



# The Faraday Farrago

*NEWSLETTER OF THE FARADAY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION INC.*

ISSUE NO. 4 - CHRISTMAS 2009



## **Dunstons' Flat**

Following ongoing discussions with Parks Victoria, the Committee met with district ranger/team leader Noel Muller on Wednesday evening 18th November on site at Dunstons Flat, formerly known as the Faraday Common.

Parks Victoria have since confirmed in writing their willingness for us to become a friends group, and we now have access to an area of considerable local significance.

The Faraday Community Association under the guidance of ParksVic will now be 'guardians' of this picturesque area. Thus our association effectively now has a 'home' with potential financial assistance for development including picnic seating, parking and barbecue area.

Watch this space for further developments and a date for our first community meeting and barbecue at Dustons' Flat!

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## **The Musselwhite Family By Peter McCarthy**

John Musselwhite bought 50 acres of land in two lots of the original Faraday subdivision in October 1855, then bought more land in 1857, 1858 and 1871, the latter two bought in partnership with William Thorn. In total he held just under 350 acres. He built an eight-roomed stone and weatherboard house on Lot 1, which was 204 acres, where Musselwhite Drive now runs across from the Sutton Grange Road to Mount Alexander.

John Musselwhite was born in Fawley, Hampshire in 1826 and his wife Mary Ann was eight years younger, a domestic servant from Glenmorganshire in Wales. John arrived in Australia in 1852, Mary in 1853, and they married in the Castlemaine Schoolhouse in October 1855, two weeks after John bought the land at Faraday. It is curious that John sometimes signed his name as John M. White, and family legend says that Mary complained that if she had known he was John Musselwhite she would not have married him. This might have been a joke, as a John Musselwhite was well known as the jailer at Hobart Town.

They raised a large family while operating a mixed farm and dairy. Two children, Annie and Elizabeth, died young and a memorial to them beside the water race was restored by the family in the late 1960s. Elizabeth was a victim of "cot death" in 1858, while Annie drowned in the swamp in front of the house in 1861. At the inquest, John said "Yesterday afternoon I left home after dinner and went to get a horse to saddle. Whilst I was doing it I saw my wife going towards the waterhole in front of the house. When she was there she gave a scream. I thought she had seen a snake as it is a swamp. But as she cried again I ran and saw the child in the water. I took it out, it was dead. I had not been away from the house half an hour. I have not



The house the Musselwhites lived in  
(photo courtesy Kevin Wilson)

got the necessary fences up." In Mary's evidence she referred to the water hole and "a little path down to it, not ten yards from the door". About ten years ago Kevin Wilson, who is a direct descendant of John and Mary, found the stone path across the swamp and the timber-lined waterhole while he was building a dam on the property. A family historian has identified about five hundred

descendants of John and Mary, some still in the district.

John was a member of the original Faraday School Committee and he donated the granite for the school's construction which came from his property. Perhaps the most dramatic moment of his life happened on New Year's Day in 1889, when flooding in the Castlemaine and Bendigo districts followed widespread heavy rain. The creeks and rivers rose quickly, sweeping away many bridges and inundating shops and houses.

The Expedition Pass Reservoir lay upstream of Chewton, with Castlemaine further downstream to the north. John Musslewhite saw a "waterspout" falling on the flanks of Mount Alexander and rode furiously to warn the keeper of the reservoir, who opened the scour valve and dumped the reservoir water into Forest Creek.

The first significant location below the reservoir was the Francis Ormond mine. As Forest Creek rose, water began to flow into the shaft of the Francis Ormond mine that stood on its banks.

A contemporary photograph shows that the mine was so close to Forest Creek that the mullock surrounding the shaft collar had encroached on the western bank. The mine tramway crossed the creek from the shaft, with a mullock abutment on the east bank forming the other half of a

restriction in the creek which would have been critical once the flood rose.

Miners W. Dennis and A. O'Connor were at the bottom of the shaft, sinking it deeper when the inrush began. There was no escape as the water roared down the 90 metre shaft. The impact must have knocked them over, with no chance to climb into the kibble (bucket) or pull the knocker line to be hauled up. In seconds the water level was above their heads as it foamed and churned their bodies over and over.

On the surface the creek grew to a brown sea which within ten minutes had covered the shaft and filled it completely. There was nothing the mine manager or anyone could do until the flood receded. The Mount Alexander Mail reported on the following day that the two men had drowned, which suggests that no hope was held for their survival by those who had seen the flood and knew the mine.

By January 4th, three days after the disaster, the mine pumps had reduced the water level to 25 metres below surface with 65 metres still to go. Experienced miners thought that the deeper workings had probably collapsed and that the bodies would never be recovered. Several weeks would be required to dewater the mine.

Dennis left a wife and six children and O'Connor, whose wife had died two years previously, had five children. The Mayor of Castlemaine raised a subscription for the widow and orphans.

The pumps proved unequal to the task of dewatering the mine and a larger surface plant was installed. This eventually got the water down, the bodies were recovered and the mine continued to operate.

After the flood, several large logs were found on the top of the Expedition Pass reservoir. The keeper estimated that the water had flowed one metre



The ruins of the Musselwhite house.

deep over the crest, so his action in opening the scour valve would have made no difference in the downstream flows.



The rebuilt house -

The Musselwhite home was abandoned by the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century and was eventually burned down, probably by rabbiters who camped there. It stood in ruins until rebuilt to a similar plan by Peter and Anthea McCarthy in 2001.

The new house incorporates steps, slate floor and the cellar from the old house, while the stone from the walls was used to build garden walls.

**BUSH FIRES**

From the Mount Alexander Mail, January 10<sup>th</sup> 1862.

The first bush fire we have noticed this season was observed on Tuesday, in the direction of Sutton Grange or Faraday. The atmosphere at Golden Point was darkened with the smoke, which appeared to come from a considerable distance. We have no doubt that the ignition of the grass this year will be attended with more serious consequences than usual.

The remarkable quantity of rain that fell during the beginning of summer developed all descriptions of bush vegetation to an immense degree, and should the reported predictions of the natives, of unwonted heat through the next two or three months be verified, conflagrations of an extraordinary character may be anticipated. The probability of such events taking place is rendered more likely by the fact that several seasons have elapsed without these phenomena assuming the serious proportions that they used to annually attain.

The hot weather of the last week or ten days having tendered the herbage highly

inflammable, we would advise all whose property might be endangered by an accidental fire to at once resort to the well-known and efficacious precaution of burning on a calm day the grass round their premises. Within the last fortnight we have seen one or two illustrations of the utility of this practice. Since writing the above, we have learned that the smoke that has enveloped us for the last day or two proceeded from a great fire in the Black Forest.

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24 Hour Wildlife Emergency  
**13 000 WILDLIFE**  
 13 000 94535  
 Wildlife Victoria [www.wildlifevictoria.org.au](http://www.wildlifevictoria.org.au)



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**THE COLIBAN SYSTEM**  
 By Alan J. Elliot

In 1993 the former Shire of Metcalfe commissioned a Heritage Study to record environmental history, historic buildings and historic sites, to assist in regional planning.

The study, carried out by Karen Twigg and Wendy Jacobs, was published in 1994. A number of historic sites and buildings in Faraday were listed and detailed including the Faraday

School, Methodist Church, Boyles Inn and the Coliban water supply system.

First proposed in 1862, this early engineering feat includes over 500Km of open channels carrying water by gravity feed from the three main reservoirs south of Malmsbury, some 70Km north to the Sandhurst Reservoir.

The main Harcourt channel includes three tunnels, the largest of which runs through Faraday. This tunnel is 2640 feet long (over 0.8Km) and 9 foot (2.74m) in diameter. From

the south it commences beside the (Old) Calder Highway on the western side and travels **under** Kennedys Lane, **under** Boyles Inn, **under** Faradale Drive, **under** Don Gillies property and exits at the rear of Elliot's property to the north (see pic).

The entrances are of split and dressed granite blocks with granite keystones, and are lined with brick for the first 15 metres. There are four granite capped, brick lined vertical shafts sunk into the tunnel from the surface above, the deepest of which is 55 feet (16.76m) (see pic).

The tunnels were drilled and blasted by experienced former gold-miners, and several men died from blasting accidents during the construction work.

After over 150 years the channel system remains in use and water still flows through the tunnels.

If the 'proposed' pipeline ever replaces the channel system for water delivery, the tunnels and associated works will retain their historical significance to this area. Alternatively they would make a perfect fire refuge or air-raid shelter! Or wine cellar!



**Thank You**

To Strategem Financial Group Pty Ltd for continuing to provide the printing facilities for our newsletter. A welcome and appreciated community minded gesture.

**The next meeting of the Association will be at 41 Faraday Drive on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February at 6:30pm and everyone is invited. Please bring a plate and drinks.**

**Reminder:  
Faraday Frolics  
Sat 12th December**



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**Deadline for articles to be considered for inclusion in the next (Autumn) newsletter is February 13<sup>th</sup> 2010. Please forward c/- PO Box 58, Elphinstone 3448 to the attention of the Editor or to our new email address: [faradayfarrago@yahoo.com.au](mailto:faradayfarrago@yahoo.com.au)**

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**Membership Application: Please copy and forward, with annual fee of \$10.00 to: Robert English, Treasurer, Faraday Community Association. PO Box 58, Elphinstone 3448**

- Name:
- Address:
- Email Address:
- Phone:

**NUMBER OF CURRENT MEMBERS: 27**