

Melton Family History Group Inc

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Registered 6th Dec 1994

June 2022-July 2022

Meeting Times: 6:30pm on the second Thursday of each month except for January

Venue: Melton Library – McKenzie Street, Melton

Membership Fee: \$25 per year payable July each year prior to August A.G.M.

Correspondence: 17 Sutherland Ave, Melton Sth, Vic, 3338.

President: Judith Bilszta

Vice President Janeen O’Connell

Secretary: Ian Bowey

Treasurer: Deborah Slattery

Email: sec.meltonfhg@outlook.com

Web site www.meltonfamilyhistory.org

Committee Members: Sue Morton and Pauline Stotten

2022 Monthly Meetings at Melton Library in McKenzie Street.

9 th June	T.B.A
14 th July	T.B.A
11 th August	T.B.A
8 th September	T.B.A
13 th October	T.B.A

All dates and times are subject to change

Update: Regular work:

A joint venture between the Melton Library and our group involving photograph scanning was organised for Thursday the 28th of April between 10:00am and midday. This joint venture was part of this year's Heritage Festival. Patrons were invited to bring along family photographs or photographs of Melton and district. They then received high resolution photographs on a U.S.B stick to keep.

With the library opening up again, we have received a number of requests for assistance.

As the library has extended its opening hours, we no longer have to request a swipe car for access out of hours. Hopefully the opening hours of the library will remain as they are. We can then try to organise guest speakers for our meetings.



Two very happy library patrons who participated in the Scanning Studio session with Melton Library's Ryilee.

Our May meeting was cancelled due to the number of members who had indicated that they were unable to attend. The committee has discussed the possibility of holding meetings every two months instead of the current schedule of every month. It has been decided that this option will be raised during our June meeting.

Memories from a Bacchus Marsh family



A local man has shared an historical photo close to a century old, to mark 100 since his father was born – with many descendants of the families pictured still living in Moorabool.

Patrick Flanagan shared a photo of four generations of his family – his father Aeneas Flanagan in the lap of Bridget Vallence (nee Green), the mother of Henry Vallance (Jr), who was the father of Ellen Flanagan (nee Valance), Aeneas' mother.

“There are still many descendants of Henry (Snr) and Bridget in and around Bacchus Marsh. Moira Ross (nee Flanagan) a 1st cousin – is the principal at Coimadai Primary School”, Mr Flanagan told the Moorabool News.

“I have been tracing my family for some time now – and do have an extensive family tree. There was a Vallence reunion in the Marsh several years ago – and my research was used”.

The Valleria property which the photo was taken no longer belongs to the Vallences, but can still be found at the top of the hill on Vallence Road, near the corner of Vallence Road and North and Finn Court. It was sold to a young family when Amy Vallence died in the early 1980s and renovated.

Mr Flanagan also shared his childhood memories of Valleria.

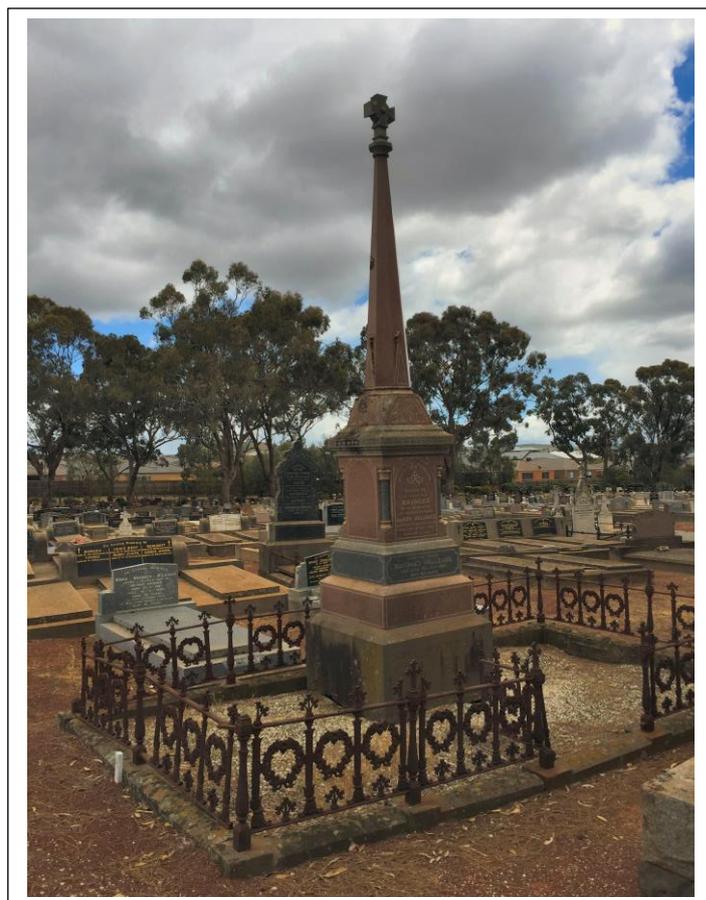
“There was a quarry across the road - next to which was the dairy. My recollection is a little foggy as I did not live in the Marsh and was a child – but we did frequently visit Amy and her two brothers, Harry and Eddie, who were all younger siblings of my grandmother” he said.

“As a child, I remember sitting in the kitchen visiting grand aunt Amy Vallence and counting the carriages on the train as it passed – whilst she cooked biscuits and/or scones on the stove – heated by wood gathered from the farm. I remember my mother asking her how she knew the oven was hot enough – and Amy replied, “I can feel it on my face”.

“There is a story that Grandma was celebrating her birthday in the front room of the house – when the news reports re the landing of Gallipoli came over the wireless”.

Aeneas Flanagan was born on the 19th of January 1922, and passed away on the 20th of August 2013. He had four children, including Patrick, with his wife Kathleen Carew.

The above article was published in the local newspaper ‘Moorabool News’ on the 1st of March 2022



The above two photographs were taken by our own Deb Slattery.

The human side of the sinking of the R.M.S Titanic.



On 15th April, it was the 110th Anniversary of the sinking of RMS Titanic. The story of the tragedy is well-known, and doubtless there will be media references to the millionaires and aristocrats who perished. Invariably, less attention is paid to the crew. Of the estimated 2224 people on board, 885 were crew. It is thought that some 1514 people died, of whom 821 were passengers and 693 were crew.

A very large proportion of the crew lived in Southampton, and amongst these, were many who had Dorset origins. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many families left the largely agricultural county of Dorset and moved to nearby cities to find work. The thriving docks of Southampton were particularly accessible, offered good employment opportunities, and the city was not too far from home and family in Dorset. It is likely that Society members have ancestors or other relatives who served as crew on the ship, and either survived or were lost.

In my own family is William James PITFIELD. The Pitfields are an ancient Dorset family, the earliest references to whom were living in the early 1500s in Allington, Bridport and nearby. Over the subsequent centuries, the family spread across the county and beyond. From 1700 an especially large group established in Fordington, Dorchester. William's family was from this group, his grandfather having moved from Fordington to Southampton in the mid-19th century. This was typical of very many families who had lived in Dorset for centuries, often tied to the land as farmers or agricultural labourers. The industrial revolution opened up new vistas for them, and very many left Dorset forever.

William James Pitfield was born in 1886 in South Stonham, and baptised 28 January 1887 at Woolston. He was the fifth son of William Henry Pitfield (1854-1910), a seaman of Southampton. In 1876 he married Louisa GOREY (1855 – 1911), also of Southampton.

William James Pitfield, aged 21, married Haidee Ethel DIAPER, aged 19, in 1908. The Diapers were a well-know Southampton family involved in running the Itchen ferry. William's profession was given in the 1911 Census as Marine Fireman; he had served on several ocean liners. The couple's son, William Frederick, was born 07 October 1910, and by early 1912 Haidee was expecting another child.

William James was recruited to the crew of RMS Titanic for her maiden voyage, and served as a Greaser, on a monthly wage £6.10.00 (£6.50 in decimal money). The job of a Greaser was to lubricate all the machinery to ensure it ran smoothly. It was a skilled and responsible occupation, located in the engine rooms and surrounding areas of the ship. He was a member of the engineering crew.

It is easy to imagine the excitement of William and Haidee at his having a well paid job on the greatest ship in the world and with a new baby on the way. Sadly though, as we know, tragedy was to strike on 15th April 1912.

The engine room was deep in the bowels of the ship. The crew there were amongst the first to realise that there was something seriously amiss after the collision with the iceberg. Valiantly though, the engine room crew stayed at their posts to ensure that electricity would continue to be generated to provide light during the rescue efforts. Also to provide power for the davits that would lower the lifeboats. Very many brave men were lost. – of the 33 Greasers like William, on the ship, only 4 were saved.

William himself did not survive the sinking. He died aged 25 and his body was not recovered. His address at time of death is given in his signing on papers as 13 Albert Road, Woolston. (This was later renamed Keswick Road).

Yet more tragedy was to strike poor Haidee. As mentioned above, at the time of the loss, William's wife was pregnant. Their daughter Haidee Doris was born to William posthumously. At that time, for a wife to be left with two children and no breadwinner to support her was dire. It would have been very hard for Haidee to cope, not least financially. To add to her grief, little Haidee Doris died in 1913. Later that year, the Titanic Relief Fund made several payments to Haidee Ethel, including sufficient to cover the expenses of her daughter's illness and funeral.



The eventual outcome was happy, however, as in 1919 Haidee married again. This was to Edward WELLS, she had two more children. This photo shows her with her children William (Bill) Pitfield, Nellie Wells and Ernie Wells. Bill married and had children, so the descendants of William James and his Dorset forebears live on.

Sadly there is no known photo of William James. Both the Titanic Museum and I would love to find one.

I'm sure other members of the Society have family members who were amongst the crew, or were passengers, on the Titanic. If so, do share your stories by writing a blog of your own about them.

NOTE: The film 'Saving The Titanic' (available to stream) is about the efforts of the engine room crew to delay the sinking, keep the electricity going, etc. It gives graphic depictions of the conditions below decks as the ship sank. It's well worth watching.

Michael Pitfield

The above article was taken from a blog by the Somerset and Dorset Historical Society.