

CLARE REGIONAL HISTORY GROUP NEWSLETTER WINTER 2023



HISTORY OF THE CLARE POLO CLUB

COURTESY PETER ROBERTS

1972 - 2022

The Clare Polo Club started with a group of interested persons and their horses gathering in a paddock at Anama Park, the property of Mr John Maitland at Rochester in 1972

Under the guidance of 'J Y' as he was called, a respected horseman and polo player, there was thought to be enough interest to start a club with the first official club meeting held on May 9th 1972

The Clare Polo Club was duly formed and incorporated on 20 December 1973.

Having played and practiced the sport in "JY's" paddock for about 18 months it was decided that a different location would be better, a location that had some facilities for horses a more suitable playing area as well as some spectator amenities would give the club a home base.

The Clare Racecourse was thought to be an ideal location, the centre of the race track could be tidied up and made into a playing area, the horse stalls and wash down facilities would be very convenient, the grassed area in front of the grandstand would be ideal for spectators and the jockey rooms could be utilised as a club house. This was all wishful thinking as a lot of work would need to be done to transform the paddock inside the running rail into a suitable playing field.

The Race club at this time was struggling with lack of finances, meetings had dropped off, the facilities required to run a meeting were getting into disrepair and general enthusiasm was low.

Ken Dunstan was the Race Club president at the time and he was approached with our idea and was glad that someone was looking at utilising and taking an interest in all that was there. A club committee was formed to investigate the possibilities with a resulting agreement to enable the Polo Club to use the area inside the running rail, for a polo field. Our club also had the use of the horse stalls, washdown facilities and jockey rooms. We also had the use of the water from the bore provided we paid for the pumping. This agreement was executed on 3 January 1974 at an annual rental of \$50.00 and a fee of \$170 to be paid or spent on the facilities outside the lease for a period of 10 years.

At about the same time there was a drive to support the continuation of the race club and shares were sold putting the club back into a financial position and get it going again.

The area inside of the running rail was a bit of a mess, overgrown with grass an old well and a creek going through the western side so quite a bit of work was needed to transform this area into a suitable level field. By way of interest the flat area between the creek and the road was used as a polo field in the late 1920's 1930 era.

Our club contracted Steve Durkay a local earthmover to tidy up our patch. An area on the western side, just behind the finishing post was excavated and filled in the creek that flowed through. The

creek was redirected around the back of the field after it had been levelled. The old well that ended up in the middle of the field was filled in. Steve was very generous in what he charged us as we would not have been able to do this off our own bat. A lot of the credit for what you see out there today needs to go to Steve.

Our official opening of this new field was on 26 January 1976 but had been used occasionally during the previous season.

Polo is a summer sport and the ground was hard, we tried to counter this by sowing some Kikuyu and irrigating it with the bore water available but a couple of long hot summers and inadequate water resulted in minimal success. The grassed area in front of the old grandstand and jockey rooms was a success for visitors and spectators alike.

Our club used the grounds for seven years, had 15 playing members traveling from Mount Bryan in the north to Riverton in the south along with associates coming to join in on the social activity.

The polo season in South Australia goes from December to March and the ground was used most weekends during this time, holding annual tournaments with visiting clubs from Adelaide, Penola and Wentworth

The Club last used the field in at the end of the 1982 season then went into recess as player numbers dwindled in December 1982

Our club had some funds on deposit at the time and were handed to the Racing Club to assist with their maintenance in June 2022



This photo was taken at the Clare Racecourse circa 1980.

The old grandstand and jockey's rooms, completed in 1923 are in the background.

L to R – James Maitland, Peter Roberts, Ian Waterman and Bruce Wigney.

Celebration of Mt Horrocks history

MEREDITH MCINNIS

ON Sunday, March 19, the Mount Horrocks Historical Society celebrated its 40th year, with celebrations held in the pleasant surroundings of the John Horrocks Cottage in Penwortham.

Nearly 30 members, guests and locals attended, which included historical society patron Ady Pearse and Pamela McTaggart, both descendants of Arthur Horrocks, as well as Member for Stuart, Geoff Brock MP.

Society president Wendy Spackman explained how the society was formed with the first meeting being held in the Watervale Uniting Church on June 6, 1983.

The first committee, with Jaime Sobels as president, applied to the Jubilee 150 Board for funding and asked for enough money for

a building.

That request was not granted, but they did receive \$4000 and were granted the use of a room at the Watervale Institute/Library for the rental of \$20 per annum.

Helen Perry was the guest speaker for the afternoon, who until recently was the information management consultant with the Department for Education, providing support and advice to 527 primary and secondary schools in SA.

Whilst searching through and digitising records, Helen found lots of interesting information regarding families, some dating back to the early 1900s.

Today the Society has 97 members and is the custodian of history records from the Penwortham, Watervale and Leasingham districts.

The Watervale Institute houses



Pamela McTaggart and Ady Pearse, descendants of Arthur Horrocks, cut the cake with Mount Horrocks Historical Society president Wendy Spackman.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

the historical society's collection of family histories, local cemetery records, memorabilia and historical documents including diaries, journals, memoirs and an extensive collection of old photographs.

The society publishes a quarterly newsletter, has a detailed web page, and maintains an online

presence through Facebook.

The society bought the John Horrocks Cottage in 2001 and the restoration and maintenance of the building is ongoing.

The Cottage is open for visitors on the first Sunday of the month from 2-4pm.

NEWS FROM THE GROUP

HISTORY MONTH EVENTS

On Friday 5 May we held another second-hand book sale in the Town Hall Foyer from 10am – 3.00pm. A steady stream of visitors searched through the quantity of books we had on offer, several lining up outside waiting for us to open. We raised over \$360, thank you all who gave their time in setting up, manning the stall and collecting funds.

A cold winters day Sunday 28 May greeted the 15 brave souls who ventured on our Cemetery Walk to both Spring Farm and Sevenhill Cemeteries. Some from Adelaide, one from Naracoorte and Bute joined us on this occasion. Umbrellas were very popular on at least one occasion! David Forsaith gave a very interesting and well researched talk on various people buried at Spring Farm as we wandered through the freshly mowed grounds. Thank you to Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council who maintain this very old cemetery.

The group continued onto Sevenhill Cemetery where Gerald Lally read from his latest publication, 'Two Churches' about several members the old established Gillen family in Clare and the early Weikert family, from Silesia, who brought with them the first Jesuit Order of priests to Australia in 1848. We were joined by Sevenhill Parish priest, Fr Kieran Gill who answered some questions from the group. It was planned to join together for afternoon tea among the pines but we felt the afternoon too cold.

**Our 2023 AGM will be held on Friday August 11th. 6pm at the
Sevenhill Hotel cellar.**



David Forsaith talking to the group at Spring Farm Cemetery.

CRHG COMMITTEE

Chairperson : Gerald Lally

Deputy Chairperson : Wendy Spackman

Secretary : David Forsaith

Treasurer : Helen Perry

Committee : David Spackman, Josie Hudson

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CLARE TALKIES
THE MID-NORTH'S ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE

Satur. Next, July 5th
MATINEE and NIGHT
and Monday, July 7th
The ANZACS
RIDE AGAIN in
“Forty
Thousand
Horsemen”
Featuring Betty Bryant, Grant Taylor
Chips Rafferty and Big Cast
No True Australian should miss this film
Also **SIDNEY TOLER** in
“Charlie Chan’s Murder Cruise”
News, etc Reserve Early.
Spalding Line Patrons Note.
‘40,000 Horsemen’ Prior to Interval on
Saturday.

The Northern Argus, July 1941

The photo board pictured right is from a display at the Old Telegraph Station, just north of Alice Springs, in April of this year. It is the work of local amateur historian Eugene Blom who has painstakingly traced the exact location from where photos were taken by Frank Gillen, Baldwin Spencer and others in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

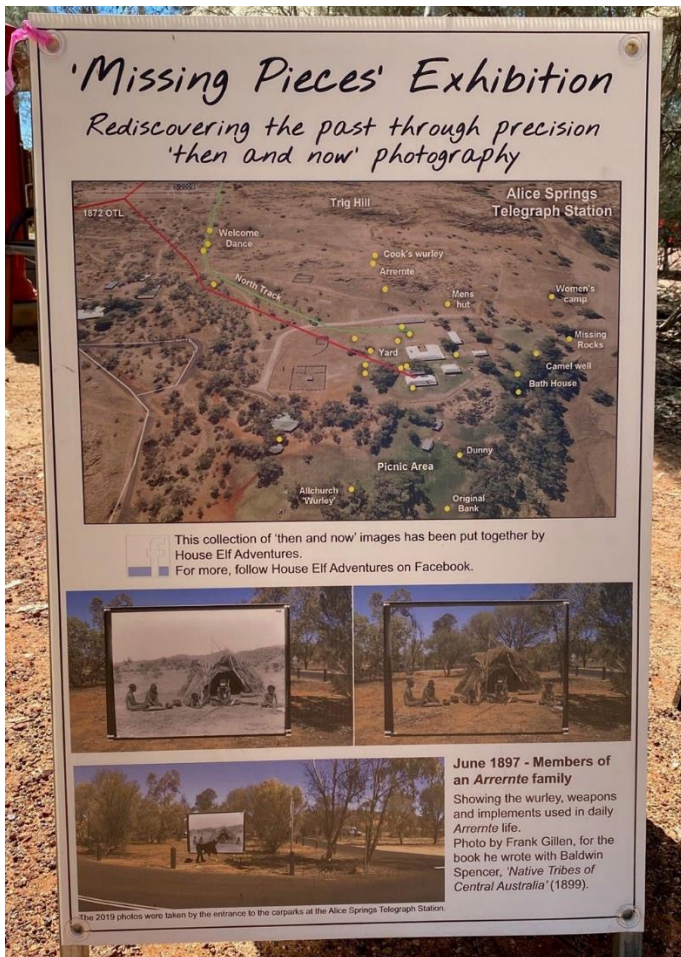
The caption reads:

1896 Arrernte men making Fire.

Photo by Frank Gillen

In the summer of 1895-96, Spencer and Gillen spent 4 months recording Angkwerre (initiation) ceremonies, but also photographed general traditional activities, for their book, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, published in 1899.





'Missing Pieces' Exhibition – a source for Frank Gillen's work (and others)

By Helen Perry

Written in 1875 his diary¹ records Frank Gillen's experiences as a 19 year old young man travelling along the Overland Telegraph Line from Adelaide to the Northern Territory – a journey which would form the basis of his later work as an ethnologist².

Frank began work aged eleven as a telegraph messenger in his home town of Clare, earning £30 a year. He would sometimes relieve the operator at Watervale. When he was fifteen, Frank was transferred to Adelaide as a junior assistant at £80 pa. From this time he received some education, studying at night at the School of Mines.

In the early 1870s, the construction of the Overland Telegraph Line ensured rapid promotion for those in the service who were prepared to serve in the Northern Territory. Frank was posted to Alice Springs

as a telegraph operator at a wage of £120 per year.

Following are some entries from Gillen's 1875 diary and part of the preface remarks he added later:

"Good Friday, March 26th – Left Adelaide per train for Burra at 4.30. Started from Redruth for Blinman at 11.30pm. Our first halt was Booborowie Eating House, a distance of 17 miles from Redruth, where we had the pleasure of paying 6^d a cup for some wishwash called Coffee, by the Landlady, had to patronise the Rum bottle to wash it down. Changed horses and away. Breakfasted at Canowie 4am, made a good feed, don't think the Landlady made much out of me! Reached Yattina 8:15, here we got some beer, the first we tasted since leaving Redruth. I may mention it was procured at a Sly Grog Shop and like stolen fruit it was much relished by all hands. Rum bottle nearly exhausted by this time, so took a few bottles of Beer with us, they did not keep though, it being hot weather. My friend (Bob) McClure displayed great anxiety on that point..."

"Monday the 29th – Easter Monday – Find Blinman Township a miserable hole... People keep the holiday on Tuesday, on account of Monday being their mail day..."

"Wednesday, March 31st / 75 – Up at 6am, made a start for Beltana at 8am. Bob and the Luggage by trap, self on horseback – after a very rough ride over some well-grassed Country, arrived at Bt (Beltana Telegraph) very sore and Stiff 5pm..."

¹ Ref. *FJ Gillen's First Diary 1875 Adelaide to Alice Springs - March to June*, edited by Robert S Gillen. Kent Town SA: Wakefield Press, 1995

² **Ethnologist** – one who studies the characteristics of different peoples and the differences and relationships between them.

“Monday, May 17th, 1875 – Turned out 6.30. Rigged my hammock on the Shafts last night, slept awfully Cold. Started for the Bulldog Creek at 8:35. Travelled through some irregular Country, in some places where the ground was bare of vegetation there was a Coating of soda about an eighth of an inch thick. Distance travelled 22 miles – this is something like travelling. Skinner suffering from the Mumps. Bob and I start early tomorrow morning on horseback and expect to reach the Peake about 12...”

“Saturday, June 5th, 1875 – Roused out at daylight... Made a start about 8. We were delayed through Horses having rambled through the night. Had a look at McClures Springs. These springs are formed in the bed of the Hugh Creek and were named after Bob’s Dad by Mr. Stuart, the Explorer. Was shown a large tree in the creek on which Stuart had cut his initials. Travelling through the James and Waterhouse Ranges until 1 o’clock when we arrived at Gilbert’s station, 42 miles south of the Alice. Spoke to Alice Springs from the Shackle. After having a festive old feed, started for “Millner’s Camp” on the Hugh, where we camped for the night. My Damper very great success.”

“Sunday, June 6th, 1875 – Got up before the lark this morning. I started at 8.30, rest of party detained through two of the Horses having gone on the back track. Harris and Conlon met us at Fenn’s Gap where we spelled for dinner. Saddled up and started again at 2. The Giant of the Interior met us at Temple Bar with a four-in-hand waggonette... I took a seat in the trap. ... Arrived at Alice Springs 5PM. Station very nicely situated. It is right in the heart of the McDonnell Ranges.”

To the Reader.

This diary was commenced shortly after leaving Adelaide with a view of giving my Metropolitan friends a rough sketch of my first Campaign in the Bush and a slight description of the General Character and principal features of the Country we travelled through. Our party with two or three exceptions were comparatively new to Bush Life and after the first few days travelling had shaken things pretty well into working order, the beautiful weather, bright Cloudless days and starlight nights (which however after the first two or three weeks were quite cool enough to be pleasant), perhaps induced us to take rather a rose coloured view of what, under different Circumstances, might have produced a song, which your humble Servant – the unworthy mouthpiece of the Party – would have sung in a totally different Key...

The inconveniences of Bush Life, which are very trying at first to the uninitiated, are considered as comparatively trifling after association with them; & a few years Steady Industry will place the Saving Man in a fair position to make a fair Start on his own account in almost any business he prefers. I would however impress upon whoever by perusing these Lines should be induced to try their fortune in the South Australian Interior – whether in the OT or otherwise – to think over the few following suggestions before jumping out of the frying pan into the fire, as he will find by experience, that this – like all other mundane avocations – has its drawbacks, and to use a familiar phrase, is not all “Beer and Skittles”.

1st, Start young. The years which you waste in Town on a small salary barely sufficient to support you, may be spent more profitably in every way, and money saved, in the Bush.

2nd, Don’t come unless you make up your mind to save Money, for you can fool it away easily enough even in the Bush, so that your voluntary Exile in such a Case would be fruitless.

3rd, Bring a sound Constitution, a Civil Tongue, cleanly habits and a willingness to learn & rough it a bit – or don’t come at all.

4th, Make up your mind to learn the outside as well as perform thr inside work on a Station, or you will be a most useless, helpless Animal...”

**Francis James Gillen (1855-1912), by an unknown
photographer, c1900 (State Library of South Australia, SLSA: B 38781)**

May 17th, 1901 – Camp 22, Ter. Min. 27:

A³ delightfully bracing morning, one feels very much alive on such a morning. Had breakfast and reached Station at 8. Writing and doing odd jobs all day. Spencer began his *Age* articles and has ground away at them all day. Had party's photo taken but it is not good of Spencer or the boys so we intend trying another tomorrow. Chance busy making cases to pack native implements of which we have quite a goodly store. Decided not to leave here until after the arrival of mail on 21st: we have plenty of work on hand to keep us engaged until then. It is a comfort to me to know that I shall get another mail without having to wait weeks for it. Tom Hanley who is one of my oldest friends in the Interior and under whose wing I made my first entrance into Bush life

arrived from the north today: time is beginning to tell on him – he is grey and gnarled looking: a trifle more cynical but still the same splendid type of hardy bushman. We are delighted to meet again and some pleasant hours are spent in reminiscing. I find it hard to realise that it is 25 years since he first introduced me to camp life at a spot about 10 miles north of the present Beltana township which then consisted only of a Telegraph Station. What changes have been affected since then; it is marvellous. At that time the Northern railway system terminated at the Burra from whence we travelled by a badly-horsed and rickety coach to Blinman which was then quite a prosperous bush township. From the Blinman we travelled to Beltana by hired trap which was driven by an old Blinman identity rejoicing in the name of Jimmy Duck who still flourishes in the Leigh Creek locality. Horses had been sent to meet us from Strangways Springs and one, a young bay colt, was allotted to me. The man who broke him in brought the horses down and assured me that my mount was as quiet as a lamb, spirited and playful as a respectable young horse should be "but no vice Mister you can take it from me". I saddled him up and at once experienced some of his playfulness in the shape of a sharp nip which deprived me of portion of my shirt. I began to funk and mildly suggested that his eye looked wicked whereupon my friend the breaker mumbling something about lime juicers and with a look of scorn took hold of the reins, gripped the beast's ear with one hand and saying "Whoa my pretty!" threw himself lightly into the saddle; in an instant the playful viceless animal had assumed the position depicted above and for 10 solid, and to me awful, minutes he made frantic efforts to turn himself inside out, then exhausted with his efforts, he stopped and the Breaker patted his neck and saying "Good little hoss" got off and led the brute up to me remarking "what more do you want Mister, aint he a bloomin lamb, no vice, you see he didn't squeal once". I said "Thanks I'll ride in the wagon" and I did for several days until some of the "playfulness" had been knocked out of him. At last I mustered up courage to mount him one afternoon, he had been ridden all morning. I remained in the saddle just three minutes and for the rest of the day travelled in the Ambulance. Returned to camp at 9pm. Bar. An. S.T.

There are many other references to the work of Frank Gillen and Baldwin Spencer available to the researcher. The photographer exhibition of Eugene Blom is to be particularly commended.



³ Gillen, FJ *Gillen's Diary: The Camp Jottings of FJ Gillen*, (South Australian Libraries Board), 1968

⁴ Alice Springs resident Eugene Blom is the brother of Clare local Reggie and Brian Haines of Morella House.

BOOKS FOR SALE

NOYE, RJ **Clare – a district history (5th ed.)** (2021) \$50

ASHBY, Marj **CARINYA 1956 – 1989 A peaceful and happy home**, (1989) CWA of SA Clare Branch, Clare, SA \$5

AUSTIN, Nigel **BOB ROWE – the great cattle trader** (2014) \$50

BELLMAN, Elinor A, **SADDLEWORTH – Hub of the Wheel**, (1995) Saddleworth, SA \$35

BOND, David **CLARE SHOW “A fine all-round display” for 150 Years** (2014) Clare, SA \$33

Brinkworth Centenary Book Committee, **MAGPIE CREEK JUNCTION – a history of Brinkworth and district 1892 – 1992**, Brinkworth, SA \$50

CROSS, Jack, **Two Crosses: Ephraim and Jack – a proletarian History: Including life in the unusual village of Armagh 1840 to 1910; as well as on Bungaree Station after 1860**, (2016) Printak Pty Ltd, Adelaide, SA. \$30

DICKESON, Helen, **CLARE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – a history 1856 – 1988** (1993) Includes baptisms, marriages, burials and extensive index. \$14

Ellis, Julie-Ann, **HARD-YACKA – The story of a Mid-North town in South Australia**, (1995) Yacka Historical Group \$40

HAYNES J. & SCHMAAL, E.J, **CLARE – A BACKWARD GLANCE**, (1980) \$8

JOHNSON, Winifred N.

COTTAGES AND CAMEOS OF CLARE (1988) \$25

CLARE CAMEOS (1986) Includes oral histories of our older Clare residents as interviewed by Win in the State's Sesquicentennial Year. 2nd ed. \$15

FROM WHERE I SIT (2010) A collection of articles on chosen themes written over past times. \$16

A HISTORY OF NGADJURI LODGE TRUST (2010) \$10

JUST AS IT WAS (2010) The story of Win's life with humour and affection. \$20

JENNER, Rosemary, **MINTARO RECOLLECTIONS** (2020) \$30

JONES, Coralie, **CLARE VALLEY, SA** a pictorial souvenir. (2014) \$20

KEAIN, Maurice, **From where the Broughton flows – a history of the Spalding district** (1976) \$15

LALLY, Gerald A.

HILL RIVER A VALLEY OF HISTORY (2004) \$40

A LANDMARK OF FAITH Church of the Immaculate Conception, Mintaro, and its parishioners 1856-2006 (2006) \$35

TIMES PAST – a pictorial history of Farrell Flat (2012) \$30

TWO CHURCHES – Catholic faithful of the Clare Valley (2019) \$50

LALLY, Gerald et al,

SOUTH CLARE SPORTS CLUB –

Celebrating 50 years of success 1960 – 2010 (2010) \$20

LINN, Rob. **THE STORY OF BUNGAREE STATION** (2011) \$17

NEILL (nee Mickel), Laurel, **“A WALK WITH LAUREL” a walking tour of the buildings and families of Farrell Flat from the memories of the period 1929-1939** \$5

NOYE, Robert J. **TALKING HISTORY – Tales of Clare SA 50** articles published weekly in *The Northern Argus* (2003) \$15

PATULLLO, William, **THE LAND HISTORY OF POLISH HILL RIVER 1842-1990** (1991) Details the ownership history of 120 sections of land in Polish Hill River, to the edge of Mintaro township. \$25

SCHMAAL, Jean

THE INCHIUIN STORY, Clare & District branch, National Trust, Clare, SA \$5

A QUIANT COURTHOUSE (1987) Clare & District Branch, National Trust, Clare, SA. \$5

SEMPLE, Carolyn, **“TO THE BEAT OF A DRUM” – Gum Creek School 1898-1957** (2018) \$20

SIMONS, J.J. ‘Boss’ **THE CLARE I REMEMBER** 13 articles published in *The Northern Argus* in 1944, describing the Clare of Simons' boyhood in the 1880's. \$15.

TILBROOK, EHH ‘Clarion’ and TILBROOK, M, **THE PATHS OF GLORY LEAD BUT TO THE GRAVE a history of Clare Cemeteries** (originally published in *The Northern Argus* in 1939) \$20.

WARRIOR, Fred et al, **Ngadjuri – Aboriginal people of the Mid North region of South Australia** (2005) Meadows, SA, SASOSE Council Inc \$40

WILSON, John

BOB'S RAILWAY – turbulent political times in SA & a remarkable railroading dog, (2019) \$78

THE RIESLING RAILWAY (2018) Photographs, illustrations, maps, drawings, USB \$110

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