

MOUNT GAMBIER HISTORY GROUP NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2021



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Mount Gambier History Group Inc.
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MOUNT GAMBIER, SA 5290

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*The Mount Gambier
History Group would
like to thank
Mr Tony Pasin,
Member for Barker,
for the printing of
this newsletter.*

 **shadforth** Financial
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Mount Gambier History Group COMMITTEE 2021

President: - Phil McInnes
Secretary & Librarian - Jeanette Aslin
Treasurer : - Maxine McInnes

Committee members:

Tricia Bott, Tony Bott, Jim Lightbody, Di Ward,
Rosemary Wilsher, Stephanie Edgeworth

Next Committee MEETING Dates

(Held monthly each 4th Tuesday of the month at 11 a.m. at the Club rooms)

September 28th 2021

October 26th 2021

November AGM 23rd 2pm

Annual Membership:

Single: \$20.00

Family: \$30.00

Concession: \$15.00



**The History Room is open for research
Tuesdays 1.30 - 4.30pm**
Also open by appointment

**We are based at the REIDY PARK CENTRE,
O'Halloran Tce.
Mt Gambier**

Website:

<http://mountgambierhistorygroup.weebly.com>

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Disclaimer

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No liability is accepted for any statements of opinion, or any error or omissions. Although advertising material is accepted for this newsletter, such acceptance does not imply endorsement by the Mount Gambier History Group



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Edwin Flack 1st Aust Olympian*

Genealogy:

An account of one's descent from an ancestor who did not particularly care to trace his own. _ Ambrose Bierce

It is with sadness we acknowledge the death of our patron Jim Galpin OAM. Jim and his wife Pat were Mount Gambier History Group's patrons from 2008 until 2014 when Pat passed away. Since then Jim continued on taking a great interest in the activities of the group by regularly dropping in to see what was happening and giving encouragement, support and advice. He will be very missed.

Our condolences to Lisa and Rick.



The **Annual General Meeting** of the Mount Gambier History Group will be held on *Tuesday 23 November at 2 pm* at the rooms on O'Halloran Terrace. **All Welcome**



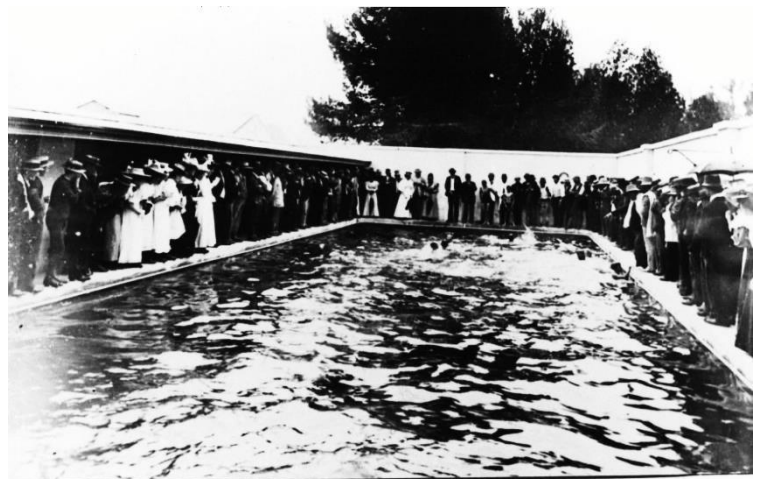
Have you ever wondered about the squares of concrete in the Cave Gardens lawn between the large sculptures and the Civic Centre?

They represent the area occupied by the original public swimming baths on the corner of Watson Tce. The baths were largely funded by a donation by Mr Percy Browne.

In October 1897 it was announced by the Mayor that Browne had sent a letter to the Council offering to donate £100 towards a public bath for the town.

Browne also donated 20 acres of land

adjoining the Blue Lake (eastern side) to be vested in the Mount Gambier Council for the purpose of providing a fund for the maintenance of the baths." There was much enthusiasm for the project and by November the foundation stone was laid. It was opened in February 1898. Initially male and females were segregated and required to use the baths at different times as was the social norm of the times.



1925



1940



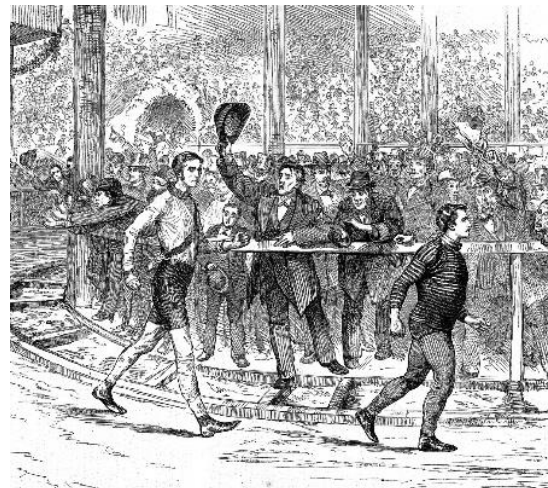
1925

The baths were used until 1953 when a swimming pool was constructed on O Halloran Terrace. Next was the swimming complex on Margaret Street which closed in 2020 and the new Wulanda Recreation and Convention Centre, which will include swimming facilities is currently being constructed

All photos from Mount Gambier Library

WALKING CONTEST – A Little Bit Bazaar

A “Starling Announcement” was advertised in the local paper dated 23rd October 1883 stating Mr C. Swan, a champion walker from New Zealand, and winner of principal tournaments in the colonies, said he would walk 450 miles, in six days and six nights, in Mount Gambier commencing at 12.05 am Monday 29th October 1883. He promised to donate £10 10s to charity if he did not complete the walk of 450 miles in that time. Swan also placed a challenge for three Mount Gambier pedestrians to compete against him, stating each of them were to walk on alternate days and, prizes would be awarded should their combined total exceed his performance.



The three local pedestrians who accepted the challenge were Tom MacMurtrie, and brothers James and John Dowdell, all three being good amateur walkers.

Mrs Swan was not to be left out of the fun. She announced that she would appear every evening, between 8.30pm and 9.30 pm on the track to give an exhibition of her graceful style and cover five miles within an hour.

The South Eastern Bazaar, situated between Commercial Street and James Street, with Short Street (now Ripley Arcade) on its eastern side, was the chosen venue. A track was laid out in the largest area of the Bazaar, each lap being 108 yards 1 foot 7 inches long, giving 17 laps to the mile. The venue was capable of holding over 400 spectators. Admission during the day until 6pm was 1shilling, after that time 2 shillings, and reserved seats 2 shillings 6 pence and was to be collected by the good lady herself, Mrs Swan.

Mr. Swan was a stoutly built man of 5' 4" in height, clean shaven with fair complexion. He weighed 10st 6 lbs and was in top walking condition. On the track he was dressed in white tights, coloured waistcloth and hose, and very light elastic slippers. MacMurtrie, who was the first of the local pedestrians to walk, was a similar build to Swan, very fair and with short cut hair. He was dressed in white tights and wore ordinary light leather shoes.

Forty to fifty persons witnessed the walking begin at 12.08 am Monday morning with Mr F. E. Harris sending Swan and MacMurtrie on their journey. MacMurtrie was greatly admired for his endurance. However, he suffered with his feet and in the course of the afternoon was compelled to remove his shoes and walk in his stockings. He left the track at 11.20pm amid a hearty cheer from the spectators, having covered 90 miles. Swan covered 99 miles and 15 laps.

That same day, Mrs Swan appeared on the track at 9pm. She was a stoutly woman of 5' 2", and was dressed in a flowered, short sleeved cretonne dress and kid boots. Apparently, her style was firm and elegant but too stiff to be considered perfectly graceful. She remained on the track for half an hour, covering about two miles, then claimed *“she was too tired after attending to her husband’s needs late the previous night to complete the 5 miles as advertised and promised to do all that was expected of her some other night!!”* (make of that as you will!)

The second local pedestrian to walk, James Dowdell entered the track on day two. He was a 20 year old slender young man of 5' 8" and was dressed in a tight fitting athletic costume and carpet slippers. Swan, after two hours sleep, resumed walking at 2.30am. Unfortunately Dowdell had dysentery and was compelled to leave the track often during the morning and in the afternoon he was troubled by a large blister on his foot. After a two hour rest at 5pm he still appeared tired and showed little improvement. The walkers retired at 11.08pm. Dowdell eventually covered 71 miles & 3 laps. Swan 173 miles all up.

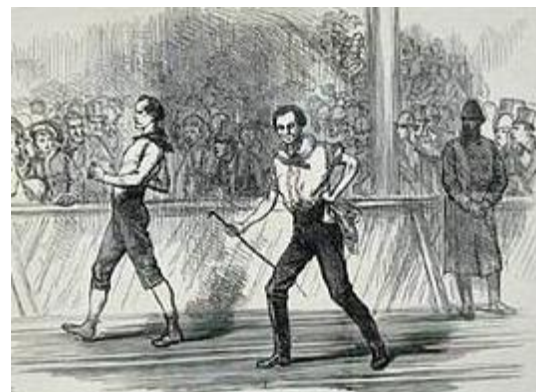
John Dowdell was next in line to walk with Swan and started punctually at 12.08am on day 3. He was 24 years of age and was a well-made but slender young man, weighing 11 st 10 lbs. It was generally conceded he would top MacMurtrie’s score for the first 24 hours. During the day Swan, showing signs of distress, went off the

track often for short rests, snacks and a hot bath. Dowdell resolved, if his strength would permit, not to leave it during the 24 hours but he eventually became exhausted and dragged himself along till 10.15pm. By that time he had covered 91 miles and 4 laps, beating MacMurtrie's effort by 1½ miles. Swan retired at 12.08am with a total of 249 miles and 8 laps.

Swan himself admitted he had not seen such excellent and enduring amateur pedestrians as Tom MacMurtrie, James and John Dowdell. He admired their pluck and endurance and decided to award them the prizes under less stringent conditions, changing the combined efforts of the locals to 400 miles not 450 as originally stated. MacMurtrie went on the track for his second effort on day 4 and Swan resumed at 2am. After traveling six hours MacMurtrie found that although his spirit was strong his flesh was weak, as his feet were causing him a great deal of distress. He removed his shoes again and persevered bravely in his stockings. He covered 72 miles, making his total 162 miles for two days. Swan's total was 308 miles, 17 ½ miles behind the amateurs. It was about this time that, unbeknown to most, rumblings of discontent were happening in the background. But more on that later!

James Dowdell took the track for the second time on day 5. Swan was not in his previous fettle, he was showing signs of fatigue and was hindered by a sore foot. He was concerned it would fester and spent 7½ hours off the track during the day. However, on retiring he had covered a total of 356 miles. 32½ miles behind the locals. Dowdell covered 63 miles and 6 laps.

John Dowdell commenced his second walk on day 6, the last day. His only task was to beat MacMurtrie and secure 1st prize of 5 guineas and a silver lever watch. He walked well all day but by 10.45pm his friends pulled him off the track fearing he would injure himself. He had completed 75 miles and 1 lap. Swan on the other hand took many spells and had eventually had enough. He left the track at 10.15pm having travelled that day only 37 miles and 1 lap. His complete record was 395 miles and 8 laps being about 54½ short of the 450 miles he had engaged to perform and 70 miles and 14 laps behind the amateurs.



Swan expressed regret at not completing the 450 miles telling the spectators that he was capable of doing it but on this occasion it was beyond him. The prizes were awarded the following Monday evening. John Dowdell received first prize and Mr Laurie, on behalf of the public presented MacMurtrie & the Dowdell brothers each with a purse of 5 guineas as acknowledgement of their pluck and endurance.

So, you may ask, what was happening in the background? Sometime during the week, officials had arrived in Mount Gambier from Port Adelaide and were patiently waiting for the match to finish on Saturday night. As soon as Swan walked off the track, they slapped him with a 'Bolter's Warrant' of £28 which he owed for rent. Swan refused to pay and was promptly thrown into gaol, as the officials were concerned he would try to cross the border therefore being free of his debt. He was to appear in court Monday morning but, for some unknown reason, the prosecution didn't show up and Swan regained his freedom.

The commotion being played out at the close of the match must have been entertaining in the least, as, not only was Swan arrested, but Mr L.G. Ehret, owner of the SE Bazaar, in true style, assaulted Mr T. Hayter, Swan's financial manager. This was due to 30 shillings owed to Frank Jones who had assisted all week with the match. Hayter refused to pay, so Ehret told him to clear out, calling him a swindler, vagabond and blackleg; and if he ever showed his face again he would kick him, then Ehret shoved him out the door. This action however cost Ehret a fine of 10 shillings and court costs of 35 shillings.

Things could not get much worse but they did. On Monday night when prizes were given, Thomas Hayter approached Swan regarding money still owing to him and Swan, in front of witnesses, promised to settle first thing the following morning. But during the night Mr and Mrs Swan decamped and crossed the border, with all the takings of the tournament leaving his business manager with nothing. As for the £10 10s that was promised for a local charity, well..... who knows!

Researched and written by Norma Werner

Gary Duff, one of our History Group members, brought in 4 small buttons he had found while metal detecting. They each had an imprinted person's name and Mt Gambier on them: The names were C MacKenzie, W Hiller, P Sullivan and M Hannagan

All the names were those of 4 local tailors in Mt Gambier in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Three of the buttons are likely to have been used for men's pants/trousers. The fourth button may also have been or perhaps a waistcoat or for holding up braces. This button is a little more ornate and has only 2 holes in it. It is also a little thicker in construction than the others. Each button is 1.5 cms in diameter

Where were the buttons made? Well there was no definite answer but it seems possible the three, 4 holed buttons were made in Birmingham, UK. Birmingham was well known in the late 19th century for being an industrial town, with one of its more successful industries being button making. The other more ornate 2 holed button may have been made in Germany, another large button manufacturing country at the time and the country of birth of William Hiller. It seems that the imprint of words onto the button was likely to have been done during manufacture.

Why were these buttons designed to have the indent in the middle? One of the reasons given was to protect the cotton sewing thread, used to attach a button to the garment, from excess wear. Therefore the button would remain attached to the garment for the maximum possible time!

William Hiller
Tailor in Mount Gambier
1866 to 1883



This button only has 2 holes and has more ornamentation on it than the others.

It may have been made in Germany.



William Hiller (Gottlob Wilhelm Hiller) grew up in Germany where he trained as a tailor. He emigrated to Australia around 1865 and came to live in Mount Gambier in 1866. In December 1866 he opened a shop in Commercial Street West.

New Tailoring Establishment.
W. HILLER desires to inform the people of Mount Gambier that he has opened a **TAILORING ESTABLISHMENT,** Next door to Rubenkönig's Bakery.
W. H. has lately arrived from Paris, and is prepared to execute orders according to the latest and most approved Fashions.
A good assortment of Best Tweeds and Cloths on hand.
Ladies' Riding Costumes manufactured. 327

Border Watch 2 December 1866 p4

By 1869 he describes himself as tailor and clothier. (shop in the vicinity of 34 Commercial St West)

By 1882 his business had expanded to also include jewellery and groceries.

He died in 1883 aged 40.

Hiller's obituary described him as being "esteemed as a good tradesman and an upright and honest man".

W. HILLER,
TAILOR AND CLOTHIER,
IN returning thanks to his customers and friends in Mount Gambier and its vicinity, begs to inform them that he has just unpacked a large and first-class assortment of **WINTER GOODS,** including—
West of England's Black and Blue Broads cloths
Venetians
Bliss's
Scotch
Sydney
Geelong,
AND
Hoper's Elastic Tweeds.
ALSO,
A first-class assortment of German Cloths and Tweeds.
A speedy inspection invited.
Sack Suits made to Order for £3 12s. 6d.,
On the shortest notice, and warranted to be shrunk.
5 Per Cent. Discount for Cash.
Ready-made Goods always on hand. 583du
TO FARMERS.
GO TO W. HILLER'S and **GET AN ORDER-MADE SUIT** for **£3 12s. 6d.,** **READY SHRUNK.** 583u



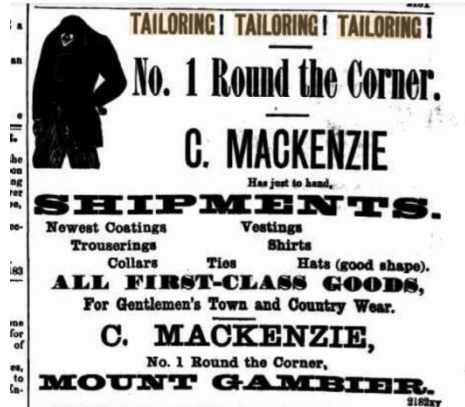
Border Watch 29 May 1869 p3

Charles McKenzie
Tailor in Mount Gambier
1865 to 1904

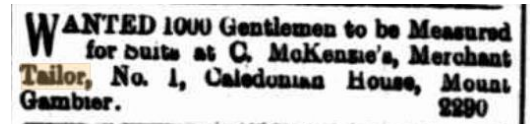


Charles MacKenzie was born in Inverness, Scotland and learnt his trade as a tailor there. He arrived in Mt Gambier in 1865. He initially worked for William Caldwell near Mac's Hotel but then opened his own business next to the popular Rubenkönig's bakery. In 1874 he bought the land on the NE corner of Penola Road and built a 2 storey building with shops below and living area above known to many as Caledonian House and/or MacKenzie's corner.

Border Watch (Mount Gambier, SA: 1861 - 1954) / Wed 8 Oct 1884 / Page 3 /



For years Charles MacKenzie optimistically had the ad below put in the Border Watch at random months of the year – perhaps when business was slow?



In 1904 MacKenzie sold his business to James Frith-Jones, an Adelaide based tailor who had once worked for him while in Mt Gambier. At a gathering of employees to acknowledge the change of ownership J. J. Harrington, on behalf of the employees, referred to the spirit of good feeling and esteem that had always existed between Mr MacKenzie and the staff, several of whom had worked with him uninterruptedly for over 20 years.

Martin John Hannagan
Tailor in Mount Gambier
1891 to 1913



Martin John Hannagan trained and worked as a tailor in New Zealand He later worked in Melbourne for some years before coming to Mt Gambier. He initially worked as a tailor for Gaillard & Rowan drapery until 1891. In 1892 he opened his own business (near the National Bank on the southern side of Commercial Street West) until 1896 when he moved premises

to one of the shops in the Jens complex between the hotel and the SW corner of Ferrers St.

Staff at M. J Hannagan's business in 1903 L_R Myrtle Underwood, M J Hannagan, Adie Hughts, Mrs Maloney, Jack Ashley, Ada Greenwood, Frank Hannagan, Nellie Hannagan Photos Mt Gambier Library He stayed there until April 1906 when he closed his business and went to



work for J.Frith-Jones as a cutter and workroom supervisor. In August 1912 he re-opened his own shop just east of Fidlers and near the Border Watch which he ran for a short time until he became very ill. He died 2nd June 1913 aged 57 years. His obituary describes him as " a genial man of liberal disposition. His dignified figure will be missed on the streets".

Patrick Sullivan
Tailor in Mount Gambier
1996-1903



Patrick Sullivan grew up in Mt Gambier and did his apprenticeship as a tailor with M. J. Hannagan.

In 1896 he opened his own business, near the NE corner of Commercial St East and Mitchell St.

He remained there until 1903 when he moved his business to Millicent.

He opened a tailoring business there at an unknown site until 1919 when he bought a shop on George St.

He remained in business there until his death in 1948 aged 73.

Border Watch 27 May 1896 p3

P. SULLIVAN & CO.,

TAILORS,

Next A. G. Everitt, Jeweller,
Commercial-street.

WE wish to notify the residents of Mount Gambier and District generally that we have commenced business, as above, with a Large Stock of **WINTER COATINGS, TROUSERINGS, VESTINGS, &c.,** under the Management of Mr. Lehey, who will spare no effort in turning out Clothing in the Latest and most Fashionable styles. Fit guaranteed. Our business will be carried out on the **CASH** principle, at the lowest possible figure.

☞ Before ordering elsewhere it would be advisable to give us a call.

Note the Address—**P. SULLIVAN & Co.,** next A. G. Everitt's, Commercial-street 3384

Imagine this!!!

BEER FLOWS IN STREET

Beer flowed in Commercial Street yesterday morning when 40 dozen bottles were smashed when a load jolted from a brewery truck.

Mr. L. Wood, who was having his first day with Molony's Brewing Company, was on the hotel delivery. As he came round the South Australian corner, the load tipped onto the footpath. Mr. B. Byrne was on the back of the truck but he could not save the falling crates.

The beer flowed down the gutter from the street from the South Australian Hotel as far as Fidler and Webb.

Unbroken bottles were salvaged and the remainder shovelled into a utility and disposed of.

It was a hot morning and the incident attracted even greater interest on this account.

Amateur photographers were busy recording what they had often read about but seldom seen.

It was perhaps ludicrous that so much beer should flow so freely in the town's main street when one of the residents' biggest problems is to obtain water from its mains.

The beer was valued at about £64 and was not covered by insurance of any kind.

Border Watch 23 January 1952 page 1

Salon 7 hair studio hair for individuals

8725 2906

And for those interested in/ fascinated by numbers.....

Article was in a regional paper in 2002

An historic moment

At 8.02pm on February 20 this year was an historic moment in time.

It was not marked by the chiming of any clocks or the ringing of bells, but at that precise time, on that specific date, something happened which has not occurred for 1,001 years and will never happen again. As the clock ticked over from 8.01pm on Wednesday, February 20, time was,

for sixty seconds only, read in perfect symmetry 2002, 2002, 2002, or to be more precise - 20:02, 20/02, 2002.

The last occasion that time read in such a symmetrical pattern was long before the days of the digital watch and the 24-hour clock - at 10.01am on January 10, 1001.

And because the clock only goes up to 23.59, it is something that will never happen again.

Alexander Symonds
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Description of Police Station Mount Gambier

Not dated but must be not long after the building was completed in mid 1856)



Mount Gambier Police Station built and opened in 1856.

Photo 1925 Mount Gambier Library

A report in the South Australian Register 15 May 1956 p3 says:

"The new (Mount Gambier) police barracks built of stone, just completed by contract, are now occupied by the efficient members of that arm of the public service whose conduct gives great satisfaction in the district. These stone buildings give an imposing and agreeable aspect to our township, strongly contrasting with the usual weather-boarded and slab buildings."

Description of Police Station Mount Gambier

Description of Building	Detail	Materials used - Construction	Dimensions	General condition as to repair
House	Roof Walls Floor Ceilings Windows	Shingles Stone & mortar Dress Plaster Glazed		In good repair being just built.
No. of rooms	3 rooms 1 cell		22 x 16 16 x 14 12 x 12 6 x 6	
Stables or shed	Wooden Lean to Three stalls		20 x 20	
Wells or tanks	1 well		90 ft	
Stockyards	None			
Fences	None			
Quantity of land attached to building	Government reserve		80 acres	Not fenced Bradshaw Young Corporal

Proced. not fenced
Bradshaw Young Corporal

Photo M Hextall **Photo above Transcription below.**

Description of building	Detail	Dimensions	General condition as to repair
House	Roof Walls Floor Ceilings Windows		In good repair being just built.
No. of rooms	3 rooms 1 cell	22' x 16' 16' x 14' 12' x 12' 6' x 6'	
Stables or shed	Wooden Lean to Three stalls	20' x 20'	
Wells or tanks	1 well	90 feet	
Stockyards	None		
Fences	None		
Quantity of land attached to building	Government reserve	80 acres	Not fenced Bradshaw Young Corporal

Penola was the South Eastern Division Headquarters in the early years.

Mount Gambier Police allocations

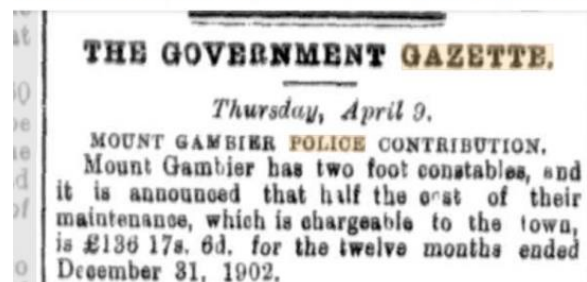
In 1856 there were 1 Corporal, 1 Constable and 3 horses.

In 1861 it was the same except there were 4 horses.

By 1877 there were 2 Corporals, 2 Mounted Constables, 1 Foot constable and 5 horses. Penola was still the SE division headquarters.

By 1902 there were 2 Foot constables

Browse / Border Watch (Mount Gambier, SA: 1861 - 1954) / Sat 18 Apr 1903 / Page 4 / THE GO



Note the Mt Gambier Council were expected to pay for one of them!

“Cheese if you please”

Researched and written by Brian Brooksby

The earliest record of cheese making in SA was published in the South Australia Gazette and Register in 1839 who noted that cheeses were being made in the colony by wives and daughters of the settlers.

By 1900, cheese making was well established in the Adelaide Hills and around Mount Gambier areas particularly.

The first factory in this local area was at ‘The Caves’ farm (Umpherston’s) in 1885. It was later purchased by the Mount Gambier Cooperative Cheese Factory Company in 1887. Also in 1885 the Tantanoola Cheese Factory opened and a day later a factory at Glenburnie began. Others followed.

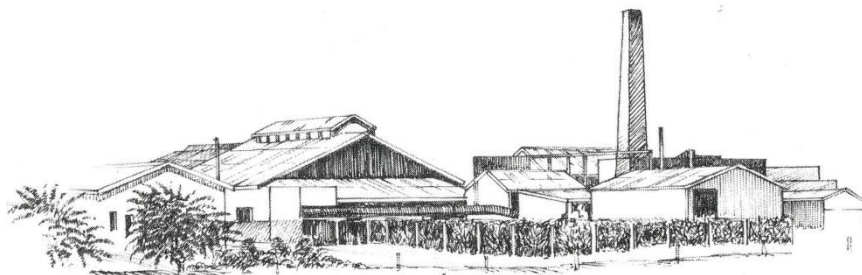
In the middle of the 1890’s John Lee opened a factory at Kingsley (west of Allendale East) which ran from the 1890’s to 1922. He later went to manage the Mt Schank Cheese factory.

John Davison built the Mt Schank Cheese Factory at the end of WW1. He sold to the Ballantines Company (of Melbourne)

In 1924 they sold it to the Burnbank Cheese Factory Cheese Company (from Western Victoria). In the 1944 they had the original section of the factory made into a

storage area and a modern cheese room built containing 10 vats. The new factory suffered damage in the disastrous 1959 bushfire, but was able to continue on after repairs were completed.

Burnbank also purchased the Glenburnie Cheese Factory which they sold in 1941.



The Mt Schank Factory operated until 1964 when it was purchased by the Yahl Cooperative who operated it until 1970. The building was later turned into a meatworks

The Burnbank Cheese Company and other businesses were owned by the Flack brothers of Victoria. Edwin Harold Flack was in charge of the Cheese Factories. The profits were donated to charities. The cheeses produced at the factory were distributed by their own companies in Melbourne with some exported overseas.

There is another interesting story about Edwin Flack

Flack had the distinction of becoming Australia’s first gold medallist at an Olympic Games at the very first modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896.

Flack, aged 21, was in England getting training and experience as an accountant and took holidays from his job to travel by boat and train to Athens to attend the Olympics.

Australia did not have a team at the Olympics that year, but as he was a keen runner he entered himself as an individual competitor for the 800 and 1500 metre running events. He wore his Melbourne Grammar School singlet to identify himself as Australian. (Pre-Federation)

He won Gold medals in both events and also won the hearts of the Greek people because of his performances. The Americans were winning an overwhelming number of field events and the locals were so excited that someone from another country was successful too. Flack was named by the Greeks as “The Lion of Athens”. He also participated in the singles and doubles tennis competitions losing both games.

Flack decided to have a go at the marathon event. Empowered by his efforts in running he was named as favourite for the 26 mile (42 km) event and he did well. Flack ran close behind the leader for many miles before that runner dropped out. Flack was leading from the front until the last 8 km when he was passed. Because he had not done preparation for running that long a distance nor the hilly terrain he had to pull out of the race in a state of collapse after running 34 kms. Flack was still acknowledged by the locals as the ‘Prince of Athens’. *The Athens Olympics of 1896 was held over only 7 days.*

Flack never competed at an Olympics Games again but took an active part in the Aust Olympic Committee.

By his participation at the first Olympic Games and achievement in winning two gold medals, it inspired many Australians and made them aware of the importance of the Olympic Games. Australia enjoys the privilege of being amongst the few countries that have participated at every Olympic Games held.

Flack never married. He became a qualified accountant and business man. He lived at Burnbank (NW of Ballarat) and bred Friesian cows on his property. He passed away in 1935.

