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Annual Membership fee: \$20.00 per person - **Renewals Due In May**

Historical Society Meetings held monthly 4th Wednesday at 7.30pm, except in January, also during *winter* on the 4th **Saturday at 1.30pm**

News/Updates/Information - Website: colachistoricalsociety.org.au

President: Robert Missen: 03 52346351. flowerfield140@bigpond.com

Postal Address: PO Box 154 Colac 3250. colachistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Newsletter Editors: Craig Pink + Dawn Missen. flowerfield140@bigpond.com

Secretary/Treasurer: John Angel: 03 52338280. elimalee@southernphone.com.au



Open Hours for the public at COPACC History Centre - 2.00pm to 4.00pm - Thursday, Friday and Sunday.

Working Bees at the History Centre - dates & times to be advised.

Please note that articles printed in this Society Newsletter are subject to Copyright.

We Thank Contributors for This Issue: Ellise Angel, Alan Doyle and Alan Salmon

Forthcoming Events –

Wednesday May 26 6pm Speaker: Jennifer O'Donnell, Author of *Coragulac House* followed by Light Meal and AGM

June 3 or 4 To be finalised. Visit to History Centre by *The Twinnies* to present further Cliff Young memorabilia

Saturday June 26 1.30pm sharp. Visit to Birregurra Historical Society & General Meeting. Car Pooling.

Saturday July 24 1.30pm Speaker: Darren Allen – Colac Cycling History & General Meeting

Saturday August 28 1.30pm. To be arranged - General Meeting

Vale Ida McIntosh 13-05-1923 – 03-05-2021

The Colac & District Historical Society Inc. mourns the passing of our Long Serving Life Member, Author and Conservator of Local History.

The efforts of Ida together with her late husband Ian were instrumental in the formative years of the Historical Society.

Ida was a driving force behind the Annual Sunday Painters Exhibition which raised funds to furnish and equip the purpose built Colac Historical Centre which was opened in 1972.

She was perhaps best known in the wider community for the authorship of *Forest, Lake and Plain –*

The History of Colac 1888-1988.

She also wrote *The Big Store: Bilsons of Colac* and jointly edited *Street Names of Colac* with her son Andrew.

A keen conservator of early history, she and Ian purchased *Mooringarara* beside the Barongarook Creek in the 1970s.

Built in 1854, it was the home of early Colac doctors, Dr. Nankivell and Dr. Rae who established Colac's first hospital there.

Lovingly restored, *Mooringarara* is one of the few surviving Colac residences from the mid 1850s.



What has been news in the Colac Herald ?

February 10, 2021- Priest steps up for challenging first year in job. Father *Ryan Austin-Eames* could never have predicted what lay ahead of him in his first year as an Anglican priest in Colac. It has been a non-typical year because of COVID-19 restrictions which have turned gatherings and masses on their head. He added mass livestreaming to his repertoire, upgrading techniques and installing the church's first internet connection.

February 10- Lake to be stocked with 10,000 trout. Victoria's fishing authority plans to stock *Lake Colac* with rainbow trout first and 5,000 golden perch next summer.

February 12- Gold detector turns to history. *Luke Phillips* of Colac began detecting for gold across Colac's parks, recreation reserves, showgrounds, and the lake 4 years ago but found more value in brass and lost coins because of the history behind each object. Of significance are the Colac cow brass tags from the 1880s and a coin, an English shilling from 1836 which predates Colac's founding, and military and other badges along with buckles and jewellery.

February 12- Tracking down cricket history. There is a niche sporting quest searching for the district's abandoned cricket pitches prompted by amateur sport historian *Les Everette* of WA. The pitch in Pomborneit was decommissioned at the end of the 1999-2000 season. Other abandoned pitches are recorded as being at Garvoc, Koallah, Bostock's Creek, Balintore, Pomborneit East and Jancourt East.

February 24- Doctor calls time on varied career. Retiring Colac GP, *Dr Peter Madden* wraps up a 45 year medical career finishing at Otway Medical Clinic after 38 years doing obstetrics, anaesthetics, emergency medicine along with family medicine and he was visiting medical officer at Colac Hospital.

February 24- Former church sells at auction. Buyers from the Surf Coast region made the winning bid of \$417,000 for the *Salvation Army hall*, and its 500 square metres across 2 titles, at 35-37 Corangamite St, Colac.

February 24- Vaccination rollout starts. *Barwon Health* will schedule Colac's COVID-19 vaccine rollout as more stock becomes available, as vaccinations continue across the country. Two vaccinations are required to receive a certificate.

February 26- OAM winner writes latest history books. Renowned Colac district archivist ***Norman Houghton*** has detailed the history of the region's coal industry at Deans Marsh which supplied key Colac industries in the early 1900s such as the butter factory and the hospital. Mr Houghton was awarded an ***Order of Australia Medal*** this year.

February 26- Book details mansion's history. The history of Coragulac House is recorded in a book by *Jenny O'Donnell* called "Coragulac". One of the earliest European settlers in the Colac district, *William Robertson's son George* was the builder of this 19th century mansion.

March 1- Quiet season for fire tower. Fire spotting workers have used Mt Gellibrand fire tower just twice this summer, following the closure and subsequent reopening and strengthening repair of the structure.

March 3- Salvos plan major expansion. The Salvation Army has bought a vacant Dennis Street office building to transform into a community hub that includes its welfare office, church, and facilities to provide meals for homeless people according to church leaders *Keryn and Aaron Coombes*.

March 3- Target petition pays off. Colac petitioner and local business advocate, *Brad McLeod*, led a community appeal in September 2020 to persuade target's parent company Wesfarmers to rethink its plan to leave Colac. Kmart has agreed to open a *K hub* in the empty Murray Street store.

March 3- Colac vaccine for aged, staff. Among the first to receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine will be aged care residents and high priority aged care staff. Barwon Health's Public Health Unit are responsible for the storage and delivery of the vaccine.

March 5- Plane salvage begins. Salvage diver and aviation enthusiast *Rod Knights* is on the verge of completing a decade long mission to rescue a fallen Second World War-era plane from *Lake Corangamite*. The CAC Wirraway has been submerged since 1950 when it was ditched during a low altitude flying exercise. The salvage team is constructing a modular lifting gantry around the wrecked plane.

March 5- Historic Day. First COVID-19 vaccines rolled out in Colac. Corangamarah aged care resident, 82-year-old, *Barbara Howard* was the first Colac person to receive the vaccine.

March 10- Lighthouse negotiations near deadline. D Day approaches for the future of *Cape Otway Lightstation* to be decided by the State Government with Tourism Great Ocean Road. A parliamentary petition attracted over 1300 signatures, calling on Victorian authorities to provide a "whole-of-government" solution.

March 10- Top gun plane returns home. An 82-year-old piece of Colac and district's history in impeccable condition, has returned home to Cressy Airfield. *Paul Lamont* has bought the Tiger Moth that once served as a practice plane when the Cressy Airfield was a training base during WW2.

March 12- Salvage has special meaning. *Kevin Hyne* whose family farmed near to Lake Corangamite watched a CAC Wirraway plunge into that lake when he was a toddler in 1950. Seventy years later he hopes to see it emerge again after a salvage attempt by diver Rod Knights.

March 15- Shots ramping up. *Colac's Australian Lamb Company* has become one of Australia's first workplaces to receive COVID-19 vaccinations. 700 employees will receive the jab over the next few weeks.

March 19- Baking legend farewelled. Colac's *Lindsay Hulm* will be remembered for his lifetime as a baker, a community leader and a dedicated family man. He followed in his father Ron's footsteps baking at Warrnambool then the family moved to Colac in 1950. Ron bought Millman's Bakery and delivered door to door sales with horse-drawn bread carts. Lindsay bought into the business using shopfronts in Murray St which he converted into a bakery, opening in 1970. He was a pastry cook for 60 years then sold to his daughter. He received the Paul Harris Fellowship for community services in Rotary. He died on March 15 and was buried at Colac Cemetery.

March 19- Brilliant banners' call to buy local. Local traders and families feature on Colac's new Murray Street banners, encouraging people to support Colac Otway businesses by shopping in the shire.

March 22- School renovation starts. Renovation and refurbishment works are underway at *Colac West Primary School* in Ligar Street. The building was opened in 1923. Before that there was a school on site, but the needs of the community necessitated a much bigger capacity building.

March 22- Two decades of brilliant baking. Michael and Elaine Menzies who were born and bred in Colac opened the doors to *Colac's Bakers Delight* on March 22, 2001. They like to employ local community members of all ages and the bakery has been the first job for many young people. Michael was once an apprentice of the late Lindsay Hulm.

March 31- Council secures school land. *Colac Otway Shire Council* is set to take ownership of nearly 4.5 hectares of the former Colac High School site, securing the land for community use. They will buy this section but have been awarded 2.48 hectares for free from the Victorian Department of Education and Training. The purchase will be funded from the Council's Public Open Space reserve said Colac Otway mayor Kate Hanson. The State Government has allocated the former high school building and surrounding land for a \$15 million *Colac Specialist School relocation*.

April 7- Cressy war history takes flight. A piece of Colac and district's wartime history has taken to the skies to celebrate 100 years of the countries' air force. A 1939 Tiger Moth, "Millie," served as a training plane on the Cressy Aerodrome, for fighter pilots. Under the owners *Paul Lamont and Siobhan Perera*, the aerodrome is fast becoming a window into the past as more and more former base equipment arrives.

April 14- Tribute to pioneering scientist. *Dr Isabel "Joy" Bear* was a pioneering and persevering force in Australian science, who helped pave the way for future female scientists during her 8-decade association with the CSIRO. She faced gender and age barriers but in 1967 she became the first woman to be reclassified to the research ranks with the CSIRO and in 1978 was awarded a Senior Doctoral Degree in Applied Science. She was the first woman to receive other honours as well. Joy died at age 94 at Colac's Barongarook Gardens.

April 16- Plane salvage is continuing. A planned salvage of a *Second World War-era CAC Wirraway plane* is continuing at Lake Corangamite where Salvage diver Rod Knights has part assembled a lifting gantry around the stricken aircraft.

April 23- Anzac events return. Events will begin with a dawn service from 6am at *Colac's Memorial Square*. A wreath laying service at 10.30 and Colac's traditional Anzac Day march to Regent Place. A 1939 Tiger Moth will roar overhead. In Colac's Cemetery about 1,000 flags mark the graves of returned service men as well as flags at Beeac, Whoorel, and Warncoort. At the Cressy Aerodrome the gates will open to visitors to see "Millie" and other WW2 memorabilia.

April 26- Colac retailer switch commencing today. Staff begin the transition of Colac's Target into a K hub before opening on May 14th. Parent company *Wesfarmers* confirmed it had backflipped on a decision to vacate Colac after intense community pressure.

April 26- lasting memory of fallen heroes. 14 shady oaks overlook the *Warrion Recreational Reserve*, representing the Warrion servicemen who never made it home. The memorial was unveiled in 1920 but now pays tribute to Warrion servicemen who died in action during the First and Second World Wars.

April 30- Colac's big build. Builders say there is a construction boom across Colac and district, while property data shows there are hundreds of houses going "under the hammer". State Revenue Office data showed there were 31 Homebuilder applications in Colac, and a further 40 at Elliminyt – the Federal Government grants support pushing demand. A timber shortage however is holding up construction. Colac Otway Shire planning officers have also been busy approving subdivision permits, unlocking desperately needed residential development in Colac. Since January 1, officers have issued 15 subdivision permits in Birregurra creating 22 lots.

May 7- Migrant plan to boost city. A Melbourne Chin community leader wants to restart talks over a deal to bring a hundreds-strong migrant workforce to settle in Colac – the project was going ahead until COVID-19 stalled talks, but Colac's housing crunch could now also halt the plans. The proposal would see dedicated officers help arrivals integrate with the city and fill jobs in factories and farms in a joint effort with Colac Otway Shire Council, major employers and the State Government.

MAY 10- Survey says newspapers still essential. A printed copy (especially in rural and country areas) was considered essential. Country Press readers are 2.6 times as likely to read their local paper in print than in digital format. "It's clear that the local newspaper really matters to Australian audiences".

The Butchers of 352 Murray Street, Colac.

352 Murray Street, Colac - GPS reference: 38°20'19.4"S 143°34'40.6"E

By Alan Doyle – March 2021

The plain cream brick butcher shop along Murray Street, Colac West, has stood serving Colac and district for 63 years. Located at 352 Murray Street (section 46, allotment 5, Parish of Colac), neighbouring Thwaites Bakehouse on the left-hand side and Steve Finn Used Cars to the right.

Its strong foundations of longevity began with the building beginning on the 1st October 1958. Butcher Derrek Edward Styles Mathews, with his wife Eva Lorna Mathews, decided to build their own butcher shop and purchased 20 feet (6.1m), of street frontage from the neighbouring Thwaites' Bakery. The shop was built, using local carpenter Laurie Kelly and bricklayer, Bill Pinne. Derrek and Eva began trading under the name "D.E. & E. L. Mathews, Meat Specialists".

Derrek was already well entrenched as a Colac butcher, having come from Moonee Ponds in his younger years. His first place of employment in Colac, was with Les Allen's butcher shop, at 91 Gellibrand Street. Leaving sometime later, he took up work with Norm Hislop's butcher shop in the Central Arcade. Later working for Mid-West butchers for nine years in Colac West, along Murray Street. He then partnered with Claude Robb back in the Central Arcade for three and half years.

After hours when Derrek wasn't dealing with meat and making sausages, he was enjoying time with his family or busy serving the Colac community in various roles that he held.

- Severed as a Colac councillor and held the position of Mayor 1968 till 1971, and again 1980 till 1981.
- Rotary Club of Colac West, foundation member and President 1971.
- Colac Hospital President 1980 till 1983.
- Held the position of Justice of the Peace.

He was awarded an M.B.E. in 1979, for services to the community.



D. & R. L. Lunn, Country Fresh Meats
Doug Kirkman collection F14 – CDHS



D. E. & E. L. Mathews, Meat Specialists – 11th March 1988
Butchers Noel Jenkins (left) & Derrek Mathews (right).
Doug Kirkman collection J16 – CDHS



Butcher Derrek Mathews
(c1968)

SLV image H38849/5539

After trading from this location for over 32 years, Derrek sold the business and shop to butcher David Lunn, in the early 1990's. David Lunn operated the business trading

under the name of "D. & R. L. Lunn, Country Fresh Meats" for approximately ten years. David Lunn left to run a local "Subway" store in Colac, and on sold the going concern to in coming butcher Michael and Mandy Murnane in 2001.

The business was renamed to "Murnanes Country Fresh Meats". The Murnane family has had a long history in the Colac butchering community, with their Grandfather, Colin McKay who was a Colac butcher back in the 1930's, working for butcher John Sanson in Murray Street East. Butchers Colin McKay with Colin Dare eventually took over Sanson's shop in August 1947, becoming McKay & Dare Quality butchers.

The butcher shop at the western end of Colac, has remained quite distant from the more populated areas of the main business and food centres in Colac. Past and present butchers have serviced the western part of Colac and outer districts and have had to continually supply quality meats and service, to remain at this location. Even the new butchers of Murnanes Country Fresh Meats have had to continually evolve and be innovative on new meats, variety and supply.

Listed below, with permission, is the Murnane brothers butchering history, from their 2020 web site (About Us): (<https://murnanescountryfreshmeats.com/about-us-2/>)

Michael Murnane Born and raised in Colac, Michael has been a Butcher in Colac for over 30yrs. Starting his career at Coles Colac as an apprentice in his early 20s, very passionate about butchering Michael was awarded the "William Angliss, Country Butchers, Best Practical Butcher" on his final year of completion. Michael worked in the Coles/Bilo Meat Department for many years as a Butcher and Manager of the Meat Department.



Michael Murnane
webpage image

After marrying local girl Mandy who was born in Birregurra and raised in Forrest, "Turner Drive" Forrest being named in honour of Mandy's Grandfather "Jack Turner" an Otway Shire President back in the day. We worked in Colac for many years, members of various community committees, until heading off on travels around Australia for 3 years to gain experience and add further skill sets, working in various Butcher Shops and Supermarkets along the way. One of the most rewarding experiences on our travels was to work on an Outback Sheep Station in WA. Wooleen Station, Murchison, W.A. Michael took a keen interest in the beforehand process, gaining an insight and valuable experience in the overall process of both Sheep and Cattle Stations. Word got out that there was a "Real Butcher" in the district so he was often "loaned" to the Neighbours, travelling 100s of kms to neighbouring properties, to fill the Station owners' freezers with professionally cut meats.

Our return to Colac was in 1999 with toddler Asha, to spend Christmas with family and friends, this made us realize that Colac is where we wanted to be so we settled back into the Community, taking over the Ownership of Country Fresh Meats in 2001, Mandy being an active member in various Committees and Boards in the Community.

Our 3 Children Asha, Denver and Grady have all grown up working in the Butcher Shop over the years, all still currently employed in the family business around School and University commitments.

Michael loves what he does and is a true Master of his craft!

Michael's brother **Trevor Murnane** has worked in Colac as a Butcher for around 35yrs and is a very important part of our Team for over 13 years. Trevor is a behind the scenes man being our expert Sausage maker, which are "award winning Snags" and also does a lot of the hard yakka, highly skilled at all of our "breaking" of the beef, lambs and poultry. Trevor is a master at his trade but also a great bloke to have a chat on what your meat order requirements might be.

Michael's brother **David Murnane** completed his Butchers Apprenticeship working alongside Michael and has been with us for 15 years. David is usually front of the house and is always up for a friendly chat and expert advice on recommendations for quantities, cooking times or suggestions on what to feed the family, David is happy to get you that speciality cut that's not on display in our large display case.

Christopher Box is our part-time qualified chef, always bringing creative new ideas to the range keeping us informed with the latest products and trends, providing helpful advice on cooking methods and times.

We have a fantastic team of Casuals that come in after school or school holidays including Uni breaks! They bring fresh ideas on the latest technology, marketing ideas and a fantastic attitude toward customer service. They come to work excited and love the interaction with all of our customers both young and old, always up for a chat about what's going on in our community. You will find them courteous helpful and happy to carry your shopping out to the car. We believe our Team are an invaluable part of our business that we are very proud of.

The shop in Murray Street at time of writing, continues to grow with another generation of butchers, adapting to the consumers ever changing requirements.

Timeline Summary of Butchers – 352 Murray Street, Colac:

- 1958** - Butcher shop begins to be built, by butcher Derrek Mathews and wife Eva Mathews – "D.E & E.L Mathews, Meat Specialists".
- 1990s** - David Lunn buys the shop and continues with butchering. Trading, as "D. & R. L. Lunn, Country Fresh Meats".
- 2001** - Michael and Mandy Murnane buy the shop and business and become "Murnanes Country Fresh Meats".
- 2021** - Continuing.



Murnanes Country Fresh Meats
Author image – January 2021

IRREWARRA ESTATE WORLD WAR 1 SOLDIER SETTLEMENT SCHEME 1920

By Alan Salmon and Craig Pink

Formerly owned by the Calvert family, the Irrewarra Estate land was acquired by the State Government and made available under a repatriation effort to discharged soldiers from World War 1. While some prospered, it soon turned out to be impossible odds for many others.

The Closer Settlement Board announced in early November 1919 that it had purchased two big estates in the Western District - being Calvert's at Irrewarra and Dreeite, both of which had been in the Calvert family for over half a century. Prior to this purchase in November 1919, various smaller lots in the surrounding Colac area had been purchased by the Closer Settlement Board and were already settled by WW1 returned soldiers. Individual lots were also purchased by some returned soldiers, to which a similar advance was set up under the Closer Settlement Board. Both these included land such as at Beeac, Cundare, Dreeite, Eurack and also other smaller areas around the Colac district.

An early figure of Calvert's Irrewarra Estate was totalled at 6,133 acres, to be cut up into 47 allotments. Troy's Estate near Beeac, 400 acres from D. E. Calvert at Dreeite, 525 acres from Mrs M. J. Holland also at Dreeite were amongst the earlier land purchases by the Closer Settlement Board prior to Calvert's Irrewarra and Dreeite Estates in early November 1919. Crown land was also purchased when available and also suitable.

WW1 returned soldier Herbert Martin purchased 81 acres (lot 19) of the Calvert's Irrewarra Estate just prior to the Closer Settlement Board's purchase of Calvert's Estate in November 1919. Herbert Martin also went on to later acquire further land on the Irrewarra Estate.

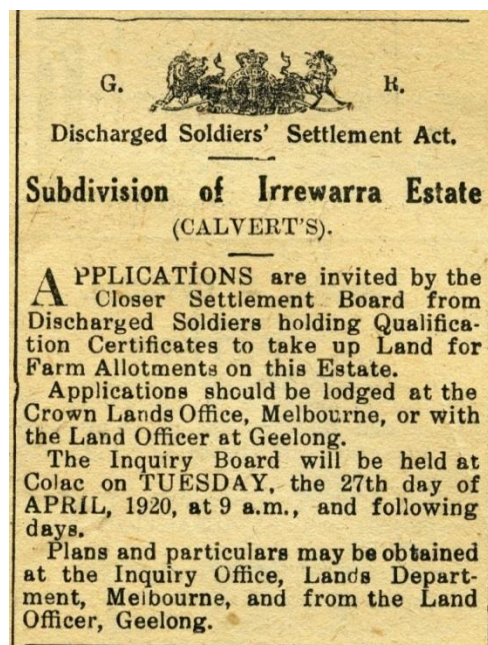
AT RIGHT – Advert from 17th April 1920 edition of the Colac Reformer newspaper, which invited applications from WW1 soldiers to take up land on the subdivision of Calvert's Irrewarra Estate under the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act. Note the prerequisite of a *Qualification Certificate* which was required (like a discharge certificate, but meaning medically fit to do supposedly physical labour). Applications for land on the subdivision of Calvert's Dreeite Estate started soon after this time, with the first recommended applicants announced in early August 1920.

(Advert from Society files – Colac Reformer Collection)

The Closer Settlement Board claimed the land on the Irrewarra Estate ranged in value from £1932, to £3511. The land, which ranged in lots from 70 to 175 acres, was claimed to be suitable for both dairying and mixed farming. With dairying being the main intention of the Irrewarra soldier settlement land, selling points included such lines as - "there are metal roads running through, with daily motor lorry service that picks up the cream for the Colac butter factory".

The Board's inquiry started at the Victoria Hall in Colac at 9am sharp on Tuesday, 27th April 1920 and following days to decide on applications (including returning in the evenings also). The inquiry board concluded with its selections at its Colac sitting on 1st May 1920. As they had been told very little, many of the returned soldiers who had put in applications had turned up at the inquiry asking for more information on the land - many also claimed they hadn't even been shown a plan. One was eventually produced for those interested to view. Over two hundred applicants' qualifications had been processed, taking six days - with 47 blocks on the Irrewarra Estate to be recommended for allocation. Applicants living locally did get some priority, but this was due more to having family close by that could be of assistance to the settlers. The allotments were numbered from 9 to 55 - see following page for the original initial allotment numbers, with names recommended by the Closer Settlement Board. The applicants, termed as "applicant recommended" were listed along with the town they resided in at the time of their application.

Mark Hager of Colac took up the position of Inspector of the soldiers' settlement and also Crown Lands Bailiff in the Colac district in early May 1920. The first allocations on the Irrewarra Estate took up occupation in late May 1920, when the Closer Settlement Board agreed to let those on the land who could immediately take up occupation and start on work such as fencing and ploughing. Mark Hager was very instrumental in obtaining permits not only for early occupation of the land, but for the purchase of requisites such as stock, horses, ploughs and materials that could be procured under the agreed terms for the new settlers.



THE IRREWARRA ESTATE.

ALLOTMENT OF BLOCKS.

The Land Board appointed to deal with the allotment of blocks on the Irrewarra Estate, purchased by the Government for soldier settlement, sat from Tuesday morning until Saturday afternoon, when the work was completed. The board consisted of Messrs Malcolm Taylor (chairman), Burgess, Major Ramsay (representing the Colac Shire Council), and the members had the assistance of Messrs Pemberton and Walshe, officers of the Department. The board took evidence from over two hundred applicants, and the members were most careful throughout. Married men in every instance received preference. The allotment was as follows:—

- Lot 9—H. W. Tonkin, Irrewarra.
- Lot 10—S. W. Niblett, Cororooke.
- Lot 11—L. R. Collyer, Beeac.
- Lot 12—W. M'Asay, Ballarat.
- Lot 13—W. L. Ryan, Almurta.
- Lot 13A, Ondit—P. J. Nicholls, Camperdown.
- Lot 13, Ondit—D. Nolan, Swan Hill.
- Lot 20—C. V. Eadsell, Moonee Ponds.
- Lot 21—W. A. Burnett, Cororooke.
- Lot 22—C. A. Platt, Ballan.
- Lot 23—A. C. Fisher, Colac.
- Lot 24—C. Buchanan, Colac.
- Lot 25—W. H. Howe, Barwon Downs.
- Lot 26—H. V. Mewha, Curdies.
- Lot 27—G. Silver, Curdies.
- Lot 28—H. J. Brennan, Warrion.
- Lot 29—D. E. Jerrard, Ballarat.
- Lot 30—F. Vagg, Cobden.
- Lot 31—C. D. Lucas, Dandenong.
- Lot 32—A. E. Nichol, Geelong.
- Lot 33—W. Robilliard, Curdies.
- Lot 34—A. J. Elbourne, Colac.
- Lot 36—G. J. Collins, Ormond.
- Lot 37—W. F. Croft, Glenhurst.
- Lot 38—E. A. Gregan, Geelong.
- Lot 39—H. T. Wraight, Tynong.
- Lot 40—T. J. Carmody, Colac.
- Lot 41—D. G. MacKay, Ballarat East.
- Lot 42—W. C. Aitken, Caulfield.
- Lot 43—T. S. Stephens, Pakenham.
- Lot 44—T. J. Hunter, Yarraville.
- Lot 46—J. L. McNeill, Birregurra.
- Lot 47—T. Alexander, Murrumbidgee.
- Lot 49—E. Eason, Footscray.
- Lot 52—E. E. Clarkson, Colac.
- Lot 53—R. E. Harrison, Chilwell.
- Lot 54—F. Hitchings, St. Kilda.
- Lot 55—W. Lock, Footscray.
- Lot 45—J. W. May, Birregurra.
- Lot 10 and 16—F. R. Morris, Kangaroo Grounds.
- Lot 48—D. A. Small, Glenferrie.

By mid-June 1920, a transformation had begun to take place on the Irrewarra Estate, where six months previously only about five dairies were in existence - the settlement of returned soldiers on the area had been responsible for an instant change. Most of the new settlers had advanced in putting their new areas under cultivation or carrying on dairying. Large quantities of timber had now been placed on the various blocks for the construction of dwellings.

AT LEFT - Colac Reformer of 4th May 1920, showing the first recommended soldier settlers on the Irrewarra Estate by the Closer Settlement Board.

NOTE - this list does not necessarily mean they all took up the recommended land on the Irrewarra Estate.

Omitted from this Reformer list is - (Lot 14 - R. H. Westbury), (Lot 15 - W. J. Ridgeway), (Lot 50 - A. H. Currington) - Decision was withheld in respect of allotment 51, but allocated to W. Bannister in mid-May 1920.

Correction/alternate listings of names include - Atkin, Edsall, Greagen, Jerrard, McAsey, Mackay, Nichols and Nicol. Christian names corrections - E. C. Hitchings, M. Lock, H. J. Mewha, F. K. Morris, A. C. Nicol, C. H. Platt, D. N. Robilliard and H. L. Ryan. Lot 13A Ondit and Lot 13 Ondit means lots in Parish of Ondit, along with Lot 10 of F. K. Morris - all other lots are in Parish of Irrewarra. Lot 41 says D. G. MacKay Ballarat East. (Advert from Society files - Colac Reformer Collection)

Portions of the Calvert's Dreeite Estate were to be allocated very soon after the first Irrewarra Estate allocations, but owing to a new subdivision of the Dreeite Estate, it was found necessary to postpone the Inquiry Board until 3rd August 1920 as the portion now included Read's, Morrissy's, M'Nicol's and part of Calvert's and also Baker's properties. This portion of the Dreeite Estate was to be subdivided into 63 allotments varying in area from 70 to 108 acres, which ranged in value from £2184 to £2500. The remaining portion of Calvert's Dreeite Estate was to be made available at a later date. Further allotments were allocated on the Dreeite Estate in late September 1920 - at the same hearing two more blocks on the Irrewarra Estate were recommended as - (Lot 17 - H. Hardley, Colac East); (Lot 18 - D. Hardley, Colac East).

Each allotment was leased on an initial two-year basis, with a two-year extension if they made all necessary payments on the land to the Commission, along-with formerly-agreed improvements such as fencing and dwellings. Obviously many returned soldiers were injured or had recurring health problems upon returning home. Some signed up in support of the repatriation efforts in the hope their health would improve, while many also signed up saying a brother or other nominated family could help on the land being applied for.

The Settlement Commission made money available for the settlers' expenses such as stock, fencing, shedding. Houses were built on the properties with the options of the Commission building them, or self-build. Some, such as bachelor David MacKay lived on his allotment in a tent until his house was

built - some also lived in various accommodation on the Calvert's home property while their houses were built. Most farms went on to have dairy cows, pigs, crops, and vegetable gardens for survival. The Irrewarra branch of the Returned Soldiers League was soon formed, with regular meetings held, which also co-operated with other branches of the League on a local basis.

Many farmers failed to make the payments, so at the end of the first two years their lease was cancelled by the Settlement Board. If cancelled, the lease was then made available to the next person who had applied for an allotment. An example - Lot 55 on the Irrewarra Estate was initially recommended to M. Lock, but only six weeks later it was re-recommended to Herbert Hardley. However, Herbert had decided he wanted lot 17 as his brother had put in an application for lot 18 - the idea was to be beside his brother so they could help each other and share equipment. They did both get allocated their lots 17 and 18 in late September 1920. Stan Dailey was yet another early applicant who took up lot 55, then, early 1923 saw John Troy of Elliminyt recommended lot 55, this being just one example of how some of the lots changed occupation over the early years of the Irrewarra Soldier Settlement from WW1.

If the lots were not allocated or taken up, they were generally leased mostly to adjoining landholders until new re-allocations were made. Whilst many of the allotments had several occupants over the early years of the Irrewarra settlement from WW1, some settlers also ended up swapping for more suitable land, also adding adjoining blocks to increase the size of their holding in an effort to become viable.

Various complaints in regard to the general quality of the construction and materials used in the dwellings soon arose. May 1921 saw their grievances aired with the assistant architect of the Closer Settlement Board, Mr. L. S. Klingender. A letter forwarded by the secretary of the Irrewarra branch of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers League - David Mackay - stated that the complaints were general on the whole estate. In regard to his own house, it was held up during construction for the want of building materials and also painters' requisites.

Stan Dailey stated that whilst his house was under construction, he had to seek medical treatment at the Caulfield Military Hospital - he was away for three months. When he left his block the framework for his house was up, but during his absence no work was done. Mr Klingender had promised to see that the construction would be pushed on, but after coming out of hospital multiple requests had to be made before construction proceeded. After seven months Stan Dailey's house was still not completed. The chimneys were not built to specifications, also between the chimneys and adjoining woodwork there was over a one inch space. The blocks which the house stood on were of hardwood, when the specifications distinctly said grey box or red gum. The water tanks leaked from their initial installation as they were faulty in manufacture. The front steps of the house were made of second-hand timber, while the flooring was also of faulty timber - it being softwood. The linoleum reminded one of "an ocean wave" in windy weather due to varying gaps. Workmen worked short days, but drew full pay, the exterior doors were not suitable - a more durable heavy door being required. The plumbing had been done by carpenters, with a result of far inferior work. Whilst hardwood timber had been used for house stumps, red gum timber had been used to make tank stands.

Albert Fisher pointed out that while he had to make a written application to the Board to repair a tank which was unserviceable when initially installed due to leaking, other complaints included weather boards on his house which had shrunk so far that the internal plaster was visible from the outside. The rain came through the roof in the two front rooms and had already ruined the furniture - he also had to cart some of the construction material himself. The foundation blocks of his house were of hardwood, when grey box or red gum was clearly specified.

Charles Edsall stated that he was allotted one of the houses on the old Calvert homestead block which was removed to his block, to which the Board did not affect the necessary improvements. When the house was shifted to the lot it was uninhabitable - Charles had to do carpentering work and even had to build the chimney to make the house habitable. After making the improvements himself, the Board then expected him to insure the house.

David Jerrerd also complained about such shortcomings as the roof of his house, which leaked badly. The rain also came in the front door and worked its way to the back door, for which bags had to be used to soak up the water.

Fred Vagg complained that the bad workmanship in his house centred around the window sashes that sagged; this, and other related problems caused some of the glass to even break - doors had also been badly hung.

In reply, Mr Klingender stated that the Closer Settlement Board were doing all they could to rectify the shortcomings. The foreman had a great deal to do in doing quotes and getting supplies, and could not supervise all workmen, and did admit it was a difficult matter to get reliable carpenters and other tradesmen - a carter was constantly employed to transport materials. In regard to the building materials problem, he stated that it was very difficult to obtain building materials of most descriptions, and that Sharp's and Moore's could not supply the 3" x 2" hardwood timber required. Due to demand being over four times what supply could fill, the timber problem was unfortunately unavoidable, there being no dried hardwood available in Australia at the time the Irrewarra settlement houses were built. Mr Klingender said he would personally inspect the houses and have the defects attended to.

Late May 1921 saw Irrewarra Estate soldier settler Talbot Hunter laid up due to complications from appendicitis - other soldier settlers from the Irrewarra Estate formed a working bee bringing their horses and ploughs, ploughing a large area on Mr Hunter's land. The soldier settlers also collected £22 for the purchase of seed and manure, while also making arrangements to sow seed on 40 acres of his land.

AT RIGHT – Early 1900s image of the Irrewarra railway station - and as it would have looked in early 1920s. The close proximity of this railway station was of great advantage to the Irrewarra soldier settlers. This building was destroyed by fire in 1939, a temporary premises replaced it, which closed in 1960.

(Image from Society files – Railways Collection)



AT RIGHT – Colac Dairying Company truck loaded with cans. The chain drive and solid rubber tyres were still very common in the early 1920s - these certainly ventured as far as Irrewarra. Sterling and Daimler were popular truck brands of the time with the CDC, some of which are said to have been dumped in the old tip site off Wilson St when worn out and replaced. Image taken around early 1920s. (Image from Society files – Dairying Collection)



A number of the soldier settlers of the first recommendations from early May 1920 on the Irrewarra Estate did not last for various reasons. Some include Captain William Bannister who had ongoing health problems which deteriorated and he died in late April 1921. His wife Nellie was allowed to take over the land as the Board decided she was considered to have relevant farming skills. Nellie went on to successfully farm for some years on the Irrewarra land.

By May 1923 Fred Vagg had been in hospital for three months with tuberculosis at an advanced stage and would be unable to work again, he wrote to the Board stating same, pleading that the land be transferred to his brother-in-law Ken Hose who had been looking after the land in his absence - the Board flatly refused this and demanded £58 owing on lot 30 + 30A, but as Fred wrote back and clearly stated, his own improvements to the block were some-what equal to this figure and he was clearly unable to work the land. An arrangement was eventually agreed to and returned soldier Ken Hose carried on the land. Fred Vagg died in later 1923.

Others amongst the original allocations from May 1920 who had their leases cancelled in the first few years due to ill health, or non-payment of instalments include Herbert Brennan, Thomas Carmody, Ernest Clarkson, Stan Dailey, Edward Greagen, brothers Douglas and Herbert Hardley, Frank Morris and John McNeill.



AT LEFT – Irrewarra House as it would have looked in 1920s. The mansion, built at the request of Mr Thomas Chirnside in 1884 as a wedding gift to his daughter when she married Mr John Calvert. This was retained by the Calverts as part of lot 35 with the 1919 Closer Settlement Board purchase. It was sold by the trustees of the Calvert Estate in later 1931 to Harold Royston Hall of New Zealand - it was demolished in 1941. The earlier and smaller original single-storey Calvert stone homestead on lot 38 remains today, which was allocated to Edward Greagen as part of the Irrewarra Soldier Settlement in May 1920.

(Image from Society files - Historic Homes File)

After the initial allocations from May 1920, some of the next occupiers on the Irrewarra Estate included - Thomas Carmody, Arthur Corben, Annie Downey, Stan England and William Robinson. Vivian Collyer and Alfred Niblett also, who both had brothers already on the Irrewarra Estate. David Prosser also, who came as late as 1931.

THE LOW PRICE OF BUTTER

At the meeting of the Irrewarra branch of the Returned Soldiers in March 1922, the matter of low butter prices and the associated hard times it was causing, was discussed. It was pointed out that the average dairy allotments on the Irrewarra Estate carried 20 cows, which would return an average income of £120 per year with butter fat at 1/ per lb. While another £50 might be made out of pigs, the yearly payment required by the Board averaged £190 for land and house only. As living expenses and other incidental expenses had to be met, the branch considered it was impossible for the Closer Settlement Board to receive any payment while butter fat remained so low, and until the price rose to 1/6 or 1/9 per lb, a continuation of the free period of occupation would be the only way the dairymen would survive on the small land allotments allocated. It was decided that the Board be approached with a view to extend the two-year free period to three years.

At the May 1922 meeting of the Irrewarra Returned Soldiers, the unsatisfactory condition of several of the houses built on the Irrewarra Estate was again the subject of much adverse comment. It was decided to ask the Board to send an architect to Irrewarra to view the complaints first-hand. Also under discussion was the refusal of the Board to extend the free occupation from two years to three on the grounds that the Minister had no power to grant the request. This prompted much surprise as the Act provided for a three years' free period, subject to the Minister's discretion. Amongst further surprises was that one of those present announced that his own case had been granted a three-year free period. It was decided to hold a special meeting to invite all district soldier settlers.

At the January 1923 meeting of the Irrewarra Returned Soldiers the following Officers were elected - President, Mr. H. Wraight; vice presidents, Messrs. W. C. Atkin and J. W. May; secretary and treasurer Mr. A. Corben. It was resolved to write to the Electricity Commission relative to obtaining a supply of current from the Morwell scheme to the Western District.

Early August 1923 the Irrewarra soldier settlers held a meeting to protest against the valuation of their allotments, also requesting the Closer Settlement Board instal a system of drainage as many holdings were under water.

Children of the early Irrewarra soldier settlers from WW1 had to travel the distance to attend either Ondit or Warncoort primary schools, (Warncoort school was earlier known as Irrewarra) but as the population from those settled on the Irrewarra Estate quickly grew, a school at Irrewarra became necessary. Hugh Mewha donated three acres of his land which the Irrewarra school was built on. In early February 1923 the Irrewarra primary school was officially opened by Mr. McDonald M. L. A.. The initial enrolment of 40 pupils on 30th January 1923 all came from the Irrewarra soldier settler families - being Atkin -2, Buchanan -2, Croft -1, Elbourne -2, Fisher -1, Greagen -5, Hardley -1, Hose -1, Howe -6, Jerrerd -2, Lucas -1, McAsey -1, Mewha -2, Niblett -5, Ryan -2, Silver -3, Stephens -1, Westbury -1.

The school went on to be the local hall, church - anything that was an under-cover requirement event at any time. Sporting clubs such as football and cricket also soon started. The road which ran east to west on which the school was on was called "School Road", to which it is still known today as "Irrewarra School Road".

THE AUSTRALASIAN LETTER

The following letter appeared in the Saturday 15th September 1923 edition of the Melbourne Australasian newspaper by Irrewarra soldier settler H. W. Tonkin – (NOTE – this not his only letter to appear in a newspaper)

SOLDIER DAIRY FARMS TO THE EDITOR OF THE AUSTRALASIAN

Sir,- it may be instructive for those interested in the prospects of soldier settlers in the dairying districts to study the following facts: - Although the Closer Settlement Board have been very generous in their treatment of soldier dairy farmers, their generosity has to a large extent been misapplied. Although the land values of the different blocks do not vary to a great extent as dairying propositions, the difference between the blocks is very marked. For instance, several blocks on the Irrewarra settlement are so well provided with shelter trees and hedges that the cattle are protected summer and winter. Other blocks are so situated that the cattle are exposed to all the heat of summer and the terrific storms and cold and rain of the winter, which reduce production to the extent of 15 per cent – a severe handicap. Then, again, some blocks are so situated that almost the entire block can be cultivated, whilst on other blocks as much as 30 acres out of 100, which cost over £20 per acre unimproved value, is under water a considerable portion of the year, and its nature is such that no use can be made of it the remainder of the time. On one block at the present time about 50 acres is under water, and cannot be drained, consequently when 25 to 30 acres of cultivation is taken out, it leaves about 20 acres of rather inferior land for grazing. On blocks of this description, soldiers are required, if they want to purchase their holdings, to pay the Board somewhere about £200 per year. The number of cows generally held by the settlers is about 25 head, which cost about £4 each to feed, independent of fodder grown – that is, of course, to get the best results. After that £300 per annum revenue is provided, the soldier starts to live.

Taking an average of 250lb. of butter-fat per cow of 25 head, with butter-fat averaging 1/4 per lb. for the season, it makes a total of £416/13/4, out of which £300 should be allowed for repayments, insurance, rates, and feed (extra) for stock, leaving £116/13/4, or thereabouts, for living and general expenses. 250lb. of butter-fat is a good average for a herd in the formation, as results from the herd-testing association will prove; to reach a standard of 300lb. per cow it requires years of culling and care, besides entailing considerable expense. High test cows cannot be chosen in the yards; it requires a whole season of continuous testing to get a true indication of the value of a cow. Type, milk-vessel, & c., are not everything, as a cow of carrying capacity, type and breeding can very often be beaten by a class breeders would call a mongrel. The only settlers who can be regarded as being really successful are those who have been fortunate enough to have had capital or stock of their own when starting. Still I maintain that the remainder can pull through, and catch up, providing the policy of assistance is altered, but it needs altering very promptly. The first thing that is required is that advisory control be taken from men who are acting solely in the interests of the board; that is the farm supervisors, who are not sufficiently experienced to warrant soldiers acting under their supervision. It is generally the lack of funds which prevents the soldier from reaching the goal of success. What the settler needs is the able supervision and advice of experienced and successful local farmers and judges of stock, to examine each individual case, advise, and report necessary alterations in stock and general farming. Let the board attend to the finances. It would be cheapest in the end. Adequate housing accommodation for cattle should be erected on unsheltered blocks. Lastly, a plant for the pasteurisation of milk or cream should be established by business men amongst the settlers, together with depots in the suburbs for direct supply to the consumer. Besides the "digger" getting full return for his labours, the consumer could benefit to the extent of 3d. or 4d. per gallon on milk cost, then leave a good margin for the soldier. Under this scheme settlers would be able to pay the excessive cost of the land, which is about an average of £10 per acre more than its proper value –

Yours, & c., H. W. TONKIN. IREWARRA, SEPT 4, 1923.

At the well-attended meeting of the Irrewarra settlers in October 1923, the question of erecting a pasteurising factory at Irrewarra was given some serious consideration. The estimated cost of a pasteurising plant was £2,000, and it was pointed out that if the settlers raised £1,000, the Closer Settlement Board would likely advance the other £1,000. Irrewarra soldier settler William Ridgeway stated that he had been advised by the Housewives Association in

Melbourne that the price fixed was sixpence a quart for milk and 1/6 a pint for cream, and that the price would continue for the whole year. The chairman of the meeting Mr Claude Atkin stated he was not in favour of retailing the milk, as amongst other problems, it would require much more capital. He stated dairymen in Gippsland were selling milk to Melbourne wholesalers and doing very well, in fact overall much better than Western District dairymen who were selling cream. If dairymen were going to supply milk to wholesale people, then coolers could be installed on the farm. As more information was required, William Ridgeway and Norman Robilliard were appointed to investigate further, together with a further detailed report about available water and also land available close to the Irrewarra railway station. The chairman also stated that the State Electricity Commission would be prepared to supply electrical energy from January next [1924].

Late February 1924 saw a Colac-based hearing into the conditions of the Dairy Industry, with a number of the Irrewarra settlers voicing their experiences to date. As the majority of the Irrewarra soldier settlers also bred pigs, the milk was mostly separated by a separator, the skim milk fed to pigs, and the cream sent by most farmers to the Colac Dairying Company - as did Norman Robilliard who had 24 dairy cows on his 71 acres. Norman stated at the hearing that he really struggled to make the payments on the land as it was too small, he simply required a larger holding. Archibald Nicol, also a returned soldier on the Irrewarra Estate, claimed similarly, milking 25 cows off his 71¼ acres.

William Anderson, acting manager for the Bulla Company was also amongst those questioned at the hearing, and while he did state that the Bulla Company purchased cream in the area and sold it to restaurants in Melbourne, he declined to state any paid, or on-sold prices. William Anderson did admit the price paid by Bulla rose in the summer season as it was difficult to keep the cream cool and fresh.

Irrewarra soldier settler William Ridgeway stated that he milked 43 cows on his 130 acres on the Irrewarra Estate, and he was extremely lucky to be sending his milk to Melbourne (for the previous seven months), and the return had averaged 1/3 per gallon. The fact that he was able to meet his obligations in regard to payments made to the Board was largely due to the fact that he sent his milk to Melbourne, and if the whole of the settlers sent their milk to Melbourne there would be a ready market for it. William went on to state that he had also been assured by the railway authorities that a cool truck would be provided if the supply was sufficient. Then asked by the chairman "There are men who are doing well at dairying in this district?" - to which William replied "Perhaps so; but there are a lot not doing well".

Irrewarra soldier settler Thomas Alexander left the district in June 1925 - he was amongst the original batch of allocations from May 1920, and was presented with a going-away present of "a wallet of notes" by the local Irrewarra residents.

THE IRREWARRA CREAM COMPANY

Early September 1925 saw the announcement that a cream factory was to be built at Irrewarra, which was to be owned and run by a Melbourne company on land selected from Irrewarra soldier settler Ken Hose. The suitable land was on the eastern boundary of Mr Hose's property, situated just a quarter mile from the Irrewarra railway station. It was hoped to be open and operational in October 1925.

By mid-September 1925 the Irrewarra Cream Company premises at Irrewarra was well advanced in construction, due to splendid progress made by the contractors Messrs Holtham Bros, of Colac. Electricity and water supply were well at hand after initial concerns over whether the proposed ¾" water pipe would be enough to supply the demand.

In mid-October 1925 the Irrewarra Cream Co. commenced operations, with a number of the Irrewarra farmers supplying the new Irrewarra facility. The cream was treated at the Irrewarra creamery, then sent by train to the Company's depot in Melbourne for city distribution. Many hurdles had been overcome since the first mention by Herbert Tonkin in September 1923 - the settlers also had to overcome newer rules and regulations around carting milk products by rail, but all these they overcame by sheer persistence.

A January 1926 report states large quantities of cream had been forwarded to Melbourne by the new Irrewarra Cream Co.

By this stage the Irrewarra farmers had a reasonable choice of outlets for their milk or cream. Direct milk or cream sales to Melbourne wholesalers with such destinations as Ascot Vale were popular, which went direct by rail from the Irrewarra railway station. The Colac Dairying Company was also another supply option, as well as small supplies at times to the Bulla Cream Co. situated at Colac east (vicinity of today's abattoirs).

Some oversupply was encountered such as in November 1926. The Irrewarra farmers supplying milk direct to Melbourne had specially fed their cows through the cold winter for a combined city milk supply contract, only to be told in the middle of Spring when the peak times hit that due to over-supply, they could not receive any more milk in Melbourne.



CRAIG'S CONUNDRUM

LAST ISSUE ANSWER – Early to mid-1980s view of Bryan Bros and Borch Pty Ltd Water Supply Engineers at 45 Corangamite Street Colac, with its new modernised frontage.

Bryan Bros & Borch folded in November 1987 due to financial difficulties.

In today's times this premises is occupied by the Betta Electrical store.

(Image from Doug Kirkman Collection)



AT LEFT – Colac previously had a Myer store – do you know what has just opened on this site in mid-May 2021 ?.

If you really need a clue, it was also Bilson's in the early days before Myer. Bilson's store was established in 1872 by Mr Thomas Tulloh.

In 1899 the store consisted of a drapery, ironmongery, grocery and wine and spirits department.

Following a fire in 1952 the building was rebuilt to cope with the new era in marketing.

ANSWER NEXT ISSUE

COLAC AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY ROSTER 2021 2.00 PM – 4.00 PM

Please Note: This roster is subject to Approval at AGM Meeting & Review

Month	Thursday	Friday	Sunday
June 2021	3 rd D. Missen 10 th L. Spence 17 th G. Splatt 24 th J. Knight	4 th C. Pink 11 th G. Bray 18 th C. King 25 th M. Saddlier	6 th R. Osborne 13 th G. Knox 20 th N. Ryan 27 th I. Barlow
July 2021	1 st D. Missen 8 th L. Spence 15 th G. Splatt 22 nd J. Knight 29 th R. Missen	2 nd C. Pink 9 th G. Bray 16 th C. King 23 rd M. Saddlier 30 th R. Missen	4 th R. Osborne 11 th G. Knox 18 th N. Ryan 25 th I. Barlow
August 2021	5 th D. Missen 12 th L. Spence 19 th G. Splatt 26 th J. Knight	6 th C. Pink 13 th G. Bray 20 st C. King 27 th M. Saddlier	1 st R. Osborne 8 th G. Knox 15 th N. Ryan 22 nd I. Barlow 29 th G. Knox