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Hello everyone,

Here we are in the depths of winter, and I for one am feeling the cold, especially on these frosty mornings. It's also time for another newsletter, and 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, research team etc. At the rooms it's 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 or our President Bill Willett – president@benallafamilyresearchgroup.org

PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

It's time for another report. Boy does this year seem to be going quickly. Working on the calendar for this year and the way things are going I'll have to miss next year to catch up, I think.

The AGM was held on the last Wednesday of May and not many things changed. Membership fees, printing costs and research fees all remain the same as last year. Of course, that means that your membership fees are due for the 24 – 25 year. We have included in this newsletter A MEMBERSHIP FORM WHICH WE HOPE YOU WILL FILL OUT and return with your membership fee SO THAT WE CAN KEEP AN UP-TO-DATE DATABASE of all addresses and emails to keep in touch and pass on any other newsletters and data required.

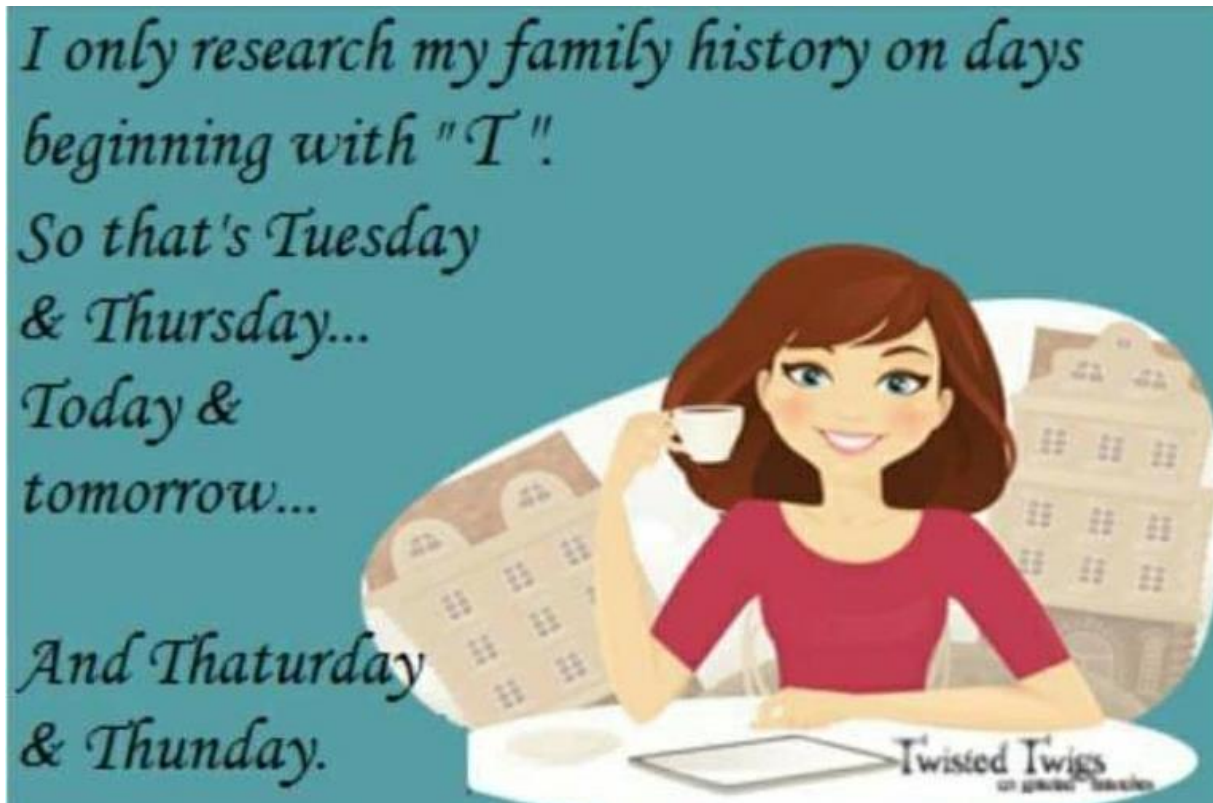
The weather has turned cold, and the normal migration north has taken place, leaving us a bit short-handed at present, but the indexers are working from the warmth of their own homes to keep the wonderful indexes coming into the library. Library staff are placing them in the relevant resources to make those resources much quicker to search and find names you are looking for.

The Wendy's book of the "Lone Graves" of the area is selling very well, and they are well into the second edition with some twenty-four more Lone Graves being researched and tabulated. Our research Officer Kaye is at present up to her neck in family trees, enhancing photos and restoring a lithograph of early Benalla.

Still no idea as to where we will move once our rooms are sold, but I suppose that will sort itself out when the time comes but still worrying to all until it happens.

Core group of helpers is getting a bit smaller so if you have any time on your hands and would like to help out and get involved, and have some fun at the same time, please get in touch. Remember that the rooms are open from 10.00 to 4.00 each Tuesday and Wednesday for a cuppa and natter.

Cheers, Bill



BENALLA AND DISTRICT LONE GRAVES.

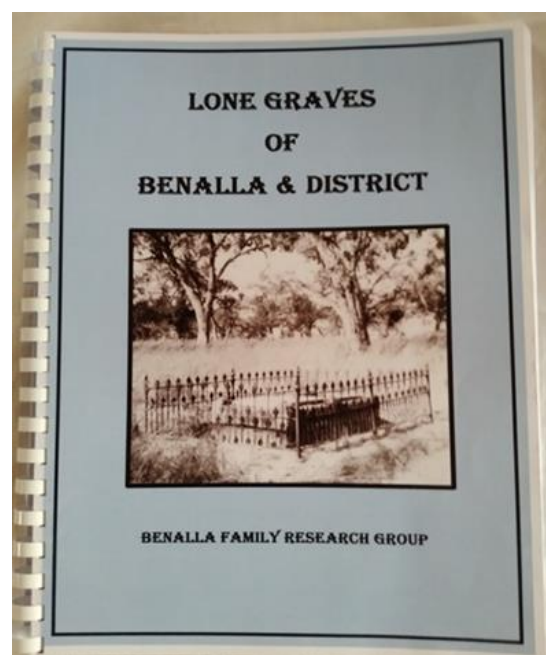
Members of our Research Team have produced a book, titled Lone Graves of Benalla and District. Here is an excerpt: -

These lone graves are a single grave or a small group of graves outside a recognised or currently used cemetery that never had more than several graves. This means that we have found isolated single burials through to some small collections on stations and at rural homesteads. This, however, does not mean that they are necessarily remote as there is an unnamed baby buried in a private garden in Benalla, but her grave is a lone grave because it is outside a regular cemetery. Most sites have no headstone, some are no more than rumoured graves and others are well documented, but all have a story to be told.

In the quest to document these lone graves, the task was twofold—the first was to locate and accurately describe the site and the second was to gather background information about the death and a brief biography of the person involved.

This collection is not restricted to confirmed graves as it also contains suspected grave sites even though the site may only be rumoured to have been a grave. The collection is restricted to Benalla and its surrounding districts and includes graves in the following categories:

- Lone grave/s—isolated single or groups
- Station cemetery—pastoral holding cemetery
- Private cemetery—family cemeteries (e.g. Walton Green)
- Unsubstantiated—rumoured grave/s only



Copies of all death certificates, Inquests and Wills are held by the Benalla Family Research Group together with maps of locations referred to throughout the book.

This project commenced in 2020 and was researched and written by members of the Benalla Family Research Team; Wendy Maxwell, Wendy Webster with assistance from Chick Walker regarding the location of some of the graves.

ORDERS ARE BEING TAKEN PRICE \$35.00

Contact: research@benallafamilyresearchgroup.org

Or call in to our rooms at St. Andrews Church Hall - 9 Church Street Benalla

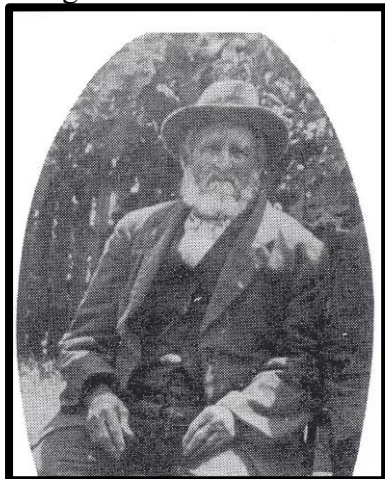
One of the stories that is included in the book follows:

THOONA
MARTHA WHITECHURCH
1874 – 1878

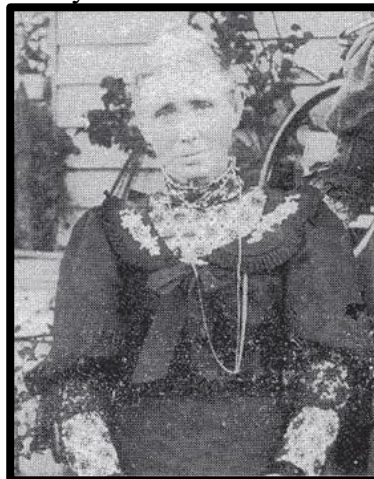
BURIED ON PRIVATE GROUND, MOKOAN

On April 2nd 1878 Martha Whitechurch died at her home at Mokoan following five days of croup. According to her death certificate she was buried two days later on 'Private Ground, Mokoan'. There was no minister of religion present at the burial which was witnessed by two close friends Messrs C. Sergeant and C. Ferris, both of whom selected land at Thoona at the same time as Martha's father.

Martha is the daughter of Charles Whitechurch and Elizabeth Priestley who spent most of their married lives farming at Thoona before retiring into Benalla in their later years.



Charles Whitechurch



Elizabeth Whitechurch

In a short life-story written two years before he died in 1926 Martha's father made mention of the following:-

"I have had my share of domestic loss and sorrow, which has been more than shared by my good wife of whom I feel that, however hard the path of life at times appeared, was softened by her companionship and counsel."

Charles' and Elizabeth's family consisted of two sons, Charles and William and eight daughters, Martha, Sarah, Mary, Florence, Ada, Edith, Ellen and Flora. Martha was their second born and the first of their children to die at the age of four years in 1878. On November 23rd 1896 their daughter Florence who at the age of 14½ was working for the local school teacher at Thoona died suddenly and unexpectedly from heat apoplexy. There was an inquest held following her death in which her father stated that Florence had been in good health so Florence's death would have come as a huge shock to the family. In 1925 a third daughter, Mary died at the age of 44 years following a lengthy illness.

A LITTLE HUMOUR

- At my age, rolling out of bed is the easy part. Getting off the floor is a whole other story.
- Lately I've been watching my weight. It's still there.
- I'm so glad I was young and stupid before there were cameras on phones.
- If a biscuit falls on the floor, and you pick it up, that's a squat, right?
- I may not have lost all my marbles yet, but there is a small hole in the bag somewhere.

- My super power is holding onto junk for years, and throwing it away a week before I need it.

STORIES OF OLD BENALLA

The following article was copied from the Melbourne newspaper "The Leader", May 19th 1894.

Benalla by the Vagabond, and R G Meade.

Major Mitchell on his return from "Australia Felix" to the Murray passed through the present Benalla in 1836. In 1837 the pioneer pastoralist along the "Majors Line" was Mr. Howie who camped on the Broken River. Over 600 blackfellows were gathered together for a bora but the party had no difficulty with them. Mr. Piper who accompanied Mr. Howitt afterwards Police Magistrate here, described how he fired at a long range into the trunk of a fallen tree on the river bank to show the effect of musketry. The blacks were greatly impressed with the white man's thunder. A year afterwards a large party, headed by the Faithful brothers crossed the Broken River, were attacked for some cause by the blacks, and 10 of the number were killed on the spot or died afterwards from the wounds received. In time traffic was developed between Sydney and Melbourne and Benalla and the main road became a crossing place, and started its career as a settlement with a pub and a punt. At Euroa I had the good fortune to drop across one of Benalla in the person of Mr. Robert Garnsey Meade the owner of Meadlands an estate joining Killeen. Mr. Meade a type of the old school of English gentlemen who came to the colonies in the early days. He was born in Taunton in Somersetshire, in 1824 and was a cousin and schoolfellow of Kinglake the famed historian of the Crimean war, and was a descendant of the Clan William family. Mr. Meade left England for Melbourne in 1841 with letters of introduction to Governor Latrobe, who appointed him the first Clerk of Petty Sessions at Benalla. Mr. W. H. H. Smyth was then Commissioner for Crown Lands for the district, and on it being decided to form a Court of Petty Sessions there he was appointed Police Magistrate. On arriving to assume duties, Mr. Meade found the town to consist of one Hotel – the White Hart, the proprietor of which also acted as Postmaster and also sold a few stores. This was a booking office for the coaches which ran from Melbourne to Sydney on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The other buildings of the township were a Blacksmiths Shop and a few wooden houses or slab huts, in which the bullock drivers on the roads left their wives and families. A mile and a half from the township Mr. Commissioner Smyth and his family with two Constables/orderlies occupied a fairly sized wooden house. A few months after wards a Court and lock-up with constable's quarters were built. Until these were completed, the business of the Court was transacted in the Hotel. The surrounding country was all held under pastoral leases and the leading Stations were Messrs Jas and Geo Allens Warrenbayne, Messrs Black and McKellar Lima station, Mr. H Darlot's Kilfeera, Messrs Redfearn and Alexander's Upotipotpon, they also leased Emu Plains, and Zelima Hollands Creek was occupied by Mr. Edmond Splatt and Messrs Clyne and Gibb had the Goomalibee run.

Some 19 months after Mr. Meade arrived in Benalla, Mr. and Mrs. Smyth determined to take a trip to Melbourne, when leaving, asked Mr. Meade to look down occasionally at their residence on the Sydney Road to see that all was safe. A few mornings following he discovered that his chief's place had been broken into and ransacked. He hastened back to the Township, enlisted the services of the Sargeant of Police O'Leary, an old Sargeant of the regulars in the King's Own, and started down the Melbourne Road in pursuit of the burglar. The offender was overtaken at Euroa and arrested. The following morning, they returned to Benalla. The prisoner proved to be a determined old scoundrel a Tasmanian convict. His record proved

him to be a man of consummate daring, as on leaving Portsmouth he jumped overboard from a convict vessel and swam ashore only to be recaptured. His character however was unknown to his captors on this occasion. He was handcuffed and was being taken along the Sydney Road, when near the Woolpress Creek near Baddaginnie he managed to slip the handcuffs off his wrists pick up a sapling wheel round on a horseman and strike the horse on which the Sergeant rode a full blow and with the next brought the Sergeant clean out of the saddle, thoroughly stunned and helpless. Meade closed with his prisoner, then ensued a struggle which lasted a full half hour. Eventually the Sergeant recovered sufficiently to look around and a hundred yards ahead noticed as he thought at first a whirlwind or dust storm in the midst of the road, which proved to be the desperate struggle of his chief and the prisoner. The old Sergeant just reached the pair in time to turn the scale of advantage in favour of his officer. The prisoner was secured and safely landed at Benalla. Later on, he received five years on the roads of the colony. On the discovery of gold being made known at the Ovens in 1851 Mr. Meade resigned the clerkship of petty sessions, and accepted a commission from Mr. B A Green, the well-known Coach and Mail contractor to proceed to Beechworth to buy gold. On his return to Benalla, after his first trip to Beechworth, whilst sitting in the bar of the Old White Hart, some of the habitues remarked that two strange men were observed passing down the road that afternoon leading a fine grey horse which a Mr. Fairburn has been riding past in the morning. The circumstances were so suspicious that the landlord and Meade saddled up and started out to the Fifteen Mile Creek with no result. They returned to find Mr. Fairburn had got to the Hotel and reported having been stuck up by the two men referred to. They had stripped him of all his clothing and had tied him to a tree, decamping with his valuables and thoroughbred horse. Mr. Meade returned to Beechworth the day following and related to his old Chief Mr. Smythe, who had been promoted to be Gold Commissioner on the goldfield. Smythe was so incensed at this outbreak, that he issued a warrant for their apprehension, and asked Meade to endeavour to affect this. On his return to Benalla Meade hired the services of Sergeant O'Leary and a civilian. He traced the bushrangers to Cliftons Station and Arcadia and effected their capture in a smart manner. These fellows were tried in Melbourne, convicted and sentenced to six years hard labour. Governor Latrobe was so impressed with Mr. Meads smartness in arresting the first bushrangers on this route that he offered him a commission as lieutenant in the police when Mr. Mitchell was chief commissioner. After serving two years in the Swan Hill and northern districts establishing police stations and patrols, he was ordered back to his old district, where for two years he took command of the gold escort from Beechworth and Benalla, sometimes being in charge of as much as 228000 ounces of gold in a trip. In 1854 he resigned his commission and took up Meadlands where he resided ever since. Mr. Meade married a daughter of Colonel St. Claire (his second wife) of Her Majesties 50th Regiment at Copenhagen, and well known in East Indian warfare. Mr. Potts of Euroa is one of his Sons in Law. I am very pleased to get these records of early Benalla from Mr. Meade. It is strange that they should commence with bushranging, and bushrangers. The Kelly gang should have made this district their headquarters. The old inhabitants of Benalla are rather uncommunicative, or like the knifegrinder have no story to tell. My old friend Edwin Brown, the Shire Engineer, sits in his office in the Shire Hall surrounded by his cases of curios and cunning models. But Mr. Brown will not talk as he did years ago. He refers me to Mr. Nixon, the first district surveyor here. Mr. Nixon refers me to Mr. Brown. Mr. Willis the saddler has been here over 40 years, and has opinions on leather. Mr. Clarke storekeeper in the main street, from Couty Armagh Ireland is another old resident, who informs me that before free selection the squatters did all they could to prevent the settlement of the people on

the land. The settlers owe a good deal to Mr. Nixon for assisting them to get their rights, says Mr. Clarke.

Well that's all for this edition. There will be more of the same in the next one. Keep warm,
Bye for now, John Crawford, Editor

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