



#### Committee

PRESIDENT: Bill Willett  
VICE PRESIDENT: Janine Crawford  
TREASURER: Meredith Tolliday  
SECRETARY: T.B.A.  
RESEARCH OFFICER: Kaye Patterson  
LIBRARIAN: Judi Ryan  
WEBMASTER: Karl Phillipson  
EDITOR: John Crawford  
GSV REPRESENTATIVE: Bill Willett  
PUBLICITY OFFICER: Mary Bridgland.

**ISSUE 128**  
MARCH 2024

#### Contact details

president@benallafamilyresearchgroup.org  
vice president@benallafamilyresearchgroup.org  
secretary@benallafamilyresearchgroup.org  
treasurer@benallafamilyresearchgroup.org  
research@benallafamilyresearchgroup.org

Hello everyone,

Goodness me, it's March 2024 already. Where is the time going? Anyway, it's a new year, and time for another newsletter. We will endeavor to keep you up to date with happenings within the group, as usual, along with some humour, and reports from our President, and Research team etc. During 2024, it will be business as usual, researching family trees, and undertaking associated projects. There is also the ongoing issue of looking for a new home, which will affect the Group until the situation is resolved.

Regarding any inquiries for family research, or inquiries in general over the holidays, contact us on our Website, or email our Secretary – [secretary@benallafamilyresearchgroup.org](mailto:secretary@benallafamilyresearchgroup.org) or our President Bill Willett – [president@benallafamilyresearchgroup.org](mailto:president@benallafamilyresearchgroup.org)

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT.**

Hello All,

Back to writing reports for another newsletter again. I don't have much to report this time other than I am thankful that the weather is cooling down slightly at the moment.

Our work at the rooms is continuing along at the regular pace. Still indexing the Benalla Shire Rate Books and will be continuing doing that for some time yet, as I am only up to 1936, and have seven more years to go. At the current rate of speed, I will be about 105 before I finish. Better late than never.

Having a remarkable run of new memberships of late which confirms the increase in genealogy we have encountered over the past couple of months, and that we are still a needed part of the Benalla community. Where we will be working from in the future is still a contentious issue at present. No further leads to a new premises after the current 48-year occupancy ends with the sale of the current property.

Research seems to be holding on at the moment with a number of requests from clients on our website, and several visits from people directly to the rooms.

Library staff continue to sort and catalogue new and donated resources which make them available to read in the rooms or borrow and take home if you are a member to read at your leisure. And to help you pick the books to read, a great number of them have been, and are being indexed by Sue McNutt, a very talented and productive member.

The "Wendy's" project, "Lone Graves of Benalla and District" is progressing fast and is likely to become a second edition with the number of unmarked graves being located. They are very excited at the possibility of publication but are having a lot of fun in the meantime, finding, and recording the locations of these graves.

The group is headlining the Benalla Heritage Festival again this year, and have bought on board seventeen like groups all involved in heritage in some way to make up the program for this year's festival, having last year won a "Merit award" from the Benalla Rural City Council as a participating organization in the Australia Day Awards. We were very chuffed as it was the first "Merit Award" presented.

Look forward to meeting a few more members in the rooms for a cuppa and biccys in the next few months.

Cheers, Bill.

### **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS.**

A sincere welcome to the new members who have signed up over the past month or so. Michelle Verwey, Marg Merriman, Colleen Kathleen, Julie Schulz, Heather Crawley, Jacqueline Durrant, Lorraine Dunn are now all signed up to use and borrow the groups resources and read and research to their hearts content. Thank you, guys, and enjoy.

### **DNA BECOMING POPULAR**

Having your DNA tested and analyzed is becoming a popular thing to do in recent months. Several of our members have enquired about the opportunities available and the worth of getting the job done. We have found a few relatives that we didn't know existed and it has opened up a couple of new branches in family trees hitherto unknown.

But it is not the magic end-all brick wall scenario as some people have claimed but it certainly is an interesting service that is now quite a common occurrence.

However, it hasn't solved one of our members brick walls trying to find the lineage of the Curry/Beacom family from Ireland. But I guess all Irish genealogy is fraught with severe handicaps and restrictions when being accessed. I must admit that it is getting better all the time with major sets of information being released by various churches and institutions on a daily basis now, but it can't come quick for Bill. He has been driven to insanity over the family.

### **RESEARCH REPORT**

In the last few months, we have had more people coming into our rooms for research than we have had emailing research requests. A number of the visitors have been from outside Benalla:

- from Sydney researching VICARY
- from Wangaratta researching REYNOLDS
- from Melbourne researching MEADOWS
- from England researching Mathew HARVEY, who was an early Scab Inspector for Benalla area
- from Castlemaine researching VALLENDER/GUNN

We have had local visitors to our rooms researching SONENBERG, NICHOL(L), RIDLEY, PALLOT and GRANT. A new member has been researching some of Benalla's heritage houses by looking at our rate books.

We have had a couple of rate requests, for Thomas and Catherine WELSH, and for CRAWFORD.

We have produced one Family Tree Chart for a woman in Melbourne who wanted to give it to her husband for a Christmas present. Two 'Cousin' Tree Charts have also been created and printed for a local member.

A couple of members have been helped with the use of Ancestry.

Wendy M and Wendy W have completed the 'Lonely Graves of Benalla and District' book and a limited number of copies have been printed, with the plan to have it professionally printed in the near future.

Wendy W has completed the Lurg Information board for the Winton Cemetery and it is ready for printing.

Kaye

Research Officer



*Benalla*  
**HERITAGE  
FESTIVAL**

## Save these dates.

*“2024 National Heritage Festival in Benalla Festival 1-5 May”*

The 2024 National Heritage Festival in Benalla Festival will be held from 10:30 am Wednesday 1 May to 5:00 pm Sunday 5 May 2024.

“Connections” – the theme of the 2024 National heritage in Benalla – promises to be a fascinating and enjoyable experience for all ages.

More than 15 events in Benalla and district will take you on a trip through Benalla’s past, its links with the present and the possibilities for the future. Festival events include after dark cemetery tours, guided history walks, movies, videos and displays, expert talks on DNA, Aboriginal resistance and colonisation, and open historical buildings.

Event locations include Benalla CBD, Winton Cemetery, Winton Wetlands, Tatong, and Swanpool.

Keep an eye out for an email containing the 2024 National Heritage Festival in Benalla Festival brochure sent to BFRG members.

In the meantime, view Benalla’s events in the 2024 National Heritage Festival in Benalla [https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/explore/?keyword=benalla&ahfdate-search=&ahf-region=VIC&region-lat=-36.9847807&region-lng=143.3906074&content=ahf\\_event](https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/explore/?keyword=benalla&ahfdate-search=&ahf-region=VIC&region-lat=-36.9847807&region-lng=143.3906074&content=ahf_event)

This event is brought to you by the BFRG’s *Benalla Heritage Network*.

**Do you have old photos you want to preserve, share or retouch?**

**We can scan them, and if needed, enhance, retouch or possibly repair them for you.**

**Scanning Cost:**

Members	\$1.50 per scan (up to A4)
Non-members	\$3.00 per scan (up to A4)

*The cost of retouching or repairing the digital image of your photo would be determined by the amount of time required.  
A quote can be provided.*

## A LITTLE HUMOUR

*I only research my family history on days  
beginning with "T".*

*So that's Tuesday  
& Thursday...*

*Today &  
tomorrow...*

*And Thaturday  
& Thunday.*



- Since youngsters of today have their texting codes, (LOL, OMG, TTYL, LMAO etc), the oldies decided not to be outdone by these kids, and now have developed their own codes too:
  - ATD - At the doctors
  - BFF - Best friends funeral
  - BTW – Bring the wheelchair
  - BYOT – Bring your own teeth
  - FWIW – Forgot where I was
  - GGPBL – Gotta go, pacemaker battery low
  - GHA – Got heartburn again
  - TFT – Texting from toilet
- I'm really into writing short fiction these days, mainly to do lists.
- Started a new job as a delivery man today. When I got to my first address, there was a sticky note left on the door saying, "Dear Mr. delivery man, we're out, please hide in garage". That was eight hours ago and still nobody's found me.
- Warning:- Do not give coco-pops to young children. I ate them as a child. Now when I stand up, I snap, crackle, and pop.
- I don't let my age define me, but the side effects are getting harder to ignore.
- Nothing spoils a good story like the arrival of an eyewitness – Mark Twain.
- The biggest lie I tell myself is "I don't need to write that down, I'll remember it."

## EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

*The following is an article from the Benalla Standard of Friday 17 March 1933.*

## LURG AND DISTRICT 60 YEARS AGO.

From time to time, recently the "Standard" has published interesting reminiscences of other days by old residents of the district. These have created a wide interest, and have been read with appreciation. A few days ago, Mr. J Challis, of Lurg, mentioned that he had followed the articles with pleasure, and he was then invited to tell something about his early days in this district. He readily did so, and provided quite a number of facts concerning a part of the shire about which little has been recorded.

He said:- "It was in 1874 that my brother and I went to Lurg. I was then 17 years of age, and I have resided there ever since. We took up land at one pound an acre and a yearly rental of 2 shillings an acre. I acquired 180 acres for mixed farming. Our near neighbours were Thomas Lloyd, who was also mixed farming: McIntosh, boundary rider at the Emu run, then belonging to the Hon. J.H. Graves, of Tatong, and Ken McIvor, a boundary rider, and father of the Mr. McIvor who died a few weeks ago. He was employed by Mr. Robert McKean, of Kilfeera. Mr. McIntosh's sons still reside in Tatong. Over the hill from us were the Kellys, about whom many unfair and wrong things had been circulated. As a matter of fact, the Kellys were particularly fine neighbours, ready at all times to lend a helping hand. They were never tired of helping anyone in difficulty, and although, like most of us in those days, they might have been a bit wild, they were really kind hearted, and kept open an door for everyone.

### **WHEAT BRINGS GOOD PRICE.**

In the days of which I speak, wheat was our chief commodity, and it was about 4/6 to 5/- a bushel. Alex Wann was the only banker in Benalla in those days, and we brought our grain to him to be crushed. We had to come to town for our meat, but we could not get in very often owing to the state of the tracks. They were not roads, but merely rough paths through the heavy timber, and we had to carry our goods by pack horse. There were three butchers in Benalla in the early eighties – Messrs Roe, Willis Little and Ried. Mr. Jack Vallender worked for the latter, and he and my brother learned the trade together at Lowe's in Geelong. When shown Mr. Vallender's notes about Benalla fifty years ago, Mr. Challis said "I recollect a big side show where Mr. Say's shop is in Nunn St. Sharp's mill was on the site of the Benalla Butter Factory, and it was there that we afterwards got our wheat crushed. One of the leading places in Benalla in the late seventies was Allek Robertson's where a little of everything was sold. It was where Watts, Turnbull and Co's premises are now. Mr. Robertson was in a big way of business, and he was a justice of the peace.

### **GRETA'S HOTEL AND "WIDDY" O'BRIEN.**

Greta had a hotel and store combined in those days. "Widdy O'Brien" kept the pub, and a man named Kennedy carried on the store. There were some lively doings at the time, when ploughing matches were all the go. These matches caused widespread interest, and people came forty or fifty miles to attend. They were gala days in the place, and at night there was always a ball and supper. T. Mahoney was the noted ploughman of the times, and Roland Hughes was another who came into prominence. They were settlers in Greta before I went there. All to the west of us was sheep run, right away to Dairy Flats, without a house anywhere except for Kilfeera and Tatong homesteads. The places were principally slab and bark, and some of them you may see in the Lurg district even now. There used to be a big swamp at Greta, but the land was all reclaimed and cut up into small holdings.

### **SEASONS CHANGING.**

One thing I notice in comparison with today and fifty years ago is that the seasons seem to be changing. We had more regular periods of heat and cold. The summers were hotter and the winters were colder, but we had much wetter springs. I feel sure, despite what others may say, that the seasons are changing more and more. There was no rabbit pest in those days, said Mr. Challis in answer to questions, but there were kangaroos all over the place. I had a number of encounters with the "old men". The first rabbits I ever saw were on the Kilfeera road, some years after. The Colemans came to settle in Lurg a few years after we went there, and the young people of the family are still in the district. One of my sons has an orchard, another is at Temora, and the third is in the railway service at Junee. I have one daughter, married to Mr. McNiven, of Lurg. Her husband's people came to Lurg shortly after us, and their place adjoined ours. The Gardiners came in the late eighties. The school was built about 50 years ago, and the first teacher was Mr. Patrick Cox. Donald McIntosh, the celebrated gun shot, sometimes came to see his brother, who lived in the district, and we often had great days together with the rifles. He used to say to me, "I wish I could use a gun like you do". He was not then so good with the rifle, but he was all right with the shot gun.

Mr. Challis could not give any more time to an interview, and with a happy jest he left to transact some business in the town. Mrs. Challis had not been experiencing the best of health, but despite his 80 years Mr. Challis was apparently enjoying modern times as much as the olden days of which he had been speaking.

### FIFTY YEARS AGO IN BENALLA

“My recollection of Benalla does not go much beyond 50 years” said Mr. John Vallender, when asked about the early days of the town, but of course, 50 years is a good span, and I’ve seen many changes in the place. When I first came to Benalla, Nunn Street while not so imposing a place as it is now, was a very busy main thoroughfare. For some reason traffic to and from the railway station was not so much by way of Carrier Street as it is today. The leading business places of the time, apart from the Hotels in Bridge Street, were in Nunn Street. I recollect Selwood’s jewellers’ shop and the tailors shop kept by Mr. Bird, father of Mr. H. C. Bird who carries on the same line of business. Weatherill’s boarding house and fruit shop were also prominent among the buildings in Nunn Street. The boarding house was a large single-story place, with cubicles in a row along the rear of the premises. There was a good-sized draper’s shop where the “standard” office is. I recall such names as Gus. Stredwick, Blackburne’s, Prout, Clarke, and Stienwehr, as carrying on business in Nunn Street.

In the early eighties the whole of a series of wooden buildings owned by Mr. J. Williams, whose son is a Benalla builder, were destroyed by fire. They stood where the bank and adjoining shops are now. Dixons boot shop and a fruit shop stood at the corner of Bridge and Nunn streets. Andersons had a draper’s shop in Bridge Street, on the site now occupied by the firm of T. J. Davis & Co. There was nothing in Carrier Street at all except a few small residences and the old Wesleyan Church. Beyond that the principal building that I remember was the old Methodist Church in Barkly Street, which was afterwards used as a hall by the Mechanics Brass Band, of which I was secretary. We used to play in the streets on Saturday night, and we never had to take the cap around for contributions, though there were 25 of us to provide with instruments. In those days hotels were almost as numerous as all the other business places in the town. There were actually 17 in Benalla, and eight of them were within a distance of 25 chains. There was a great deal of traffic in Nunn St. in those days, quite apart from that coming from the railway station. It used to be the regular route from Yarrawonga way. Mr. Bleske’s father boarded in a house in Nunn Street, where I believe it was the usual thing to serve as many as 30 to 40 dinners a day.

Well, that’s all for this edition. There will be more of the same in the next one. Hope you all had a happy and relaxing Easter.

Bye for now,  
John Crawford,  
Editor

**OUR MOST VALUED SPONSORS.**

We are absolutely thrilled that two new sponsors in Terry White Chemmart and Benalla Mitre 10 have come on board for the 2024 year, and we thank them for their trust and support.

N.J. TODD  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS  
Est. 1938

Member A.F.D.A  
48 Carrier Street  
Benalla

Phone: (03) 5762 2461  
Fax: (03) 5762 6310

For efficient, prompt and  
courteous attention at all times.

**CODEGARDEN**  
*websites from seed*

**Website Design and Development**  
We design clean, mobile friendly  
websites with a strong emphasis  
on simple navigation, search engine  
optimized content  
and relevant images.

CALL US 03 5757 6330



27-29 Bridge Street East

Benalla Victoria 3672

(03) 5762 7575

[benallacommunitypharmacy@gmail.com](mailto:benallacommunitypharmacy@gmail.com)

MIGHTY HELPFUL  
**MITRE 10**

MITRE 10  
*TradeCentre*

**Bi-Rite**  
HOME APPLIANCES

**Benalla Mitre 10 & Bi-Rite**  
**Home Appliances**

45 Sydney Road, Benalla,  
Vic 3672 Australia.

PO Box 415 Benalla,  
Vic 3671 Australia.

Tel 03 5762 9800

Fax 03 5762 6744

**DISCLAIMER** The group do not hold themselves responsible for statements or opinions expressed by authors of newspapers or articles published in this newsletter. We realize that the attitudes of people who lived in the past, are not consistent with the attitudes of people today.