FREEMANTLE ROAD
connections
ISSUE 2: JULY 2023 ISSN 2653-8482

Gowan • Killongbutta • Freemantle •Milkers Flat •Watton • Billywillinga • Mt Rankin

MORE FEATURES INSIDE:

- Farewell to our Living Legends
- Freemantle Volunteer RFS Feature
- *Platypus Pals* contributions by our junior writer and artist
- Collecting Stones? Join the local lapidary club.
- Major road upgrades in our area
- Chris Hogg's childhood memories of growing up at Billywillinga

INSIDE: the story of Freemantle Woolshed

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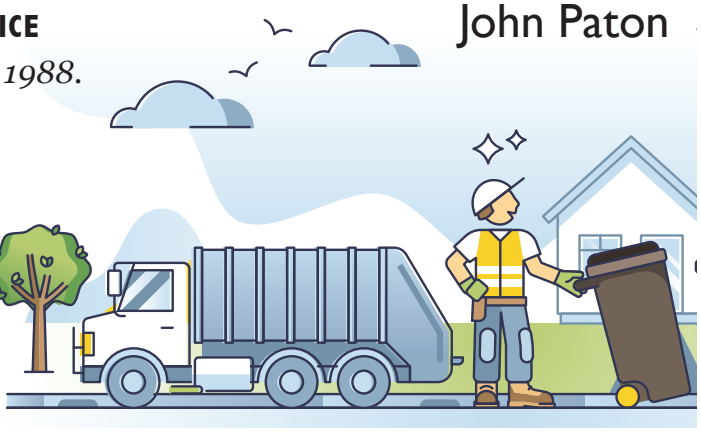

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Front cover photos of the Freemantle shelter shed were taken by Melinda Sexton.

FREEMANTLE ROAD connections

Editorial:

Hi readers, I don't know about you, but this winter has been really hard on my body with a dodgy knee that's causing me grief and the frosts keeping me under my doona for longer than usual.

But lots of things have been happening while I have been hibernating at Killongbutta.

We have a new road that has transformed our valley. The Gracey road crew were here for three months and we got to know them pretty well. They were an experienced, respectful team who did their best to avoid lengthy disruptions.

We've also got an ISSN from the National Library that ensures as we lodge each issue of *Freemantle Road Connections* it will be archived and searchable on Trove.

This is particularly important for the history features which will be accessible to future generations.

One of our contributors, Chris Hogg, has written an insightful piece about her experiences of growing up on an isolated property at Billywillinga.

If you have memories you'd like to share please contact me.

For our local historians, please feel free to submit your stories if you want them included in our collection.

Thanks to Bathurst Regional Council for providing the information about our road works.

Jenny Pickford from Billywillinga Road has submitted her cartoon of the frustration that we all feel when encountering the traffic lights at Kelloshiel Creek.

In future issues I'd like to profile all the B & Bs and camping sites on Freemantle Road starting with those located at Watton.

So if you own one please contact me so I can start on your story for the Spring issue.

I hope you enjoy the read and look forward to your feedback to continue developing the quality and content of this community publication.

Please don't forget to email me your favourite recipe.

- Marje Prior
Publisher

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Farewell to our **Living Legends**

Bathurst Living Legends Jim and Lesley Buchan have sold their 'Glenhaven' property at Milkers Flat and moved to Canberra to be closer to their son, Andrew and grandchildren.

The couple were farewelled by the Freemantle Rural Fire Service with a presentation of a framed photo of their land. Jim was a volunteer for over 40 years and their training officer. They have both contributed significantly to the Bathurst and Freemantle Road communities.

Lesley, a retired primary school teacher, was a Senior Guides leader for 60 years in the Sutherland and Bathurst regions. She stepped down recently and is a member of the Australian Trefoil Guild retired members connected to the Guides community.

She was also instrumental in helping establish the Bathurst Family History Group in 1984 after attending an Adult Education Workshop on family history.

She was the longest-serving president of the group which was located with the Bathurst Library before moving to the Senior Citizens Centre. In 2015 she was made a Living Legend by Bathurst Regional Council in recognition of her contribution to youth, culture and education.

Lesley's interest started after the couple spent months in England in 1981 when Jim took long service leave to research their family history. In 1983, The family moved from Sutherland Shire to Milkers Flat after Jim was appointed as a field training officer with Telstra.

In 1992, Jim suffered a heart attack at the age of 52 while running a training course in Broken Hill. He started his career with Telstra as a technician before taking on the responsibility of training regional technicians in the conversion to digital technology.

It was a life changing event that enabled Jim to pursue his interest in local history after taking early retirement in December 1993.

Jim's interest was initially in the property he bought that once belonged to an early pioneer family. The 'Hillside' homestead, outbuildings and sheds remained virtually untouched. On 'Combogolong', he discovered a hut site and some small relics and wanted to know more about its original owners. The property was owned by a descendant of the Prior family, the late Jill Williams and her husband Graham who became his lifelong friends.

Jim spent years researching old records, survey maps and newspaper articles in the state and national archives, Charles Sturt library, NSW Lands Titles Office and the Bathurst Historical Society. He self-published his local history *Freemantle via Bathurst* in 2001 and sold 420 copies, also making it available on CDs. The publication focuses on the local pioneering families and their properties from the 1820s to the 1960s and is full of interesting extracts from old newspapers.

For 20 years Jim took people on a tour of Freemantle Road as part of the Autumn Heritage Festival where he shared his knowledge and Tony McIntosh hosted a viewing of the early Australian film, The Girl of the Bush shot on location at Freemantle.

Jim's main passion is the outdoors where he was a Scout commissioner for the 15-18 year-old Venturers in Sutherland and Bathurst. He was at the forefront of Venturers activities introducing bushwalking, abseiling, cross-country skiing, rock climbing, caving, sailing and whitewater canoeing.

He stored the canoes and outdoor gear on his property and set up a scouts and guides camping site on his river frontage which was also used by the Backtracks Program run by Veritas House.

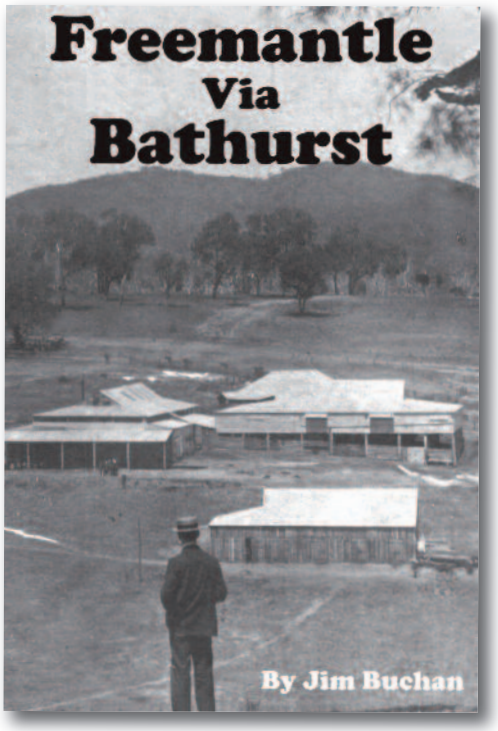
From 1995 to 2005 he volunteered to run the Backtracks outdoor programs for local school students that included caving and abseiling as part of a confidence building exercise.

In 2001 Jim was the Citizen of the Year for Evans Shire Council for his work in training rural fire service volunteers in security for the Olympic games. He trained them at the police academy in Goulburn and was a security team leader at the Olympics with control over different stations for bag inspection.

In 2017 he was made a Living Legend by Bathurst Regional Council for his significant contribution to the community.

The couple has left an indelible mark on the Freemantle Road community and will be sadly missed by their neighbours at Milkers Flat where Jim was always available to lend a helping hand.

Their life motto is simple: "Make the most use of it and try everything."



Jim has donated the proceeds from the sale of the second edition of his book to the Freemantle Rural Fire Service. Priced at $40 you can order by emailing: freemantlerfs@gmail.com

Cheeky the pet kangaroo that lived for 23 years

Jim has many fond memories of the wildlife they reared as babies. Cheeky their pet kangaroo lived for 23 years which is unusual for a grey kangaroo, even in captivity. Their lifespan in the wild is 10 years.

He became the star attraction for the young campers who would always ask about him.

Cheeky would follow Jim around the paddock with Sadie, the wombat, and a red-necked wallaby often following him.

"One day yells were coming from the tiler who was grouting the ensuite in our new home. Cheeky kept leaning over his shoulder to see what he was doing," said Jim.

"If you weren't watching him, he'd come up behind you and pull out a

single hair behind your knee. I'd call him in at night and he'd tap you on the shoulder to let you know he was there.

"We were minding Anne's dog who kept running up and pinching Cheeky's cob of corn. One day we couldn't find them. He was standing there with a great grin on his face as he'd shut the dog in under the house.

"Sadie was the size of a can of coke when we got her and had no hair. She lived inside until she went nocturnal and would come in and out through the cat door.

"I made a tunnel out of blankets for her in the house. We'd sometimes find her burrowed into the bottom of our bed asleep. Sadie was returned to Jenolan Caves when she was two and weighed 20 kilos. The first night she was there she broke into the ranger's garage and turned everything over. She then went into his daughter's bedroom and was sleeping in the bed."

PLATYPUS PALS

A page for junior writers, photographers and artists

Our junior writer, Piper Thompson from Killongbutta and artist, Grace Ryan from Billywillinga are our contributors for this issue about emus.

Dinawan is the Wiradjuri way for saying 'Emu' and Balugan is Wiradjuri for 'animal'.

Dinawan (emus) feature prominently in Aboriginal stories and culture. They're the inspiration behind dances, the subject of astrological mythology (the emu constellation) and other creation stories.

The 'Emu in the Sky' is a constellation that's outlined by dark areas of the night sky, not the stars. To find it, first locate the Southern Cross constellation above the southern horizon. The dark between the stars that make up the Southern Cross is the Dinawans head. From here, you can see its neck, body and legs forming between the dust lanes of the Milky Way.

"The Dinawan is special to me because it reminds me how lucky I am to live in such a beautiful part of the world and the local family of Dinawan's reminds me of how lucky I am to live with my family. '

In Dreamtime stories the Dinawan was acknowledged as the King of the Birds.

The Dinawan, is the largest bird native to Australia and is the second largest in the world after its relative the ostrich. The Dinawan is also related to the Cassowary, which is another large Australian and incredibly special bird, it helps to spread new plants and trees within the rainforest by eating the seeds of plants and pooping them out elsewhere helping them grow!

Although the Dinawan is known to sometimes be aggressive this bird also has a sense of curiosity towards plants and other living things that may interest it.

The Dinawan are just one of the amazing Balugan (animals) that the Wiradjuri people live with, they have been with them for over 60,000 years, so they know a lot about them.

The Dinawan can grow up to 2 metres tall and can live between 10 and 20 years, they are found across Australia, including in our local community – we are very lucky to have a family of them living in Billywillinga. These birds are sometimes seen crossing roads and drivers should be careful to avoid hitting them with a car, although they can run speeds of up to 30 miles per hour.

Ernie the Emu at Emu Corner painted by 12-year-old Grace Ryan.

The Dinawan is also an important Australian symbol found on the coat of arms with the kangaroo, the only two animals in Australia that can't walk backwards. They are also special because of their ability to swim.

'The Dinawan is special to me because it reminds me how lucky I am to live in such a beautiful part of the world and the local family of Dinawan's reminds me of how lucky I am to live with my family.

Story written by nine-year-old Piper Thompson.

Collecting stones? join our local Lapidary Club

Looking for a hobby? The Bathurst Lapidary & Collectors Club Inc. (next to the tennis courts in Park St Eglinton) may have something to offer.

We are a 'not for profit', non-political, non – sectarian club managed by elected members to cater for their various interests.

What We Do

Most members are involved with Lapidary. We find stones in our travels or buy them (inexpensively) from the club then we cut them, grind them and polish them to make gemstones. Sometimes they are kept for display but some are incorporated into jewellery such as rings, pendants and earrings. We even have faceting machines that can be used to cut precise 'faces' to enhance the brilliance of transparent jewels e.g., sapphires. In Bathurst, we have an abundance of natural stones that can be used to help create our finished pieces e.g., sapphires, quartz crystals, jasper, obsidian, fossils etc.

Many members have started off by making polished gemstones but have branched out into an allied field such as beading, wire wrapping, wire weaving, electroforming and silversmithing in order to add another dimension to their cut stones.

We also have collectors. The club actually started as a Philatelic Society in 1895. Over the years, people have collected coins, militaria, bottles, rocks, etc. Discussing lapidary projects and collections with other members is part and parcel of the strong social aspect of the club. We enjoy sharing morning tea together and enjoy

each other's company on field trips to collect for example: agate, petrified wood, jasper, sapphires and fossils.

Is Lapidary Easy to do?

Yes! The basic lapidary skills are easy to learn. Even first attempts often produce excellent, finished gemstones. Practice and patience help to improve the finished product.

School Holiday Workshops

Two day workshops are held during most school holidays. Individual tutors help to teach children over 8 yrs. to make 2 or three finished stones. The children and their carers are often surprised at their high quality. The children love to make quality pieces of jewellery to give to loved ones.

Check Out Our Club

We are open from 9am till 1p.m. on Wednesdays and from 9a.m. till 3p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month.

Come In Have a Look over our workroom and have a chat to some of the members. Think about whether the Bathurst Lapidary & Collectors Club may be of interest to you.

If you decide to join, annual membership is $25 for an individual, $35 for a family and $5 for a junior (children of school age). School Holiday Children's Workshops cost $50. A $7 fee is charged for attending Wednesday and Sunday workshops to cover operating costs. Membership is open to all (8 years of age and over).

For further information contact Paul Martensz.
Email: martensz.paul@gmail.com
Ph: 0427896945

Pictured are young hobbists working at machines in the Lapidary Club Rooms.

Be prepared for this fire season

Before winter ends prepare your property for this coming fire season. Cooler weather makes it easier to burn heaps in a safe manner.

If you have forest and tree debris that builds up and is a fire risk near homes and sheds, now is the time to heap it up in to piles and burn it off safely.

Before you burn off

Is it necessary? Do you need a permit? Have you notified everyone you need to notify? Are you in a no burn area? Is it safe? Have you prepared the heaps? Have you the capacity to put out any fire that escapes? Is the weather favourable?

If you are in a town or village, you cannot burn debris, you have to take it to your tip or recycle centre. Could you mulch the material instead of burning? Household rubbish cannot be burnt. During the fire season, from 1st October to 31st March you MUST have a fire permit issued by a permit officer. In non fire season periods, usually 1 April till 30 September, you must notify RFS and neighbours 24 hours before burning. Notify RFS either through the local fire control centre, Chifley during office hours, 1300 258 737 or do the notification on line which can be easier. If you have a nervous nearby resident, let them know you are burning.

Prepare your heaps

Clear around them for at least 2 metres down to mineral earth. Have water and equipment ready for any eventuality. Stay with the fires till they are out. Burn some smaller heaps before starting on a larger heap. Are there sparks and embers generated? Where are they going? Head to the NSW RFS webpage for more suggestions on how to prepare.

Join our Brigade!

Have you thought of joining the RFS?

We need you and you need us!

Our members are a diverse bunch of all ages and skills. We connect with everyone. Hopefully not as a fire is on your fence. But if there is a fire we need lots of people helping. The best way to help is as a trained up team. Our team needs lots of people as fires do not respect what day of the week it is, whose place it is burning or if you are away on holidays.

Benefits

Being a member has huge benefits. You meet lots of people. You learn lots of skills, especially how to deal with fires. You help your community.

Freemantle brigade covers a very large area. If you are near our boundaries you are still welcome to join. If you are not near us, please consider joining or supporting your local brigade.

Joining up starts by meeting us,

then an online application, then training online, then assessment before we can let you participate on a fire. This process takes a few months, so start now to be able to help next fire season.

Our meeting dates

Our brigade meets first and third Wednesdays of the month, 7 pm at the fire shed for training. Come along and meet us.

Article contributed by Phillipa Jarrett, Captain of Freemantle Volunteer Bushfire Brigade

Contact Brigade by emailing freemantlerfs@gmail.com or via Freemantle Rural Fire Service facebook page.

No road too hard for this team

A major upgrade of unsealed roads in the Freemantle district and the Bridle Track, has been a year and a half long project for Gracey's Earthmoving and Excavations creating new opportunities for tourism and improving travel for residents who live in these remote areas.

Owner of the company, Kevin Gracey (pictured with his grandson, Alfie) has been in the road construction and earthmoving business for 30 years. He grew up on the machines coming from an earth moving family in Kanimbla Valley, near Hartley.

His business does a lot of work in the Lithgow and Bathurst regions and on the catchments in National Parks. He is fully equipped and insured to carry out major road works in rough, steep terrain having made a significant investment in heavy machinery and equipment.

He is reluctant to discuss his business and prefers to just get on with the job which he loves doing while letting the results of his work tell the story.

Re-opening the Bridle Track

Kevin describes his contract to construct a new diversion road around Monaghan's Bluff to reopen the Bridle Track as a "good, interesting job".

"There were three kilometres of steep, hard rock where we built a new road that required a lot of drill, blast and rock hammer work," he said.

Bathurst Regional Council received $2 million from the NSW Government for the project and the diversion road was completed in November 2022.

The bypass over Monaghan's Bluff was constructed on a new alignment and built in steep terrain. It was a large and complex project to complete the diversion. The new route is designed so that the switchbacks are largely on a level cut and the climb to the next corner is a relatively straight and uniform grade. The old track remains as a four-wheel-drive access only.

Council workers and other contractors also worked on the project with sections of the Bridle Track widened, new drainage work carried out and the road re-sheeted with gravel.

In February 2023, the Bridle Track was reopened after it had been closed for 13 years by a landslide at Monaghans Bluff. It now provides an alternate, scenic route to Hill End and access to camping sites on the river

Upgrading the Root Hog Road

Kevin's crew then moved their heavy machinery to the end of Freemantle Road to upgrade the Root Hog Road. The road is approximately 10 kms in length ending with a rough, stoney crossing on the Macquarie River that connects it to the Bridle Track.

The machines they used were a 336 Cat excavator with a rock hammer, two dump trucks Cat 740 and Cat 725, Hitachi 13 t excavator, Cat D6N dozer, Cat D8 dozer, Cat roller and Volvo N12 tipper truck.

The road was completed on 23 April 2023. It has been widened in sections and re-sheeted with gravel after installing new pipes and completing drainage work.

Access to the Root Hog was initially through private land and by four-wheel drive until Bathurst

Thanks guys for a job well done

Sarah and Leigh Thorne who manage the Cassinia property at Killongbutta hosted a lovely barbeque lunch for the Gracey road crew to show our gratitude for the new road which has greatly improved our lifestyle. Pictured from left to right: Dean Cornish, Darren Burns, Matt Duggan, John Fisher, Colin Bennett, former owner of Warra Creek, contractor Jimmy Foskert, Leigh and Sarah Thorne. Missing crew members are Tim Smith, Ray Cullen and Tyson Petitt.

(Continued next page)

Regional Council purchased the land and it was designated a public road.

Transforming Killongbutta Road

Kevin's crew moved onto Killongbutta Road bringing with them a 324 Cat excavator with a rock hammer and sieve bucket, Hitachi 13t excavator, Cat D6N dozer, Cat D8 dozer, Cat roller and Volvo N12 tipper truck.

The six kilometres of narrow, rocky road winds around a steep hill until the country opens up into a river valley. Its condition had deteriorated significantly over the past years requiring major roadworks to keep it open for residents.

The three months project has transformed the road, making it safer and more accessible for two-wheel drive vehicles. Large unstable rocks have been removed, sections widened and built up, pipes installed and drainage completed before it was resurfaced with road base from quarries at Chris Di Meglio's property at Killongbutta and the Root Hog.

The machine operators recognised the stone remnants of the old bridle track which were not disturbed as part of the excavation work to widen the road.

Their skill in reforming the old road to avoid deterioration from run off is commendable.

Team member, Dean Cornish, says every machine has a dedicated operator.

"Our largest team was at Root Hog which included council employee, Karl, on a water truck and contractor Jimmy Foskert who has been with us on all these jobs. Contractors have also brought the road base from the Root Hog quarry that we've been using."

Dean's challenge with the Killongbutta job was personal. His wife was due to have their first baby and he was out of mobile range to receive a call if she had gone into labour.

"I'd call when I found a signal and to see if the baby was arriving. Luckily I did make if for the birth of our baby boy," he says.

"We all enjoy our work, have a good bunch of blokes to work with and the boss has got all the right gear for these jobs. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else. Working in the bush and seeing different parts of our country."

Bathurst Regional Council said the Root Hog and Killongbutta road upgrades were aimed at preventing damage from heavy rainfall and run-off. The work was funded from its Rural Roads Maintenance budget.

Killongbutta road works

Root Hog's upgraded road

Bridle Track road works on Monaghan's Bluff

THE FREEMANTLE WOOLSHED - A LOST ASSET

By Marje Prior

In 1975, while a journalism student at Mitchell College of Advanced Education, I wrote a story about the history of the Freemantle woolshed published in our student magazine, *Postscript*. Six years later, in 1981 it had vanished. Destroyed to make way for a new four-stand shed on its site.

While the main section of the shed was in reasonable condition it was in disrepair with canvas flapping on broken windows - a ghostly reminder of times passed.

The owners, Brian and Tony McIntosh, still used the shed but said the cost to restore it was too high as their interests were in cattle not sheep.

Thankfully, they kept the adjoining shelter shed which was restored to provide a wonderful example of the craftsmanship of hand hewn timber by our early builders.

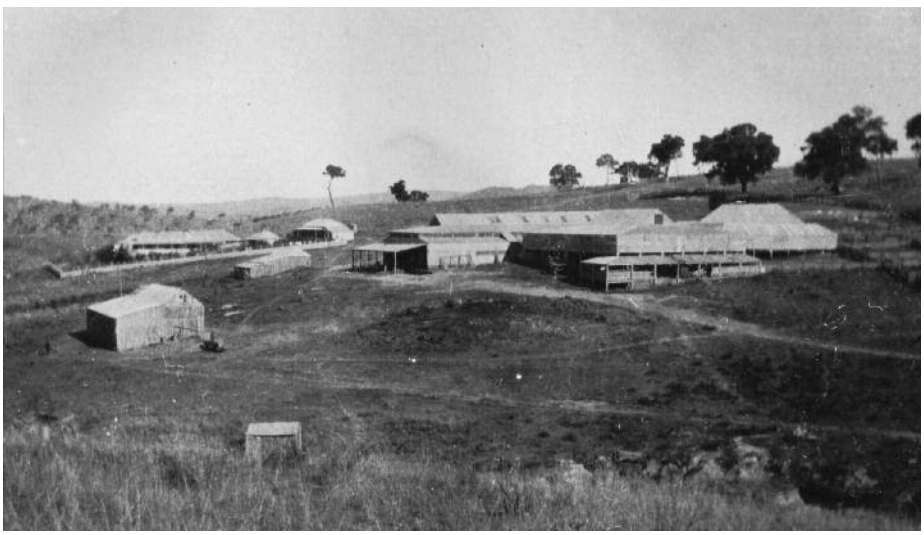
The Freemantle woolshed complex was one of the largest of its kind in the region. Located 30.5 kms from Bathurst on Freemantle Road it once produced one of the top clips in NSW reported in the monthly issue of *Dalgety's Review* in April 1911.

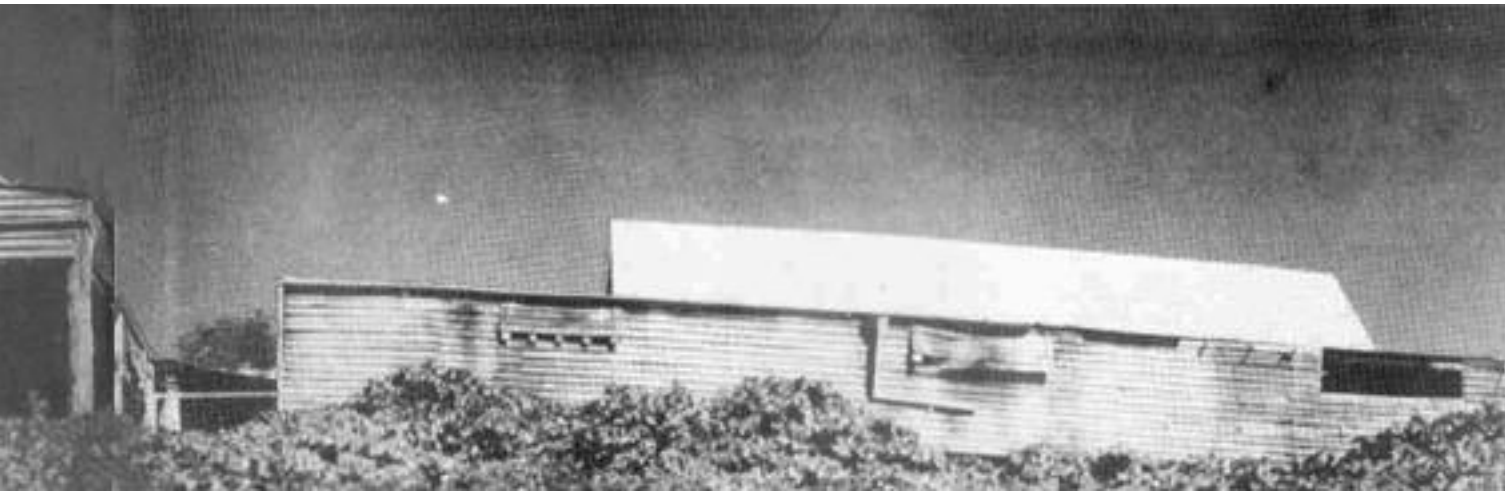
The two-storey woolshed, homestead and its out buildings sprawled against the hillside. The names of some of its workers were carved onto the wooden beams on the ground floor below. These were recorded before the shed was demolished and published in Jim Buchan's *Freemantle via Bathurst* history.

The 80,000 acre (32,375 hectare) property, was originally known as 'Killongbutta' and owned by Mr Thomas Anderson who died in 1889. He travelled from Sydney in the 1840s to settle on the land described as 'the ends of the earth' and in later years, 'a rabbit-infested warren'. He is buried in the family cemetery near the original homestead of Killongbutta, now owned by the biodiversity company, Cassinia.

The four Anderson brothers, Thomas, John, James and Henry, sons of the late pioneering father, carried on the estate which had become the largest freehold property in the district, excelling in wool production. In 1924, it was sold to John Leahy before the government purchased it for Closer Settlement in 1929.

In early 1930, Donald McIntosh acquired the homestead block with





its original buildings on 2750 acres by tender. His brother, Jack McIntosh bought the neighbouring block, Glenview, now known as Montrose in the original settlement ballot.

In 2004 Vic and Cheryl Schembri purchased the homestead block after the McIntosh brothers sold the property to the developer, Graham Toole for subdivision.

Freemantle Woolshed was built in 1902 and promoted in *Dalgety's Review* as the ideal twentieth century shed. It contained 16 stands of Wolsely machines to shear approximately 80,000 sheep and designed to avoid unnecessary hard labour.

The wool bales were rolled to an opening on the first floor where they were dropped to the ground floor then rolled to the edge of the shed and loaded onto the wagons.

Three bullock teams would take the clip part of the journey. If the Macquarie River was in flood, the wagons would be delayed for days while the men grew restless waiting for the rain to cease and the river to drop. The teams would then continue their long drive on the narrow, winding road until met by horse teams which would complete the remainder of the journey to the Bathurst railway station.

More than 100 men worked in the shed. The shearers worked in five runs, three runs of one hour 45 minutes and two of one hour, 20 minutes, with shearing on Saturday. Before sunrise and breakfast, candlelight was used for the first run. The men would then return to continue the long day's shearing.

In 1904 the shed experienced its worst strike which lasted two weeks. The shearers' award of one pound per 100 was increased to 24 shillings and for the first time smoking was allowed inside the shed.

During smoko, the men would roll a supply of cigarettes for the run or make sure they had a full packet for there was not time once the machines started.

Gun shearer, Frank Osberg, made his reputation by shearing 155 sheep a day and his ability to keep 10 sheep ahead of his rivals without physically showing any sign of competition.

Hector Eades, an 82-year-old bachelor spent 10 seasons working in the shed as a kitchen hand. He lived in a hut near Ophir Creek and would walk to Orange every week to place bets on his favourite horses.

Though his eyesight and hearing were failing he had a sharp memory and recalled the days when he began working in the shed in 1904.

"Shearing in those days was a blackfellow's job," he told me. "They didn't sleep on beds like they do today, it was bare boards and hard floor".

When Hector first started work he helped cook for 110 men who were fed six meals a day in a separate room from the overseer and Andersons. All the men were served at the tables.

"Each week we fed them two bullocks, 24 sheep, two batches of bread and umpteen numbers of plum puddings each week." he recalled.

The cook was given what was for those days a large wage. Besides providing the men with good meals he had to be a diplomat or an excellent fighter for if the men were not satisfied he was quickly replaced to avoid trouble in the shed.

Although it wasn't until 30 years later that Hector took his turn at the shears he had fond memories of working for the Andersons who were the largest employers in the area.

Dances and a sports benefit event

Shearing was late in the year, usually lasting for seven to eight weeks. A sports carnival, dance and

concert were held to celebrate cut out with Bathurst guests arriving on Donnelly's coaches in time to witness the shearing operations. The sports day competitions included chasing the greasy tail of pigs, hurdling, high jumping and running. Cricket was the main attraction with Bathurst players competing against the locals. There was always a keen interest in the battle between the 'townies' and the 'bushies' on the cricket field.

The *Bathurst National Advocate* on January 4, 1907, reported that the Freemantle sports event had raised eight pounds:

New Years Day at Freemantle is by no means allowed to pass without some celebration. The amusement for the day consisted of a sports meeting, including various footraces, interspersed with a number of horse races. The proceedings were organised by the shearers and rouseabouts of the Freemantle shearing shed and were carried out in the vicinity of the shed. The object of the sports was to raise an amount to be utilised for a beneficial purpose and the numerous visitors and shed hands were not slow in coming forward with their contributions…

When the bush dance was in full swing, the walls and the floor would shake from the weight of a hundred couples rollicking to the sound of a popular band.

At midnight Mrs Anderson would enter the shed to remind the carefree couples that dancing would have to cease because of the Sabbath and the evening would finish with guests listening to a quiet concert.

Dances continued to be held up until the time the property was sold for closer settlement.

Bush musician, Joe Yates, worked as a boundary rider for John Leahy where he met and married their bookkeeper, Gertrude 'Queenie' McGee. The couple often played for the Freemantle and Killongbutta dances.

Queenie played the piano while Joe played the fiddle, often to his own compositions. Mike Martin interviewed and collected tunes from the old musician which he published in 1999. Joe describes these nights:

"They used to hold a good dance there, about every fortnight in the big dining room. Used to play for the dance there and do a bit of dancing too.

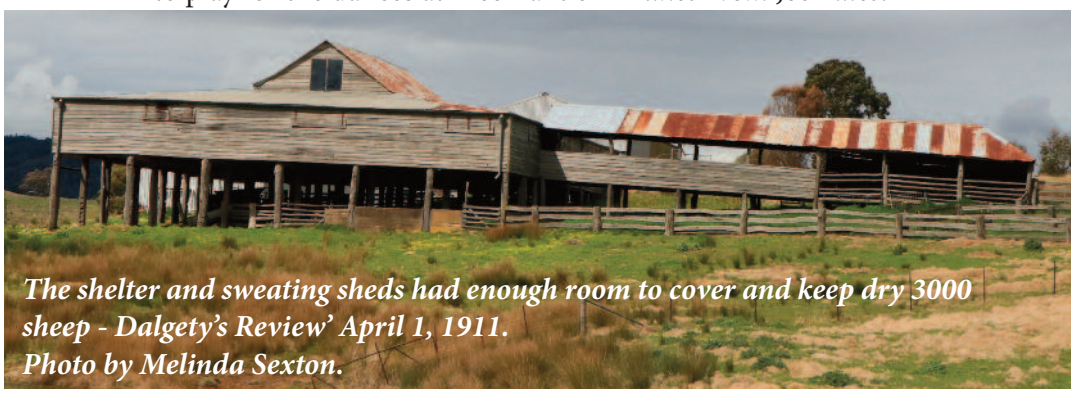
My wife played piano and we used to play for the dances at Freemantle Station.

I remember there one time a step-dance teacher of all the step dances, she came out. Had to play for her and I put them on a bit too fast, but she kept time all right… made her shift though!

We used to have some good fun there!"

Joe came from a Hill End musical family who arrived during the Gold Rush. He spent his life in the bush playing his fiddle, composing dance music and writing poetry.

Joe composed two Varsovianas for Freemantle Station and Killongbutta - although it was often difficult to get him to play the same tune twice. His music is published in Mike Martin's book *Collected Tunes From Joe Yates*.



The shelter and sweating sheds had enough room to cover and keep dry 3000 sheep - Dalgety's Review' April 1, 1911. Photo by Melinda Sexton.

The bush location for Australia's early film makers

In the early 1900s the Freemantle district attracted two of Australia's early film makers for the location of their bush and pastoral scenes for their silent movies.

The first film, The Shepherd of the Southern Cross, was produced by Australasian Films Limited, a public company which merged with Cosens Spencer's company in 1911. Spencer was an English entrepreneur and pioneer of the Australian film industry. In 1905, he and his wife, Mary who was his chief projectionist and business partner, opened the 'Great American Theatrescope' at the Lyceum Theatre in Sydney which they later remodelled as a permanent picture theatre.

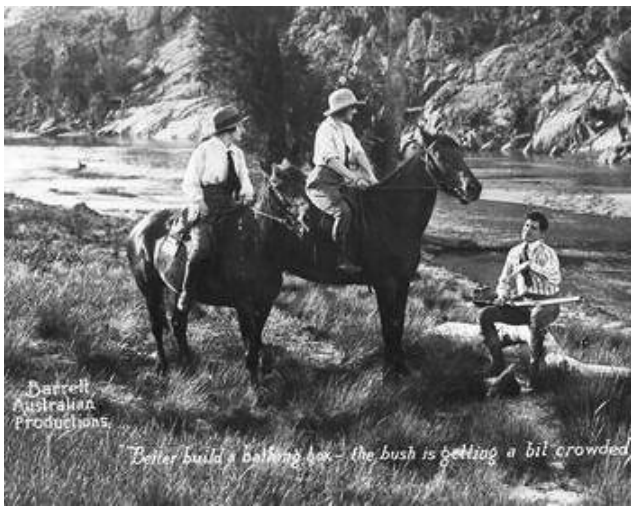
An article published in the *Bathurst National Advocate* on 16 February, 1914, reported that Spencer's English film maker, Alexander Butler was in Bathurst with his crew filming in different locations that included Rockley Road and Freemantle Station.

Butler boasted "*that the film should prove to be the best advertisement Bathurst ever received, for it will be shown in all parts of the world.*

"As a result, when the cinema industry becomes more freely established in Australia, more than likely Bathurst will be made the principal centre, in the cases of picture dramas dealing with Australian bush life."

Butler went on to describe in detail the plot of the film which was about an English woman torn between two men. It was a high-budget film, also shot in England and featured Vera Pearce, Roland Conway, Arthur Shirley, Clare Stephenson, Tien Hogue, Shirley Huxley, and P J Noonan.

The film was launched at the Lyceum Theatre in June 1914. But it was a box office failure and no copies have survived.



In 1923, the Spencer couple moved to Vancouver after buying a 20,000 acre cattle ranch, the largest in British Columbia.

In a macabre end to an illustrious career, on September 10, 1930, Spencer shot and killed Edward Smith, his storekeeper and also wounded another employee before fleeing into the bush. There was some speculation that he had escaped back to Australia until *The Canberra Times* on November 1, 1930, reported that his body was found in a lake.

The second film, *A Girl of the Bush*, is a 1921 Australian silent film directed and produced by Franklyn Barrett who was also its cinematographer and wrote the screen play. It is one of the few films from Barrett to survive in its entirety today.

The plot is based around a young independent woman who manages a wealthy sheep station, Kangaroo Flat, which is Freemantle Station. She is the object of desire for her unscrupulous, conniving cousin who frames her true love, a surveyor, for murder.

There are great scenes of real life on Freemantle Station in the 1900s with the shearers and locals as the extras. You can see how different the Macquarie River looked in those days, the wool wagons crossing the river, street scenes of Sofala and Rankins Bridge.

Some of the romantic scenes in the film (pictured below) were shot on the homestead verandah and rose garden at Hillside, owned by my family. My great grandmother, Laura Prior, had fond memories of watching them make the film and was given a makeup bag by the leading lady, Vera James. Other cast members were Jack Martin, Herbert Linden, San Warr and Emma Shea.

The film opened on 26 March 1921 at West's Olympia Theatre, Brisbane and was screened widely in both Australia and New Zealand, the home of Vera James.

Memories of my childhood at Billywillinga

By Chris Hogg

My Dad, George Howarth, was born and bred at Lewis Ponds, and first came to the Freemantle district in the 1940's while trapping rabbits with his dad.

When they were trapping at Bimbimbi, there was a chance meeting in the bush with my mum Jennifer Edmonds. Romance bloomed, and led to their marriage in 1950, and my birth in 1951.

Within a few years they made their home at Billywillinga, sold to them at a 50% discount to them by my grandfather Cleve Edmonds as a wedding gift. Our home was a three room cottage built from the ground up by dad with very little help. Life in those early days was tough, with little money, no electricity, only cold running water from one tap, and an outdoor pit toilet, which sometimes gave shelter to spiders and snakes. Bathing was in a tin bathtub, on the verandah in summer, by the fire in winter, with water heated in a kerosine tin bucket on top of the wood stove. The nearest neighbours were miles away, and with no telephone, we lived a very isolated life.

It was some years before Billywillinga was self supporting, so Dad supplemented our income by trapping rabbits and shooting foxes for their skins, and doing shearing jobs around the district.

Gradually, Dad made additions to our home, a new kitchen with a kerosene fridge (home made ice cream !) a bathroom with hand pumped shower, and a bedroom for me instead of sleeping on the open verandah. Fences were built, and a shearing shed constructed. At particularly busy times, my grandfather Fred Howarth would ride across country from Lewis Ponds on his horse, Bright, to help Dad out for a day or two. This was always an exciting time as our visitors in those days were very few.

The Billywillinga property is located in a river valley at the end of Billywillinga Road. It was one of the early land grants in the district leased until 1837 when John Piper Jnr purchased the 1206 acres which formed part of Killongbutta Station. In 1935, soldier settler, Fredrick Cleverton (Cleve) Edmonds leased the property as part of 3200 acres which included the neighbouring portion of land.

Our isolation meant that all my primary schooling was by mail with Blackfriars Correspondence School. Twice a week Dad would ride on horseback to Milker's Flat to collect our mail and bread delivery.

My mum was a very sick woman, with frequent stays in hospital, and in 1965, when I was 13 years old, she died at the early age of 38, leaving Dad and I to battle on alone.

It was a very hard time, and with Mum no longer there to supervise my lessons, I started attending a bricks and mortar school (Bathurst High) for the first time, a real culture shock for me.

Our lives were changed again, and this time for the better, when Dad met and married Lorraine Garrett, who became and remained my very dearest friend. The added bonus was that I gained a little brother, Linton, and soon another, Steven.

For the next 40 odd years Lorraine and Dad worked the farm together, side by side, through good times and bad. they built up a flock

of fine wool merinos to be proud of.

The house was extended, more sheds and stables built, once again by Dad of course.

Throughout the years, the land and its beauty were a constant, loved and enjoyed by us all.

In 2000, retirement beckoned, and Billywillinga passed out of the hands of the Howarth family, except for a block overlooking the valley where my brother Steven and his wife Michelle live.

I think we all felt (and still do) its loss very deeply, but it was a joy and a privilege to spend so many years in such a unique and special place. The Freemantle community was a great one to grow up in, and those days unforgettable.

Dad left us in 2006, but lives on in our hearts and memories, especially those at our humble happy home in the valley.

Chris is pictured with her mother Jennifer Howarth at *Billywillinga.*

Descendants of a Bathurst pioneer family

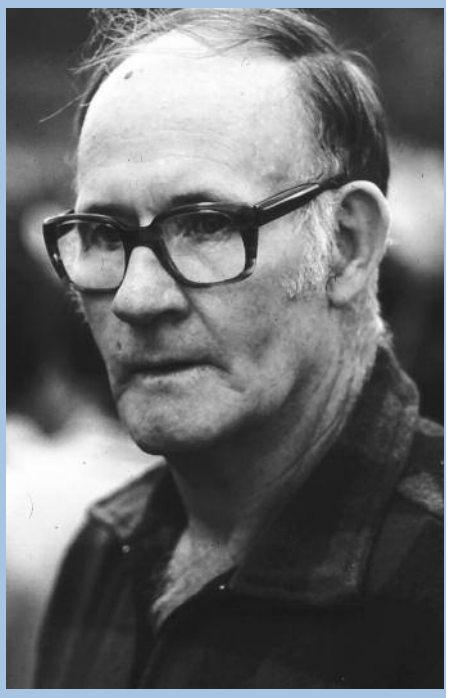
George Howarth (pictured) is a descendant of Thomas 'Lanky Tom' Howarth, who was transported to the colony on the Waterloo in 1829 for stealing a cow.

He worked for the surveyor, Major Thomas Livingston Mitchell obtaining his ticket of leave in 1837.

He was later wrongly accused of stealing two bullocks and lost his ticket of leave, forfeiting his property to the Crown.

In 1842 Tom had beaten the charges and regained his status settling back in Bathurst and running inns in the area. He was an interesting man worthy of further research and publication.

His descendants are holding an extended family gathering next month after his plaque was recently installed on the unmarked graves wall at the Bathurst cemetery.



Further information can be obtained by contacting Chris Hogg: cjhogg51@gmail.com

Pictured are the Howarth family today. From left to right: Back row Michelle Howarth, Chris Hogg, Steven Howarth, Jeannie Brooks, Travis Fardell, Kate Fardell. Front Row Bob Hogg, Erin Hogg, Lorraine Howarth, Tambelin Howarth and Linton Howarth.

THE TRAFFIC LIGHTS AT KELLOSHEIL CREEK

Council has adopted the tender to reconstruct the work of the culvert across Kelloshiel Creek after significant flood damage in November last year.

The tender was awarded to Keech Constructions Pty Ltd after approval by the Council at its meeting on 19 April 2023.

The contractor is currently seeking all the necessary approvals (for example, environmental) for the work to commence.

Meanwhile, waiting for the lights to turn green at the old stone bridge is frustrating as expressed by Jenny Pickford in her cartoon.

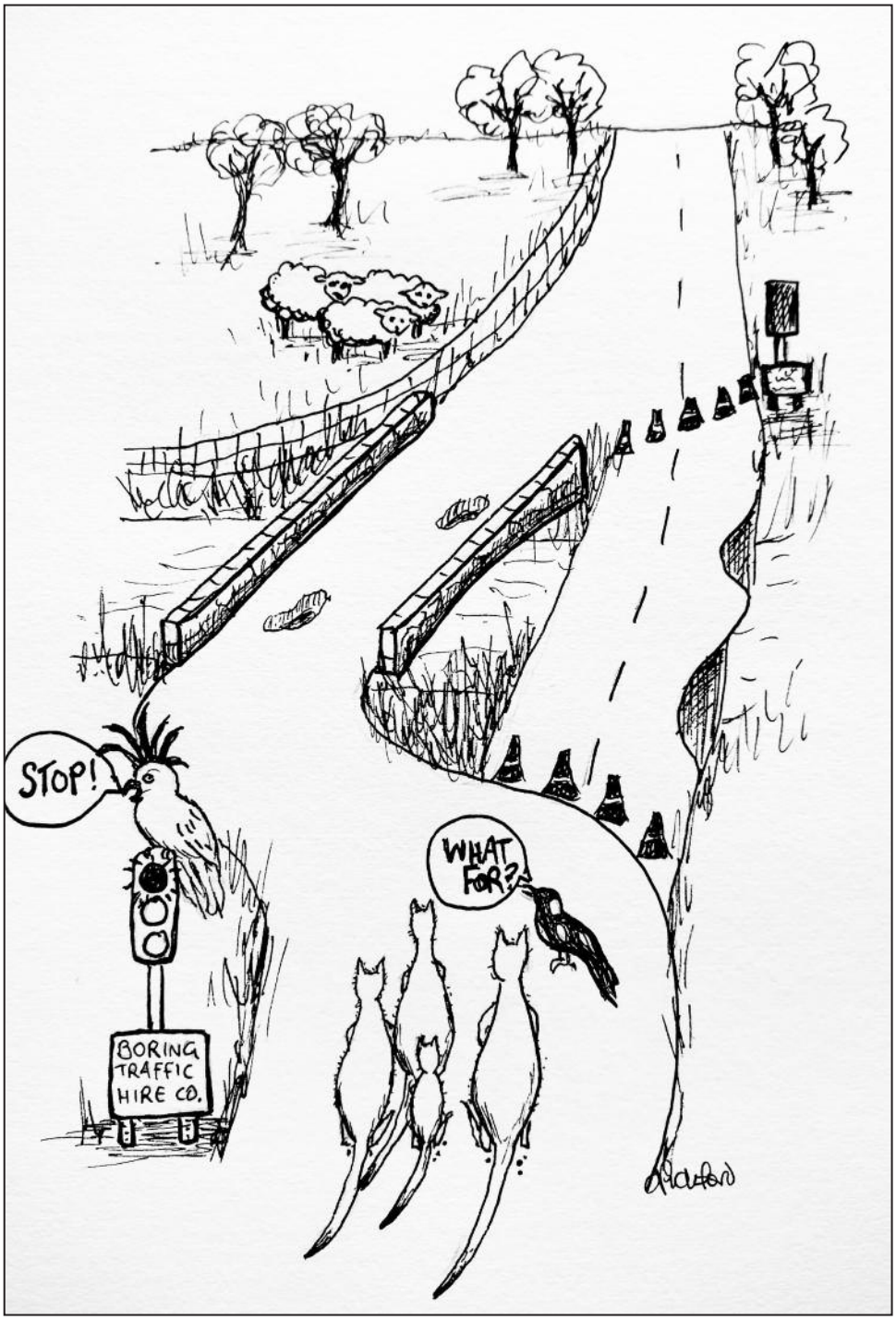
Many travellers question the time they take to change when there is no oncoming traffic in the area.

Others have witnessed drivers ignoring the lights, speeding up and driving straight through when they think there is no traffic!

This is unsafe - especially when encountering cars that think they own the road!

My best advice is to remain calm, wave to the travellers as they pass and take in the view.

We are a friendly bunch of people on Freemantle Road so let's keep it that way by showing respect to fellow travellers and the workers who will soon be on this site.



Cartoon by Jenny Pickford from Billywillinga Road

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FROM THE NO BASE COOKBOOK

During 1984-1986 the Freemantle Road community joined other people in the Central West to stop the federal government from reclaiming rural land for an army base.

The women of the 'No Base' Movement published a book with their recipes to raise funds. I've chosen one of their recipes to start a recipe section as recommended by our readers. As I love Greek cooking this is a great nourisher for people who are recovering from an illness. It's tasty and light on the stomach!

AVGOLEMONO SOUP (GREEK EGG AND LEMON SOUP)

3 1/2 cups of Chicken Stock
3 chopped shallots
Juice of 1 lemon
Thin strips of lemon rind
1/4 cup of rice
Salt and Pepper to taste
2 egg yolks
Cream

Bring stock to boil, add rice, shallots and lemon juice. Simmer 10 mins, season to taste.

Beat egg yolks and stir in a little of the hot liquid. Pour into pan and stir constantly until thickened. Do not boil. Garnish with lightly whipped cream and very thin strips of lemon rind.

Enjoy! *Kali Oreksi!*

No Base Women - Radio documentary

During the mid 1980s I interviewed women in Cobar, Hill End and Bathurst to produce this documentary for the ABC social history unit.

You can listen to their stories by going to my website ***www.onthestone.com.au*** *and clicking on the* ***Podcast*** *menu.*

FREEMANTLE ROAD
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