milestone of 21 years since Birdsland first opened its gates to the public in 1984. The League had been among the first to advocate Council buying the property in 1980 when an application was made to the shire of Sherbrooke to activate an old small lot subdivision for housing development on the property which was currently being used for farming purposes. A number of local residents as well as environmental groups opposed the proposal and also lobbied Council to consider purchase for public open space as a solution. Fortunately some Councillors were receptive to this idea and over a period of time, negotiations took place (led by Crs. Michael Buxton and Frank Reid) with the Bird family. This resulted in a satisfactory proposition being put to Council and much discussion among councillors of the day (1981). Some councillors felt that long term maintenance would be

a problem. On the other hand the land's position adjacent to the Monbulk Creek Retarding Basin Lakes and their recreational possibilities, were seen as a decided bonus. The land's miraculous survival as bushland and open pasture were seen by some as an opportunity to be seized then as the alternative was some sort of housing development. It had become a divisive issue by the time the vote was taken on whether or not to buy the property in October 1981. The writer had been a Sherbrooke Councillor for only a few months but had taken a particular interest in the Birdsland situation and did not hesitate to support the purchase. The vote was close but a decision was made to purchase the Bird's Farm property for public open space and recreation.

A number of modifications and improvements had to be made, and it



Celebrating 21 years of Birdsland last November, were:  
(L to R) CEO Shire Yarra Ranges Rob Hauser, Cr. Robyn Hale, Peter Downard, Susan Heywood-Downard, Michael Buxton, Betty Marsden, Frank Reid.

was in April 1984 that the gates of Birdsland Reserve were finally opened to the public, along with the adjacent Monbulk Creek Retarding Basin (then managed by the Dandenong Valley Authority, but now by Melbourne Water.) About 100 people attended the 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday including members of the Bird family, Cr. Robyn Hale (Lyster Ward Councillor) and member of the BEEC Committee, Mr. Rob Hauser, CEO of the Shire and a number of senior Shire staff. Staff of the Environment Dept. (who had worked hard for the day) were led by their

manager Caroline Carvalho and members of the Birdsland Environmental Education Centre (BEEC) Advisory Committee who had also prepared and worked for the day, were among the gathering. Children from Belgrave Heights Christian School choir sang two songs from "The Ballad of Birdsland" composed by John Shortis (Commissioned in 1980 by Dandenong Ranges Music Council) and they provided a delightful interlude. Speeches by Mr. Rob Hauser, Cr. Robyn Hale, and Melbourne Water, talked about the new Wetlands, and the writer as Chairperson of BEEC gave some of the history (as outlined above) and special thanks to the Bird family for their co-operation and sharing our vision. Also present were former Sherbrooke Councillors, Michael Buxton and Frank Reid who played an important part in acquiring Birdsland and Peter Downard who as Shire President helped convince the State Government to buy the "link-up" land between Birdsland and Lysterfield Lake Park, an outcome which had been sought for a number of years. The wisdom and far-sightedness of these decisions can now be seen.

## Cr. Robyn Hale

Our warmest thanks to Robyn Hale who has retired from Yarra Ranges Council after nine years and a further four years on Sherbrooke Council prior to that. She also served one year as Mayor. Robyn was a highly conscientious and diligent Councillor who loved and appreciated her Dandenongs environment. She was a great advocate for Birdsland. Thank you Robyn and good wishes for your future.

*Betty Marsden, President*

# Birdsland comes of age

By Judy Wolff

A walk through Birdsland Reserve in Belgrave South is a walk through pioneering tragedy, political controversy and environmental rejuvenation.

Starting at the Mc Nicol Rd entrance, take the driveway or one kilometre walking track to the picnic grounds. From here, stroll around two peaceful lakes or construct a circuit of up to 10 km, passing ruins, an abandoned orchard, views to Melbourne, huge granite boulders and grazing horses.

The area commonly known as Birdsland is in fact three adjoining parcels of land owned by separate government bodies. The approach road, picnic area, buildings and paddocks were purchased by the former Shire of Sherbrooke in 1981 in a narrowly won vote to prevent an unwanted housing sub-division. Melbourne Water owns the lakes and surrounds, and Parks Victoria holds the land beyond, stretching to Wellington Rd and forming the northern-most catchment of Lysterfield Lake Park.

Birdsland's two lakes were constructed in the 1970s as retarding basins on Monbulk Creek to ease the impact of downstream flooding on the Dandenong region. The area surrounding the lakes is home to significant animal species, such as platypus, powerful owl, sugar glider and swamp wallaby. For this reason dogs should be kept on a lead and are not permitted on Parks Victoria land.



Many groups use the reserve for recreation and training: mountain bike riders, cross-country runners, orienteers, dog walkers and fishermen. You might come across a dozen members of the Course Anglers Club of Melbourne seated around the lake, catching carp, roach and eel, only to weigh and return them. The hills above, with their soaring view of the length of the Lysterfield Valley, have inspired artists, musicians, poets and even weddings.

The reserve's many stretches of indigenous plantings are part of a campaign to preserve an ecological link from the Dandenong Ranges right to Port Phillip Bay at Carrum. Plants are sourced from the Southern Dandenongs Community Nursery, situated on the road above and to the left of the first lake. Volunteers propagate local indigenous plants and open for business on Sunday mornings.

Next to the nursery is the mud brick Birdsland Environment Education Centre, built by the shire in the late 1990s after a long struggle for funding. The shire's environmental program facilitator, Simon Woodland, can often be seen poking about creeks with nets and groups of school students.

Close by is a weatherboard farm-

house, garden and orchard, dating from the 1890s. This is presently occupied by caretaker, Kelly O'Brien and family, whose job is to oversee the reserve and manage facilities for horse agistment, a re-introduced traditional land use and source of income for the reserve.

Between the farm buildings and creek, a new wetland of clay-lined basins, spanned by a walkway is taking shape. It is one of 90 wetlands constructed by Melbourne Water, with a primary purpose of filtering nitrogen from stormwater runoff, but also providing education and recreation for visitors. By next summer 46,000 plants will have taken hold and we will see the start of a vibrant ecosystem.

Beyond the lakes lies Dargon's Track, which passes ruins of the original homestead, water-well, and orchard – which still bears fruit: plums, apples, mulberries.

.....

Birdsland's earliest European history as part of Monbulk pastoral run is marked by adversity and tragedy, with names still in use locally.

One of the earliest lessees, Irishman Thomas Dargon, drowned in 1860 while trying to cross the flooded creek to reach his home.

His widow struggled to carry on the lease, but a year later lost all her stock to disease. Soon after, two of her three children died of diphtheria from exposure to rotting carcasses.

She later married Robert Nixon and with him re-established production. The couple had a daughter, Isabella, who married a German sailor, Alfred Brandt, who had begun working on the farm in 1888.

Tragedy struck once more when the now elderly Isabella Brandt was burnt to death in 1958 in a fire that also destroyed the old Dargon homestead.

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With its present serenity and past struggles, Birdsland is passionately defended by locals. Last November, current managers and early advocates celebrated 21 years of Birdsland Reserve being open to the public under shire ownership.

Recognising evolving community



*Cr Robyn Hale together with our president Betty Marsden cut the birthday cake at Birdsland's 21st Birthday celebrations last November.*

values, the Shire of Yarra Ranges has commissioned a new management plan for the reserve, which will soon be available for public comment.

Birdsland Reserve is located at 271 Mc Nichol Rd, Belgrave South and is open every day, excluding days of Total Fire Ban. A new noticeboard in the picnic grounds explains many features, strategies and tracks of the land.

For information on environmental programs phone 9294 6480.



New Information Display board in Birdsland Picnic Ground—opened on 5th November 2006.

Birdsland supporters enjoying the party atmosphere while awaiting the cutting of the 21s birthday cake.



Children from Belgrave Heights Christian School perform an extract of *Ballad of Birdsland* to honour the occasion.

*Photos Carolyn Ebdon & Judy Wolff*

## Vale - Francis John (Frank) May

The League Committee was greatly saddened to learn of the death of Frank May last October. A number of our members were among the largest gathering of people who attended Frank's funeral service. The tributes by Frank's family members and the music were truly inspirational.

Frank joined the League Committee in 1978 when the Committee was trying to reform after the death of May Moon. As District Forester for the Dandenongs District he was a very welcome addition to our numbers, bringing his great experience and knowledge of the environment and the Dandenongs. Frank was a great contributor to Committee discussions and kept us informed of any works and undertakings which could be of concern to us. He was always willing to listen to our views. Sometime during the middle Eighties Frank resigned from the Committee but after a few years absence he returned and served another five years. During the late Eighties he had been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and retired from the Forests Commission, This was a great blow not only to Frank and his family but also to all of us who loved the Dandenongs because we trusted and respected his judgement in the management of the forest. We knew it would be very difficult to replace him.

Before his illness made it too difficult Frank continued with many of his enjoyed activities such as bushwalking and following his interest in lyrebirds. Lucy's wonderful care and devotion to Frank would have been a very positive factor in the management of his illness. They regularly attended our Annual Meetings and were present in 2000 at our 50th Birthday Celebrations. Frank was a man of great integrity and high managerial and technical skills in his chosen profession forestry.

The fact that he spent so many years managing our forests in the Dandenong Ranges is something for which we can be profoundly grateful.

— Betty Marsden

**On Friday October 28, 2005, a thanksgiving service was held for one of the most respected Foresters to have ever served in the Dandenongs - Francis John (Frank) May.**

Born on May 1, 1926, Frank passed away with his wife Lucy by his side at the Frankston Hospital on October 21, 2005. Many of Frank and Lucy's family took part in the moving service. The Dandenongs were well represented by folk from many groups. A number of past work colleagues also attended and again the Dandenongs were well represented.

Frank returned to the Dandenongs as the District Forester in 1973. Earlier during their courting days, he and Lucy had spent many hours pursuing the haunts of the Lyrebirds in Sherbrooke Forest. Frank managed a number of Forest Districts before the Dandenongs, building an admirable reputation as a manager. These districts included Buchan, Marysville and prior to the Dandenongs, Powelltown. Frank was very supportive of his staff, and would defend them and his department if he considered that they had been unfairly criticized or discriminated against. He had great technical and organizational skills, and loved dealing with electronics and anything mechanical.

Frank was well read, and he kept up with the latest research. He was extremely proud of both his family and profession. His love of the environment, particularly of the Dandenongs, led him to join the committee of the Save The Dandenongs League, and he lent his valuable support to our Friends Group, and the Lyrebird Survey Group. Several years after Frank's appointment, the Friends responded to Frank's support by presenting him with a section of English Ivy trunk that

## Green Wedge Amendments

had been mounted on a backing board with an inscription.

Frank's love for the environment and Lyrebirds continued after his retirement, and he was an active member of the Maroon-dah Bushwalking Club and the Lyrebird Survey Group for some years. Lucy has always been of great support to Frank in the many Forest Districts throughout Victoria where his career had taken them, and in all his other interests including a great love of classical music. Frank hadn't kept the best of health in recent years, suffering from Parkinson's Disease.

On Fathers' Day 2005 Frank and Lucy's youngest son Barrie summed up the feelings of his family and friends when he wrote:

**"Every time I see a tree  
I see your face,  
every time I listen to music  
I hear your voice,  
and every time I hold my  
children  
I feel your touch."**

Barrie's words were included in the order of service for Frank's Thanksgiving Service.

A man of great ability and sensitivity with a deep understanding of the complexities of the Dandenongs.

Always a gentleman, he will be sadly missed by us all.

*John Lloyd*

*Forest Focus, Issue 112,  
Friends of Sherbrooke Forest*

### **THE Shire of Yarra Ranges Lyster Ward councillor Samantha Dunn has called on Planning Minister Rob Hulls to pull back two projects as they contradict the green wedge planning principal.**

Cr Dunn said this is a warning to all planners that commercial proposal will not be approved by the council if they are in a green wedge zone.

She said the council was sending a clear message that if a business is commercial and the proposal is within a green wedge zone, then they should not bother applying.

At a council meeting recently, Cr Dunn led the charge to have the proposals for the Mt Evelyn 2600-seat auditorium and the Lilydale funeral parlour, currently under consideration for planning scheme amendments, to be withdrawn.

Cr Dunn also called on the council to advise Mr Hulls that the Yarra Glen supermarket proposal is to proceed with the exhibition of the amendment, on the condition that the proposed development is not in the green wedge zone.

Cr Dunn said at the moment, the supermarket development has a small section, a proposed driveway, which is contained within the green wedge zone.

Green wedges are open landscapes set aside more than 30 years ago to concern rural activities and significant natural features and resources between the growth areas of metropolitan Melbourne and the

outer suburban areas.

Chirnside Park Ward councillor Ken Smith said that the previous council had allowed for the three developments to be exhibited with the planning scheme amendments and that process should continue.

Cr Smith said the minister could make a decision tomorrow and that any recommendation the council makes would be redundant, as the proposal would come back to the council for further comments from residents.

He also raised concern over the fairness to the applicant of this decision to withdraw the council's original recommendation.

Cr Smith said it was the wrong way to go about business and that it would be an abuse of the process after the former council made a decision on the applications.

He said he failed to see the reasoning behind withdrawing the applications from the Minister as they would either come back before the council or be dismissed by the minister.

Walling Ward councillor Len Cox said that he agreed with the move to withdraw the applications, but also insisted if the council was to take this action on the three applications, it needed to be consistent on all green wedge proposals.

Cr Dunn said it was important to send a message to the wider community that non-agricultural proposals in a green wedge area are not encouraged or supported by the council.

*Mountain Views Mail, 7/3/2006*

# Wastewater – Death by a thousand flushes

It's been common knowledge for many of us living in the Dandenongs that the management of domestic wastewater is not sustainable in its current form. The majority of properties have failing onsite systems discharging wastewater into the natural environment. It is estimated that 17,500 septic systems are installed in the Dandenongs, many on small blocks, well past their lifespan, and often are unknown and therefore unmanaged by their owners. The legislative and regulatory environment can be politely described as complex and provides a situation where the responsibilities of the various actors involved remain uncertain even in the face of significant attempts to clarify. Impacts on the environment from wastewater have been well established by research, however the specific details require more research to pin-point the culprits in terms of observed tree die-back in the forests.

The DRWW steering committee has reached consensus on some key points that I would like to share with you. Firstly we need a long term solution to the wastewater issue that includes the installation of wastewater systems that will be sustainable in not just environmental terms but also be socially appropriate, technically feasible, cost effective & just, within a supportive regulatory environment where responsibilities are clearly articulated and backed up with legislation that enable their fulfilment. The work for this needs to begin now – the steering committee has delved into all the factors that limit the resolution of this issue currently and are preparing recommendations to the State Government on the steps it could take to assist. Many of the issues identified as barriers to solutions are well beyond the jurisdiction of

the stakeholders and require State level action.

Traditional sewerage technologies are inappropriate given the damage that construction will have on the already highly stressed local environment. A technical solution must be generated that takes into account the physical characteristics of the Dandenongs along with the high value placed on this environment by residents and visitors alike.

The second aspect of our proposal addresses the need for immediate action – the problem is now – a truly sustainable solution cannot be implemented overnight but something must be done and soon. The quickest way we can have an impact is to ensure that the existing septic systems are operating at their best. This involves ensuring that people are aware that they have a septic system and that this requires some maintenance to operate properly as well as being more selective in what is out into the system. Property owners would be required to have their septic system pumped every three years, and advice would be provided on how to keep the system operating well via water conservation and the reduction of septic-unfriendly chemicals. Information on locating the septic and on how to look after the sand filter would be provided – i.e. Its not a good idea to park your car on it or to build a shed on top of it. These actions would require a community education program which would be run by the shire. The establishment of powers for Council to be able to enforce the EPA code of practice for septic systems, the committee has investigated a number of ways that this could be achieved and these will be forwarded to the Minister for the Environment.

## Key developments in Wastewater over the last couple of years

The State Government, through DSE, has initiated a *Country Town Sewerage Program* that includes the trialling of various technologies including decentralised wastewater systems. This research will prove vital in the decisions for future options for Dandenongs and the rest of the Shire.

## Domestic Wastewater Management Plan

Councils with a large number of septic systems are required to prepare plan for how these will be managed and establish areas that are to be prioritised for the backlog program. The Shire will be producing a draft for public comment by end of March 2006.

## Yarra River Action Plan

Identifies many of the pollution issues in the Yarra River as associated with *e.coli*, much of which is believed to come from unsewered areas with failing septic systems. The plan identifies most of the tributaries of the Yarra that flow from the Dandenongs as being of moderate health – these tributaries represent the headwaters of the Yarra. The plan announces extra money for the backlog program for areas reliant on septic systems – however it proposes the solution as reticulated sewerage – as identified above this is not appropriate for our region in most cases.

## Auditor General Audit of Backlog Program

The Auditor General has been undertaking a performance audit entitled 'Managing backlog sewerage connections'. The objective of the audit is to determine whether the sewerage backlog programs are achieving their objectives of reducing environmental and public health risks across Victoria by increasing the number of properties provided with, and connected to, reticulated or alternative sewerage systems. The report is expected to be tabled in parliament in March 2006.

If you are interested in finding out more about this or even would consider joining in a UYDEC working group that I am seeking to establish to work on this issue over the remainder of this year, then please get in touch with Jo Tenner [jotenner@mpx.com.au](mailto:jotenner@mpx.com.au) or 9755 3038.

This is an excerpt from a much larger report that will be finished in about 6 weeks time.

## Dandenong Ranges Wastewater Steering Committee

The Steering Committee was set up as the result of a 'Integrated Planning and Health: Wastewater in the Dandenongs' project which involved a number of stakeholder workshops, the final one held in May 2003 recommended the establishment of the steering committee.

The steering committee first met in November 2004 and it was envisioned that the committee would run for a period of two years. As this issue sits with no single agency or department, it was considered essential to include all those who play a role in the system.

### Membership of the committee includes:

- Shire of Yarra Ranges (Environment, Public Health, Councillor)
  - Southern Rural Water
  - South East Water
  - Yarra Valley Water
  - Melbourne Water
  - Environment Protection Authority
  - Department of Sustainability and Environment – Country Town Water Supply & Sewerage Program
  - Parks Victoria
  - Port Phillip and Western Port Catchment Management Authority
  - Monbulk Member of Parliament
  - UYDEC
  - Dandenong Ranges Tourism
- Community members (8)



# RECOMMENDED READING:

## Tom Tregellas – Pioneer Naturalist

By Esther Hardware

On Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April, the Bird Observers Club of Australia, together with Sherbrooke Lyrebird Survey Group launched the book "Tom Tregellas – Pioneer Naturalist".

This biography of Tom Tregellas and his study of the lyrebirds in Sherbrooke has been meticulously researched and beautifully illustrated by Esther Hardware.

Tom's family migrated from Cornwall to Victoria in the 1850s and he was born at Huntly, near Bendigo, in 1864. The book describes his early interest in natural history, his marriage in Melbourne, and his skill in glass plate photography and record-keeping, developed through his friendships with early members of the Bird Observers Club. In the last twenty years of his life he concentrated on his study of the lyrebird, which was then in severe decline, and it was during this time that he became famous as the resident of 'The Log' in Hardy Gully. Decades after his death he was still remembered for his lively 'magic lantern' lectures.

The book will be of interest to naturalists and family historians, residents of the Dandenongs, and anyone interested in the conservation of the Lyrebird. It is priced at \$20.00 which includes a CD of lyrebird calls, and is available from Bird Observers Club of Australia, P.O. Box 185, Nunawading, Vic. 3131, phone 9877 5342.

## Bred To Be Wild From the Diary of Naturalist, Des Hackett

By Peter Preuss

With just two Leadbeater's Possum left in captivity, the publication of this book is very timely. It will provoke public debate about the future management of this endangered species while at the same time provide a

fascinating insight to the behaviour of the leadbeater's Possum and the work of Des Hackett.

– Sera Blair, President – Friends of the Leadbeater's Possum

Des Hackett worked tirelessly to provide zoos throughout the world with thriving colonies of Leadbeater's Possum. His dream, documented by this book, was to see his captive bred Leadbeater's shore up the wild population of this endangered species. Unfortunately, the wild population is still on the decline as logging continues throughout much of their natural range. The species has become virtually extinct in captivity and we may have missed out opportunity to turn the tide of extinction for our State emblem.

– David Swinson, Secretary – Upper Yarra Conservation Society

This book questions the function of zoos in terms of conservation and exposes our wildlife authorities as incompetent in terms of protecting our wildlife heritage. Would we allow this to happen to the panda or gorilla? When will we learn to truly appreciate our unique native wildlife?

– Maryland Wilson, President – Australian Wildlife Protection Council

Copies of Bred To Be Wild are available at \$35.00 each including postage and GST. \$5.00 from the purchase price of each copy will be donated to whichever of the following endorsing organisations you wish to nominate.

- Australian Wildlife Protection Council
- Friends of the Leadbeater's Possum Upper Yarra Conservation Society.

## Tea and Charity: the Life and Times of James Griffiths, Tea Merchant and Philanthropist

By Volkhard Wehner

THE LIFE AND TIMES of a tea baron and philanthropist have been detailed in a new book by a local historian.

Writer and historian Volkhard Wehner recently launched his book on James Griffiths, an English-born merchant who ran his empire from an estate in The Basin and roamed the Hills helping the poor and destitute.

For Mr Wehner, whose many books include a centenary history of Olinda, the work is the culmination of 25 years of research into the deeds and motivation of Griffiths.

Born in 1850 into a modest background in Wolverhampton, Griffiths came to Australia in part to escape the stigma of alcoholism that ran through his family.

A pious Christian, Griffiths built himself a magnificent house called Ferndale at the foot of the Dandenongs in the late 1880s and would soon become one of the richest tea merchants in Australia.

"The Griffiths empire once ruled the world, and his tea was drunk by all corners of Australia," Mr Wehner said.

Griffiths and his wife of more than 50 years would eventually be killed when a steam train collided with their carriage on a Bayswater level crossing in 1925, while Ferndale continued to dominate the valley above The Basin for 70 years until it was destroyed in the disastrous bushfires of 1962.

## RECOMMENDED READING:

It was partly Griffiths's demise, from extraordinary fame and fortune to total obscurity, that drew Mr Wehner to his subject.

"The reason I wrote about him is because he is forgotten. Fallen heroes are my heroes.

"At the time of his death, Griffiths would have been the leading tea merchant in Australia.

"His death was a very major tragedy and made the headlines of the metropolitan papers because he was so noted an individual and the brand was so well known," he said.

In addition to Griffiths's stature as a merchant, Mr Wehner has concerned himself with his subject's vast moral and altruistic dimensions.

Griffiths was in a position to help when, in the 1890s, the colonial government threw open preserved crown land in the Dandenongs to Melbourne's homeless and unemployed.

With no money, jobs, housing or social services, only the generosity of benefactors could help alleviate the suffering of the new arrivals.

"From his huge mansion at the foot of the hills, Mr Griffiths set out into the Dandenongs with bags of shilling coins, bags of flour, potatoes and loaves of bread, and gave them to anyone who looked poor.

"He also put lots of money into churches when churches held the community together," Mr Wehner said.

Griffiths helped build churches at Sassafras and Monbulk, set up a Christian boarding house in Olinda, and took a major interest in a boys'

home in The Basin, which housed orphans and taught wayward young men honest work in the orchard industry.

His was an age when belief in God was almost universal and Griffiths appeared to embody the idea that God helped those who helped themselves.

"He saw himself as an improver of the world.

"Bringing the Kingdom of Heaven onto this earth, that was the basic thinking of the altruistic Victorian," Mr Wehner said.

Though so much of what Griffiths brought to the region has been erased, the passion of his biographer has brought traces of that kingdom back to life.

Tea and Charity; the Life and Times of James Griffiths, Tea Merchant and Philanthropist is available by phoning Mr Wehner on 9889 3511.

## Secession Bid Brings Memories

As reported in the Leader Free Press, last February, news of a secession bid in the Dandenongs triggered mixed memories for a couple of Sherbrooke shire presidents.

Save the Dandenongs League president Betty Marsden said: "I would be inclined to agree with it . . . it was very sad that Emerald was ever put into Cardinia Shire.

"People will argue that Yarra Ranges is already very large, but then so is Cardinia." said Ms Marsden, "And I don't think the people of Emerald have ever got much out of Cardinia.

## Secession Bid Brings Memories (cont.)

I know quite a few Emerald people who are feeling frustrated and disgruntled with Cardinia Council."

Out of the 12 Emerald, Cockatoo and Gembrook residents reported in the Free Press, only one said they thought it should be left as it is.

Ms. Marsden said she never got over the Kennett Government's decision to lop bits of the former Sherbrooke Shire into Cardinia and Knox, in the 1994 amalgamations.

A concerted push to form a Dandenong Ranges Council at the time saw two major rallies and 5000-plus support letters.

"But . . . they (the government) were determined to carve it up." Ms Marsden said. "It was a political decision rather than a common sense decision."

Former Sherbrooke shire president Louis Delacretaz said the Government's advertised proposal at the time of amalgamation was for all of the Dandenong Ranges to be part of Yarra Ranges but it never eventuated.

"It was a shame . . . the Dandenong Ranges was torn asunder," Mr Delacretaz said.

He said of the latest secession bid: "It just indicates how important it is for councils to look after their communities on the edges – this is the real message here.

"It's too easy for councils to lose focus of the communities that are separate from the main towns." He said it was also unfortunate that communities like Menzies Creek were split in half by shire boundaries.

Ms Marsden said if Emerald, Cockatoo and Gembrook residents wanted to move to Yarra Ranges they would have to make a huge fuss.

# Genetically Modified Roses in the Shire of Yarra Ranges

## Councillor Samantha Dunn urges you to take action

I am very disappointed to learn that the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) has approved the trial of a genetically modified (GM) rose to take place in the Yarra Ranges.

I condemn the decision of the OGTR, I believe the OGTR has shown a complete disrespect for our community and its wishes to remain GM Free. This trial poses a massive threat to our clean and green agriculture industry.

The decision to allow Florigene Ltd (florigene@florigene.com.au) to grow a genetically modified rose is in spite of strong opposition from the council, which in February 2001 adopted a policy opposing the introduction of GMO crops into the shire following widespread community concern.

The OGTR has disregarded the council's written submission against the trial and its official policy opposing GMOs. The testing and controlled release of a genetically modified rose poses a real threat to the Yarra Ranges' agricultural and horticultural producers and to the region's precious biodiversity.

The council's objection to GMOs is not just based on philosophical concerns; we have major concerns on scientific grounds and the potential impact on our farmers and horticultural industries.

Not enough is known about the potential effects of a genetically modified rose on insect life including native and exotic pollinating insects, its potential for recombinant viruses and the level of gene flow with other rose cultivars and potential weediness from altered genes.

In my opinion none of these issues have been adequately addressed by the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and I am calling for its decision to be reversed.

**The Yarra Ranges' environment and its agricultural sector is too precious to risk with a GMO trial.**

This link

<http://www.ogtr.gov.au/ir/dir060.htm> will connect you to a range of relevant documents relating to this decision on the OGTR website including:

Public notification of the decision on application DIR 060/2005

Executive Summary of the finalised Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan

Technical Summary of the finalised Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan

Finalised Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan

Licence conditions

Questions and Answers on the decision

The Biology and Ecology of Rose (Rosa x hybrida) document

Risk Analysis Framework for Licence Applications to the OGTR

**For regular updates visit my blog:**

[Http://crdunn.blogspot.com](http://crdunn.blogspot.com)

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*what can you  
do? ....*

### Write to:

Dr Sue Meeks, OGTR -  
[ogtr@health.gov.au](mailto:ogtr@health.gov.au) requesting that she reverse her decision.

### Write and voice your disapproval to:

The Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, Tony Abbot  
[Tony.Abbott.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Tony.Abbott.MP@aph.gov.au)

### Your local federal MP:

Jason Wood (Latrobe)  
[Jason.Wod.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Jason.Wod.MP@aph.gov.au)

Tony Smith (Casey)  
[Tony.Smith.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Tony.Smith.MP@aph.gov.au)

### Your local state MP:

James Merlino (Monbulk)  
[james.merlino@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:james.merlino@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Tammy Lobato (Gembrook)  
[tammy.lobato@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:tammy.lobato@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Heather McTaggart (Evelyn)  
[heather.mctaggart@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:heather.mctaggart@parliament.vic.gov.au)

**and don't forget to cc me -**  
[s.dunn@yarraranges.vic.gov.au](mailto:s.dunn@yarraranges.vic.gov.au)

## Bypassing Belgrave's real transport issues

**The Save the Dandenongs League has labelled the Belgrave bypass 'an expensive short term solution to transport problems in the Hills'.**

Group spokesman Louis Delacretaz said what was proposed amounted to a 'multimillion dollar Band-Aid' when a comprehensive traffic solution was called for.

"You've really got to look at the bigger picture. My concern with the bypass is that 10 years after you do it you still have the same problems," he said.

Mr Delacretaz pointed out that the real issue is providing a solution that gives "hills" residents viable alternatives to road transport instead of moving the traffic jam to the roundabout at the end of Storey Rd.

According to the SDL, Hills residents are faced with several transport problems.

These include limited public transport services for Monbulk, Emerald and other townships beyond Belgrave, poor local planning decisions that forced residents to rely on motor vehicles to access shops and services, and rising petrol prices.

Mr Delacretaz said it was time the government listened to the community rather than scripting its response.

"The bypass treats the symptoms while the underlying causes like inadequate public

transport festers away. We need long-term answers like boosting public transport to give us realistic alternatives before climate change and rising petrol prices take away our options," he said.

But Mr Wood hit back at Mr Delacretaz's suggestion that long-term public transport strategy had been overlooked.

Mr Wood pointed to his presence on the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage, which tabled its report on sustainable cities last September, as evidence of his advocacy for public transport.

The bipartisan report included recommendations to boost Australian Government funding for public transport systems in major cities and to provide specific funding for sustainable public transport infrastructure for suburbs and developments on the outer fringe of cities.

The committee also recommended reviewing current fringe benefits tax concessions for car use, removal of incentives for greater car use and new incentives for using other modes of transport.

"That report is something I'm very proud of but it doesn't look like (the Save the Dandenongs League) has read it.

"I'd strongly encourage Save the Dandenongs League to go away and look at the sustainable cities report and make a public comment on it," he said.

Mr Wood, who has access to

Federal strategic regional transport funding for a road project, said the bypass issue was 'not connected' to the public transport question.

"We've written to 12,000 people to get their views and the majority that responded supported a deviation to sort out traffic congestion in Belgrave once and for all.

"All this traffic is killing Belgrave and I just want to bring it back to life," he said.

The Save the Dandenongs League has urged government agencies not to bypass what it says are the real transport issues.

"We commend the recommendations to boost funding for public transport systems and applaud Mr Wood's advocacy for sustainable cities, said Mr Delacretaz

"However the proof of the government's commitment to improving public transport lies in the amount of money being made available to improve our rail infrastructure.

"Urgent action is needed to turn around decades of neglect by government of the public transport system.

*Ranges Trader Mail, 28/3/06*

Please send contributions for the next newsletter to:-

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10 Ropely Grange,  
Upwey, VIC, 3158

carebdon@gmail.com

If undelivered return to:  
**Save the Dandenongs League Inc.**



PO Box 146  
Kallista VIC 3791

Phone: (03) 9755 2777  
Email: [contact@sdl.org.au](mailto:contact@sdl.org.au)



**Subscriptions now due...see enclosed form**

**Save The Dandenongs League Inc**

**Our Annual General Meeting**

will be held on

**Sunday 28 May 2006 in the  
Kallista Community House**

Church street Kallista

(off the Village Green adjacent to the  
Mechanics Hall; Melways map 75 K3)

commencing at **2.30PM**

Guest Speaker:

**Jim Montgomery from The Greens**

will be presenting on

**Ngintaka Heritage Songline**

This 300km songline trail in South Australia near the Northern Territory border follows the footsteps of Wati Ngintaka. Wati Ngintaka is the Giant Perentie Lizard Man, a spirit being from creation time who formed mountains and salt lakes, giving people many of the bush foods gathered today.

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All welcome, afternoon tea provided

Enquiries: Betty Marsden 9755 2777