FREEMANTLE ROAD
connections
ISSUE 3: OCTOBER 2023 ISSN 2653-8482

Gowan • Killongbutta • Freemantle •Milker's Flat •Watton • Billywillinga • Mt Rankin

FEATURED INSIDE:

- LIVING OFF THE GRID AT MT RANKIN
- FREEMANTLE VOLUNTEER RFS FEATURE
- *PLATYPUS PALS* - PIPER THOMPSON
- WILD DOG ATTACKS A SERIOUS ISSUE
- HISTORY OF THE PRIOR FAMILY AT MILKER'S FLAT

Cartoon by Jenny Pickford from Billywillinga Road

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Editorial:

Hi readers, it's been a frustrating couple of weeks for me after my Facebook was hacked and taken over.

The issue still hasn't been resolved resulting in me posting a letter to FB headquarters in the US as a last desperate effort to recover it.

Would you believe their physical address is Hacker Way!

This incident has me reviewing how I distribute this magazine next year and my reliance on our Facebook group to do this. So watch this space as I explore other distribution options.

I'll also have printed copies of the first two issues, for sale at the Freemantle RFS Christmas Party which promises to be a great event this year.

The Welcome to New Neighbours Day exceeded our expectations with nearly 50 people attending with representation from the full length of Freemantle Road.

It is events like these that build our road community and support our rural fire service volunteers.

On a much sadder note, Pat Edwards from Hillside, Milker's Flat passed away recently.

Our deepest condolences to Rhonda Clayton and family.

Chris Hogg, our popular contributor, also lost her daughter Erin. Our hearts go out to these families.

I'm now looking for contributions for the Christmas issue. Please email me your ideas for an article or information that you'd like published.

We are always looking for more advertisers or sponsors to help sustain this community initiative.

Our two faithful advertisers enable us to print a small amount of copies and we are always looking for more ideas to build our revenue.

- Marje Prior
Writer, Editor and Publisher

Front cover photo of Adam and Sue Ortiger of Willow Tree Lane taken by Libby Dallimore.

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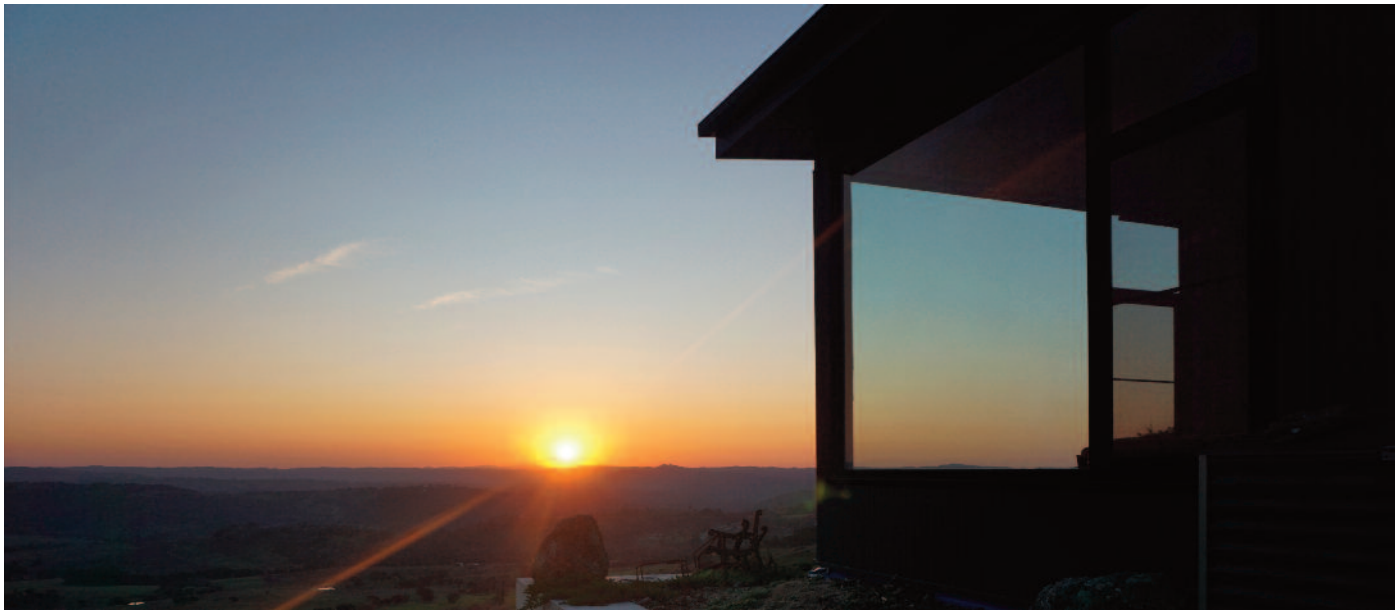
Living their dreams **off the grid**



Owner builders, Adam and Sue Ortiger, at Willow Tree Lane, Mt Rankin, turned their dreams for a passive solar off-the-grid home into a reality when they designed their home remotely from Gunnedah before moving back to the block where Adam grew up.

Good design and well researched building materials proved to be the most important element of their project combined with some good luck before building materials became scarce during COVID.

At the end of 2021, the couple moved into their beautiful home, perched high above Willow Tree Lane on a ridge that overlooks Bathurst and Freemantle Road.

Split-level living areas capture the breath-taking western views. On a clear, still day, Adam can be seen soaring past in his paraglider, from top landing off his property.

The couple knew what they wanted. Sue liked 'old' which is reflected throughout its interior in the furnishings and bathroom fittings. Adam liked clean, modern design with a shed feel and hill-hugging profile to suit the sloping site. Double glazed windows and no floorboards for Bathurst breezes to infiltrate mean its easy to keep warm too.

They researched and sourced structural insulated panels from a Western Australian supplier that were light enough to lift with just two people, though up to 6m by 1.2m in size. The panels were cut to size and remove the need for framing. Once the slab was ready, it went up quickly.

The panels are orientated strand board (small bits of wood, glued back together!) with polystyrene insulation in between. The panels are exposed in places inside, which works acoustically to reduce the noise in large spaces.

They first understood that they needed to skill up as owner builders, and learnt as much as they could about the building process and sourcing easy to use materials – both new and recycled.

The floor plan was first designed using a drawing software, then with a 3D software to see what it looked like when constructed. Adam completed the architectural drawings which were then approved by council.

A family effort

Built on the small farm that Adam grew up on, Doug and Lyn Ortiger were part of the small construction team along with Sue's parents from Tamworth, Peter and Sandra Holmes. The bright stained glass front door is a feature and the first part completed by their daughter Jemma for her 2020 HSC Design and Technology major work.

This small team of builders got from 'slab' to 'watertight' within six weeks! An amazing feat of family commitment and effort.

Adam a surveyor and Sue a high school scripture teacher, have always had an interest in architecture and watching 'Grand

Designs' on the television. What they have created is truly amazing and they learnt so much in the process.

They even designed the roof of their carport to be 36 degrees and north facing for the solar panels. The large shed also houses the 12 batteries. Another feature is the recycling of sewerage – Bioseptic tanks ensure their garden has a constant recycled water supply.

This couple is definitely living their dream. While Adam and his mate soar outside in their paragliders like eagles, Sue plans her native plant garden and running a B and B in the adjoining three bedroom self-contained accommodation which they finished last of all.

Sue's advice to owner builders is: "Don't rush, we took two years to plan this before we started. Know what you like and go for it!"

"It doesn't have to be a kit home. You can put the effort into what you want to build. Yes there's the stress as its 'all your responsibility' at the end of the day. But its worth it. I remember I'm blessed every day, I just look out the window!"

Pictured below: Adam soaring past his house; the structural insulated panels; and the family builders hard at work!

Be ready - have a fire plan

Fire Season Officially Starts 1st October and finishes March 31st, subject to change.

The official response from the RFS is; ***if you can see active flame with no-one in attendance call 000.***

Then what do you do? Run around like a headless chook, looking for the portable pump, the hose for the dam, the longer hose, trying to make it run when it is full of stale fuel, discovering you still have shorts and thongs on. Or throwing the kids, cat and phone in the car and going like crazy to mum's?

Plan & be prepared

If you live, work, drive through or visit rural localities have a plan and be prepared.

Where do you get a plan from? What do you prepare?

Easiest place is the RFS website, full of very comprehensive material including plans and how to prepare yourself and property.

You don't have internet? Then contact your local fire control centre.

https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/resources/bush-fire-survival-plan

Bathurst - Chifley Fire Control Centre 1300 258 737

Cabonne - Canobolas Fire Control Centre 02 6363 6666

Ask for help

There are usually RFS stands at local shows. Stop in and have a chat. RFS also hold open days at their local stations. Call in and meet your local crew, gain local insights, knowledge and information.

If you need help preparing, then the plan will tell you who to call.

Prepare yourself, your property, your vehicle and your family. Decisions and actions you make now could save your life. Your plan may include staying and defending, which means you and your property must be prepared and ready. Discuss with children and partners what to do if your road is cut and you cannot follow the usual school bus routines. You may decide to go somewhere safe early, then work out what your trigger for leaving early is. You may wish to discuss your plan further with locals. Include factors such as landline phones not working, mobile phones not working, no internet or local community chats, power line failures, road closures, areas of safety, who is coming to help, access roads etc.

Fires can be incredibly powerful tool for land managers. The flip side is they can be deadly.

Unfortunately, my crystal ball is full of smoke and I do not know what will happen this season, but it is highly likely to be hotter and drier than the past couple of seasons, and that someone reading this article may be heavily impacted by fires this season. PLEASE have a plan, and know when and how you are going to implement it.

Last year the Hill End region had a huge fire started by lightning. That is just a hop, skip and a jump from our area. Some years back, we had the Martin Bird Lane fire, just to our west, again just a hop, skip and a jump from us.

When the Fire Danger Rating is defined as extreme or catastrophic,

By Phillipa Jarrett, Captain, Freemantle Volunteer Bushfire Brigade

fire is exceedingly difficult to control and it can move incredibly quickly with wind, terrain, high fuel loads, high temperature and low humidity all driving the fire. Under the right conditions, it could be at your back door, before a fire truck has left a station or before any RFS response. In rural areas, we must always be alert and ready to act.

Freemantle volunteer brigade are a diverse bunch of people. When a firecall is activated, it can take a while to even have a truck out of the station. I live 20km from the station, it takes time to grab my uniform, lock the house and leave. Other members live 20km in the other direction. It can take time to organise a crew and have them at the station. Depending on the proximity of the fire to the station, it could be an hour from when you call to when a truck turns up, where will the fire be in an hour?

We are fortunate our sister brigade Eglinton can have a truck

rolling in less than ten minutes. We cannot respond if we do not have enough members. We need you so we can help our community. Think about joining up.

Complete and print out the page on the inside back cover of this issue and place on your fridge so you have the information and phone numbers in the event of a fire.

Permitted fires

Not every sighting of smoke or flame is a cause for 000.

Out of fire season, there is a system of notification.

You notify RFS and you notify your neighbours of your intentions and timeframes. You may also as an adjunct, post on local social media pages.

During fire season, October 1st through to March 31st, you MUST have a permit.

These can only be issued by a permit officer.

Contact your fire control centre to organise a permit:

Bathurst - Chifley Fire Control Centre 1300 258 737

Cabonne - Canobolas Fire Control Centre 02 6363 6666

Get Ready Day - lots of interest and new faces

At the beginning of our Fire Season we ask the community to have a look at their properties and clear away any excess trees close to buildings, clear out gutters and generally debris around structures etc.

During this Get Ready Day they have also been educating the community on the new Fire Danger Ratings that have been updated over the past year.

This year Freemantle RFS decided that we would participate in the Get Ready Day activities for the first time, and it was a fantastic day.

What a wonderful day we had!!

We opened the Freemantle RFS Shed from 9am until 3pm and we had a great number of people from the community stop by to say 'hello' and see what we do and to chat about preparing their properties.

We met so many people that we had not met before from all sections of our zone, this included people from Billywillinga, Gowan and in-between.

It was so wonderful to meet everyone, and a few people have shown interest in joining up, so that's even better.

We also had someone just pop in to make a donation, so thank you again to that person.

We met some kids, and they loved seeing the fire trucks and loved the little Fire Helmets and colouring books we gave them.

My apologies to those who I didn't get details from, please get in touch to remain connected.

We are so grateful to the community for all its support, and we are planning on doing some more community events soon, so keep an eye out on our Facebook page and don't miss our Christmas Party on Saturday, 25 November starting at 6pm with Santa arriving at 7pm.

If you would like to contact us for any information about preparing your property, get in touch with us via our Facebook or email: freemantlerfs@gmail.com

And for those wanting to join here is the link with more information and the application form. Please contact us if you pop in an application so we can chat more with you.

https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/volunteer/join-the-nsw-rfs

By Annette Taylor – Freemantle RFS Secretary/Treasurer

FEATURE

PLATYPUS PALS

A page for junior writers, photographers and artists

Our junior writer, Piper Thompson from Killongbutta has researched and written this article after observing an echnida.

What is camouflage?

Camouflage is a way of helping animals blend into the surroundings, it is a defence mechanism that animals can use to disguise their appearance, usually to blend in with their surroundings. Animals use camouflage to hide their location and their movement. This can allow them to avoid predators or to catch food more easily.

Background matching is the most common camouflage tactic. In background matching, an animal hides itself by matching its surroundings in colour, shape or movement.

Animals with fur are more often camouflaged by season while animals with scales or feathers can more easily change to match their surroundings.

Australian animals that use camouflage include geckos, toads and frogs, spiders, stick insects, leaf bugs and echidnas.

Echidnas and Camouflage

The greatest threats to echidnas are hunting and farming. As human populations grow and activity expands, their habitats have been converted to farms. They are also at risk of being hit by cars. Feral dogs and foxes are other major threats to echidnas.

The beige-and-black spines on all echidna species are about 5 cm long and help camouflage the echidna in the bush. Echidnas also use their spines to protect themselves from predators if they cannot hide by rolling into a ball when scared.

Did you Know?

- A baby echidna is called a "puggle"
- Echidnas have the lowest body temperature of any mammal
- They can live up to 50 years
- They dig up ants, grubs and termites for food
- Echidnas normally live alone

Pictured are five-year-old twins, Thomas and Charlie Flemming painting the sunset at the Freemantle Artists Retreat.

Mass tree planting at Cassinia

By Chris Lunardi, Revegetation Manager, Cassinia Environmental.

Killongbutta's Restoration – 18 months on as reported in the Autumn 2023 issue of *Freemantle Road Connections* – Cassinia Environmental has embarked on an ambitious project to restore 1200 hectares of marginal agricultural land for biodiversity and carbon.

While stunningly picturesque with kilometres of Macquarie River frontage, the land found at the end of Killongbutta Road is strained from an overburden of weeds such as Serrated Tussock, St. Johns Wort and Blackberry and has competitive grazing from feral and native herbivores such as kangaroos, goats, deer and pigs. It is clearly in need of a new direction.

Encouraged by the germination in the seeding lines and growth in seedlings planted in 2022, this year the Cassinia team took to the south side of the River, the steep hills, the escarpments and deep valleys – all the hard to access areas – to plant trees and sow seeds using their own specially designed hand seeders.

Weed control in these areas was achieved by drone with the crew from Ag Drones spraying lines across the hills for the team to follow.

Two weeks of hiking up and down hills and digging holes between hand-jarring rocks in the warm spring weather and the second round of revegetation works was complete, adding a further 15,000 seedlings and a hundred kilometres worth of direct seeding to the restoration project.

Now efforts turn once again to weed and pest animal control while the seeds wait patiently for the right conditions to germinate, and the seedlings wait for rain to get their roots down. The dry start to spring is a stark contrast to last year which saw the Macquarie River in constant flood. Reducing the weed

load and grazing pressure will be critical in these drier times, ensuring any available moisture is free for the growing seedlings to take up.

It has been 18 months since Cassinia took the reins of Killongbutta and there is still a lot of work to be done. However, the land is beginning to change. Surrounding every mature eucalypt one will find dozens of young trees growing strong with less stock and feral herbivores to browse them down to their thin stumps. Between these mature trees are lines of direct seeding and seedling planting that fill in the gaps created by historic land clearing.

The extent of the Serrated Tussock and Blackberry is being gradually reduced with each passing month thanks to Killongbutta Manager, Leigh Thorne's, careful and methodical weed control. And as the new seedlings develop, they will create competition for the weeds and that will slow their spread across the district. Killongbutta is a still a long way from being restored. However, the feeling across the property is that it has turned a corner and is heading in the right direction.

The 2023 planting project was once again supported by Landlife Company. Without their support and shared vision for restoring degraded land across the globe, the Killongbutta restoration project would not be possible.

Wild dog attacks a serious issue

Graeme Christopherson thought the drought was tough enough, followed by COVID price rises and the volatile sheep market. But nothing could prepare him for the impact of wild dog attacks.

More than half of his property on Gowan Road is vulnerable to these attacks and he is now considering restocking with cattle after generations of growing sheep in the Ophir area as part of a well-known early settler family.

Recent attacks and sheep being chased off his property by the wild dogs have forced him to relocate most of his stock to another property. The damage they do to the sheep is distressing with recent attacks being more selective as they are now taking their kidneys, leaving the sheep alive.

"I found a mob of 100 wethers by accident when I was travelling through the Ophir Creek Reserve and recognised my tags," he said. "They had been chased more than eight kilometres through my neighbour's property."

"It's shocking! You can't use your place in this predominantly sheep growing country. It makes it very hard to plan ahead unless I get out of sheep altogether." I've just put a mob of old wethers out the back again and haven't seen anything over the last couple of weeks. However, this can change dramatically overnight."

Dogs have been sighted just 800 metres from his house where he has injured sheep from dog attacks enclosed in a paddock.

Graeme has tried everything to control them from baiting, trapping, shooting and has now invested in night vision rifle scopes to hunt them when they are most active. He believes the dogs are breeding up in the Ophir Creek area in the remote, wild country at the foothills of the Hill End range on the Macquarie River.

He first saw the dogs that look like dingoes on his property in June 2020. He witnessed a pair of older dogs watching their pups push the sheep through a fence while attacking the stragglers as if it was a game. He managed to shoot the older male but the female got away.

Hanging at the front of Graeme's entrance are the carcasses of the dogs he kills as a sign that they are active in the area. He has invested heavily in new boundary fencing along Gowan Road but it is a costly exercise to renew fencing of his entire property.

Pictured above is Graeme with his partner, Tiana Jeffries.

Up until 2020, Landowners could take the ears of the dead dogs into the Local Land Services (LLS) for DNA testing to determine if they are dingos. However, Graeme hasn't been able to DNA test his dogs because funding has stopped.

"Lack of funding is a major issue for control of these animals as we need more help, especially with DNA testing to identify if these are dingoes," he said.

I've been given some baits from the LLS but the government needs to do more to monitor their activity and to maintain a central DNA database for this region to see if the dingo population is growing.

First wild dog sightings in 2017

John Howarth was the first farmer in the area to trap a wild dog on his sheep property at Freemantle in December 2017. Over the past six years he has been meticulously documenting the date and time of the sightings and kills in his area.

John says that he first saw a dog chase and kill a young kangaroo, which he mistakenly thought was a fox!

"This was before I saw five dogs in a group in the Deadman Creek on 'Combogolong' in December 2017.

"I set traps after watching them go into the scrub in various directions and caught two separately over the next couple of days.

"I then started to find dead sheep mauled by dogs and two lambs, sheep boxed in and a dead ewe with lambs bitten."

In March, 2020, he submitted ears of a dog trapped in Deadman's Creek for DNA testing which showed it was 93% dingo. Other testing of dogs caught ranged from 34% hybrid to 88% dingo.

"I believe I caught the first dogs in this area in 100 years according to local history," says John.

John's brother Don, tried to catch an elusive, cunning dingo on his property for some years until a shooter, funded by LLS, arrived and used a whistle which almost immediately drew it out of the bush to be shot.

A wild dog caught on camera going through a fence at Graeme's property and one of his injured sheep.

Wild dogs or dingoes?

A DNA study funded by University of Sydney and UNSW Sydney and published 29 May 2023 questions the use of the term "wild dog" which suggested pure dingoes were virtually extinct in Victoria and NSW.

The sample of 307 "wild dogs" caught across Australia showed most were pure dingo.

The report argues that the term "wild dog" is a misnomer and should be removed from public language and legislation. The animals being targeted for eradication as an "invasive" pest are native dingoes.

"Dingo and feral dog should be used instead. This change in terminology would accurately reflect the fact that a vast majority of the wild canines in Australia are pure dingoes – and the hybrids are predominantly dingo in their genetic make-up."

Reference: *Genome-wide variant analyses reveal new patterns of admixture and population structure in Australian dingoes.* Kylie M. Cairns, Mathew S. Crowther, Heidi G. Parker, Elaine A. Ostrander, Mike Letnic.

The Freemantle Districts Pest Management Group

The first meeting of the Freemantle Districts Pest Management Group was held on 5 March, 2019 to deal with the issue of feral pests in the area.

The president is Chris Howarth and the group meets at 7pm on the first Tuesday of every second month at the Freemantle Fire Shed. The next meeting is Tuesday, 5 December, 2023.

The incorporated body monitors wild dogs, pig, deer and mouse infestations and actively encourages landowners to report sightings and damage to their stock and property.

Group Autumn and Spring dog bating programs occur every year around the district in cooperation with Central Tablelands Local Land Services (LLS) with the timing to coincide with aerial baiting runs done by LLS. The group has previously secured a small grant from LLS to pay for dog trappers on properties which was successful in removing three hard to get dogs that could not be got by other means, but this has now finished. Also, LLS have carried out aerial control programs for deer, pigs and wild dogs in the area but the funds have now ended.

It keeps landowners informed by letterboxing and through its Facebook group Freemantle @ Surrounding Districts Pest Management Group administered by its public officer and treasurer, Lisa Howarth.

For further information contact: Lisa on 0438 292 708 or email

Feral Pig Technical Skills & Management Workshop

Join members of the Bathurst Local Land Services Biosecurity team for a practical workshop and discussion about feral pig activity and monitoring, trap design, baiting methods and control strategies.

Friday 24 November 2023

Time: 10am – 3pm

Freemantle Fire Shed

Different trap designs and baiting equipment will be on display on the day which will also include discussion on how they work, what bait to use and how to exclude livestock and other non-target species.

The session will cover:

- Feral pig ecology and distribution
- Seasonal behaviours and signs
- Feral Pig scan – Recording pig activity
- Control methods and techniques including a new net trap design that it is currently trialling
- Hoggone
  - which is a new type of bait product that is an alternative to 1080 that is more specific to pigs used in a special feeder.

FeralScan is a free app or computer program available to landholders Australia wide that is used to record and map the location of feral animals and any damage that they may cause.

FeralScan was developed by a number of industry partners including the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, NSW Department of Primary, AWI, Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Pest Smart and Local Land Services.

Please RSVP by 5.00pm on Monday 20th November 2023
by contacting Ross Trudget, Local Land Services, 0427 710 004
ross.trudgett@lls.nsw.gov.au
For further information contact Ross or:
Chris Howarth, President, Freemantle and Districts Pest Management Group
Ph: 0475 401 865

The history of the **Prior family at Milker's Flat**

Henry Prior, with his eight-year-old son, Henry Junior, arrived from Bristol in England in 1843 as a free settler. His sister, Hannah, had arrived in 1838 with her husband John Palser and two children, and encouraged Henry to make the long journey to the new colony.

Henry Senior was a miller by trade, and on arrival in the Bathurst district first worked for George Ranken at Kelloshiel. At this time, many millers arrived from England as work was short over there. Similarly, lace makers came from Calais to Australia looking for work. By 1845, Henry leased the mill from Ranken, and later a brewery and mill house in Eglinton before purchasing land at Milker's Flat on the Freemantle Road in 1863.

Henry purchased three portions of land from Hugh and Janet Smith of Watton. Mrs Smith named the area Milker's Flat as her milking cows spent most of their time at that location. The three portions of land had been purchased at a Land Grant Auction by Hugh and Janet Smith on 10th October 1855, as an addition to Watton. In 1864, Henry Snr built a house for his son Henry Jnr, now aged about 28 years, together with his wife, Elizabeth, nee Anderson, as a belated wedding present and named it Hillside. For some reason, the house was actually built on adjoining Crown Land, and so in 1870 Henry Jnr applied for a Conditional Purchase of the adjoining 80 acres. The house has had no major renovations since it was built, thus giving us a true indication of the country lifestyle of a prominent early pioneer family some one hundred and forty years ago. Henry and Elizabeth had seven children, Hannah, Henry Thomas (died as an infant), Thomas Henry, Charles, Elizabeth Jane (known as Jean), Ernest James Darg and Albert Edward.

It was Jean who convinced her father to change the name of the property from Milker's Flat to Hillside. Following Henry and Elizabeth's death, the property passed to their children, however it was Albert who bought out his siblings and returned from Narromine to live in the homestead. He soon became involved with the local community, being elected as a Councillor of Turon Shire Council in February 1920, and serving as Shire President in 1922. He married Laura Ileanor Bonham of Duramana in 1898 and had two children, Ernest Henry (Ernie) and Edith Elizabeth (Edie) who married Reg Tobin.

This article was published in *Volume Three of 100 Heritage Homes of Bathurst and District,* and has been reproduced with kind permission from Lee Steele, author and publisher. Copies are available from Books Plus..

The Prior family played a prominent role in the local community, often hosting woolshed dances in aide of the Bathurst Ambulance Service.

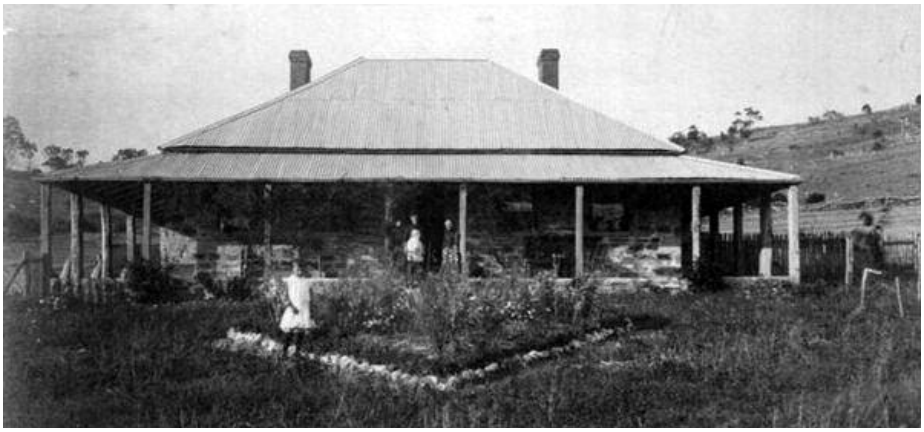
Albert died in 1957 and Laura in 1969 at the age of 94 years. Their son, Ernie Prior, managed the estate until he retired in the early 1970s and the different portions of land comprising the 7000 acre property were all sold.

Ernie's 2700 acres that adjoined Billywillinga were sold to developers in 1972 who bought and subdivided the bushland into 28 lots.

Seven generations of Priors had lived on the land, and four at one time when Ernie's son, Albert Ernest (Jim) Prior, was employed by the estate. He and his wife, Heather, raised their young family in what is now Jim and Lesley Buchan's home. (Jim Buchan went on to restore the title name of Milker's Flat as part of his extensive research into the early settler families for his book, Freemantle via Bathurst.)

In 1973, Jim's daughter, Jill Williams and her husband, Graham, purchased part of Hillside that included Ernie's home and named it Combogolong. Jill was a Councillor on Evans Shire Council for some fifteen years.

Pat and Wally Edwards, purchased from Edie Tobin (nee Prior) the original homestead block that included a four-stand shearing shed, a blacksmith's forge, shearers' quarters, machinery and chaff sheds. The homestead was built of local shale, using lime mined from Billywillinga as mortar. The original kitchen and bakery were replaced in 1895 using bush cut rafters from Darg Prior's hut near Spring Hill.



The shingle roof was later covered with iron and the stone walls rendered. Alongside the home, were stables next to the horse paddock, a gardener's cottage behind the large orchard, a milking shed, garage and a large wire screened meat house.

Initially, the slab kitchen with its low hanging verandah was detached from the house, and later connected to the large dining room by a glass atrium. In the centre of the kitchen was a large bush crafted table with a brick oven and stove at one end, and a screened pantry at the other. Behind the pantry was a narrow galley where the men would wash and shave before entering the homestead.

In the centre of the homestead was a wide hall with a staircase that accessed the attic where the housekeeper slept. The property was once known for its lovely terraced rose garden with a stone fountain and sun dial at the front of the house. This was used for some of the romantic scenes in the film *Girl of the Bus*h, the majority of which was filmed at Freemantle.

Pictured above:
A very early photo of the Hillside homestead.
Ern Prior pictured with his son, Jim Prior with Lester Tobin in the background.

Encounters with **bushrangers**

Henry Prior Jnr once encountered Ben Hall which was documented in his obituary printed in the *National Times* 3.2.1922 when he died, aged 86:

"…Mr Prior was camped with his team near Kelloshiel (near Eglinton) when they were approached by Ben Hall. Mr Prior had with him 360 pounds in cash which he deposited in a bag of chaff for safety. When Hall came up to them he needed no introduction. The countryside had been discussing Ben Hall, his methods and his reputation of a certain respectability. He was not bloodthirsty. Consequently, they were not afraid, but they did not intimate that they knew their uninvited guest. Hall asked for chaff and corn and was given them. Mr Prior asked Hall if he had meat. He replied that he hadn't but if his host had any lead with him he would soon overcome the shortage.

Mr Prior gave him a couple of leads from his fishing line. These the bushranger quickly made into bullets and with one of Mr Prior's assistants, an aboriginal half caste, he went into one of the neighbouring paddocks and shot a bullock.

At night the bushranger slept beside a campfire built so that he occupied the only shadow it threw. He rose at three o'clock in the morning and cheerfully rode away."

In 1856, Henry Prior Snr of Kelloshiel Mills, Bathurst placed an advertisement in the local paper offering a 20 pounds reward for anyone who could provide information that would lead to the apprehension of the party or parties who robbed his son.

"On Thursday night last, between 7 and 8 o'clock, my son was robbed by some person on Green Wattle Flat, Sofala Road, of the sum of ninety-six pounds, viz: - 13 five pound notes, one twenty pound note on the Oriental Bank, one ten pound cheque, on the Bank of New South Wales, drawn by C Wilson in favour of H Polson and one pound note."

A Bathurst Show legend

Ern Prior never missed a Bathurst show in 80 years when he died in 1990 on his 90th birthday.

In fact, it was a passion shared with his father and the highlight of their year.

In 1950 Ern became a life member of the Bathurst Show. As Chief Cattle Steward he wanted to develop the cattle section and saw the need for a new shed to house the stud beef cattle exhibits.

It was built in 1953 with the Prior family supplying all the posts, palings and sawn timber for the new pavilion.

The timber was cut from the bush and milled on their property by two employees - Jim Prior and Greg Kerr.

The large timber posts were pulled by a horse team to the mill where they were then transported into town on their Reo truck.

It was a huge undertaking for the family and the volunteers who built the shed.

In 1983 Ern was invited to open the show as an honorary life member.

Though he claimed that his show work was his lifetime commitment, he served as a councillor on Turon Shire and was awarded an OAM for his contribution to the Bathurst district. Among other things, he started the first two volunteer brigades at Eglinton and Freemantle where he was captain for 20 years.

Pictured is Ern receiving the Bushfire Council long service award. From left: Don Oates, Trevor Toole and John Howarth.

Memories of my early childhood at Hillside

By Marje Prior

There are only three of us left, myself and my two aunties, Bev Kerr and Wendy Brown who grew up at 'Hillside', Freemantle Road, during the 1940s and 50s.

Now known as Milker's Flat, four generations of Priors lived on the property at one time.

They are my best childhood memories before we moved into town in 1961 so we could go to school and I was socialised.

Being home schooled by my mother had advantages as I could complete my lessons quickly with the freedom to spend the rest of my day exploring, swimming in the Macquarie River and building Indonesian styled homes I'd seen in a Blackfriars reader.

I became a builder very early in my life carting pieces of timber and tin that I found around the sheds to build my homes on stilts over the creek. But the floods always washed them away.

An old wooden horse trough became my rabbit hospital where I tried to heal the injured rabbits I'd rescued from the traps. I'd dab kerosene onto their wounds and wrap them in cloth bandages.

But somehow, they would all manage to escape - well that's what I was told by my father who obviously knocked them on the head when I wasn't around.

Our Christmas gatherings were special and always held in my grandparent's house, now known as 'Combogolong' and owned by my niece, Jane and her husband James Priestly.

The adults would sit around the extended table in the dining room while the children were fed in a another room where they could be noisy and not disturb the adults.

My other aunties and their families would travel from Canberra and Warwick, Qld, to join us.

I was always excited to see my cousins to show them my cubby houses and to race against them in the river where I learnt to swim.

In many ways, the river was my best friend, full of secrets and surprises, fuelling my imagination and always changing with new swimming holes and sandy beaches appearing after the floods.

It was exciting to hear the river roar when the waters came down from Bathurst after a flood.

Another favourite place was my great grandmother's slab kitchen. Nan, as we called her, lived alone after my great grandfather died and I spent a lot of time by her side.

She was an independent, enterprising woman who was respected by many.

I have vivid memories of nearly cutting my foot in half as a three-year-old after stepping on a broken cup. It was Nan who made me a special pair of crutches so I could get around again.

We didn't wear shoes in those days until we went into town but they would soon be kicked off in our car.

I loved going to the Bathurst Show as it meant I got a new dress that my mother would make instead of the hand-me-downs from my aunty Wendy.

Living remotely meant we rarely had visitors and local events such as tennis, bush dances and bonfires were important for the community - especially for the women, giving them a chance to catch up.

My mother had visions of me becoming a great pianist but after I performed a faultless piece an octave too low at the Orange Eisteddfod she gave up on me.

I attended the Milker's Flat school when I was old enough to walk the distance as a four-year-old to keep up the numbers. The teacher would set me up on the verandah with black counting cards (that tasted good when you licked off the phosphorus ink).

Unfortunately, when the big kids left, the school eventually closed and my mother supervised my brother, sister and I with Blackfriars correspondence.

Pictured is a gathering by the Macquarie River at the Freemantle Bridge. I'm sitting on my great grandmother's lap, Laura Prior, with Betty Howarth sitting next to my mother, Heather Prior who is holding my baby sister, Jill.

The Howarth family celebrates 200 years

By Chris Hogg

Most Freemantle residents will know, I am sure, that there is a strong Howarth presence and history in the district.

On Saturday 26th August a gathering was held for the descendants of Thomas (Lanky Tom) Howarth and his wife Martha Ann Pearson Post.

The date was selected as it was 200 years to the day since Martha's father John Post arrived as a convict in Sydney in 1823, after having his death sentence for sheep stealing commuted to transportation. Martha arrived in 1828 with her mother and siblings as part of a scheme to reunite well behaved convicts with their families. Tom arrived in 1828 on the ship Waterloo, sentenced to 14 years transportation for stealing a cow.

On arrival, Tom was assigned to George Williams in Bathurst. After George died in 1830, Tom was reassigned to Major Thomas Mitchell, and remained in his employ, accompanying him on some of his explorations, until he obtained his ticket of leave in 1837.

In 1838, Tom lost his ticket of leave and had all his possessions confiscated after being accused of stealing some bullocks. However, it was soon reinstated when it came to light that the evidence against him had been concocted by one William Ambling, who "desired Tom's wife".

Tom went on to run several inns, including The Jolly Butcher in Picton where the Picton Hotel now stands, the Woolpack Inn at Evans Plains, and the Bushman's Inn, on the site where the Bathurst Armada shopping centre stands.

Tom passed away in 1865 while living at Evans Plains, where his home still stands.

Martha remarried Abbott Osborne, and lived in Orange until her death in 1905.

Tom and Martha had a large family and now have over 1500 descendants, around 120 of whom attended the gathering at Nashdale hall.

The organizing committee must be soundly congratulated for the huge effort that they put into organising the day. The hall was filled with a myriad of photos, documents and articles, and the printout of the extended family tree stretched almost twice the length of the hall.

After an official welcome, the morning was spent in renewing old connections and making new ones, browsing the wonderful displays, and perusing, and if necessary adding to and amending the family tree.

After a picnic lunch there were several interesting and informative presentations.

A great day was had by all and will be long remembered.

WELCOME TO **NEW NEIGHBOURS DAY**

Thanks to all the new residents who came to the Welcome Day this month to support the Freemantle Road community.

There was a constant Buzz in the shed as 47 people mingled, made new friends and connected.

People came from all along the road - from Mt Rankin to Root Hog and Gowan Roads. It was a great representation of our growing community with future potential for new community initiatives and support for our local volunteer fire brigade.

Some of the old timers were also there including John and Marie Howarth and Fred Howarth.

A special thanks to Vic and Cheryl Schembri for making their heritage shed available and in particular, for the work involved in cleaning it as it looked fantastic with the chandeliers unwrapped for the occasion.

Also, thanks to folk musician, Ron Van Der Zwaag who volunteered to provide the acoustic music which create the ambience for the day.

The food everyone brought was plentiful and scrumptious - a great day enjoyed by al and we look forward to more events like this.

FREEMANTLE RURAL FIRE SERVICE CHRISTMAS PARTY

ALL WELCOME

When: Saturday 25th November
Where: Freemantle RFS Shed - 2512 Freemantle Rd
Time: 6pm until late

Santa arrives at 7pm – with goodies for all the kids (Big and Small)

BYO: Drinks and Food
BBQ is available for use
LOTS OF FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Cut or print out and put on your fridge

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU SEE FLAMES

Call 000

You will be asked fire, police or ambulance.

Please have ready:

- your location - the rural address is best
- a cross road or feature, such as 2 km past Macquarie River
- directions on how to access the fire, (some properties are large and have numerous access points, or the fire may be better accessed via a neighbour)

What can you see?

(eg fire approx 500m from house, flame front 20m running fast)

Then activate your plan. This may involve calling someone not near the fire and asking them to call your neighbours.

Write here your rural address and the phone numbers of your neighbours and other people you need to call.

My Rural Address:

Name	Phone numbers:

Note: if you live, travel through, work or visit rural areas, make a plan.
If you have mobile phone coverage download the Hazards Near Me App.

Visit https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/resources/bush-fire-survival-plan or call:
Bathurst - Chifley Fire Control Centre 1300 258 737
Cabonne - Canobolas Fire Control Centre 02 6363 6666

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