



CAMPERDOWN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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NEWSLETTER

January, 2016

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Hello to all members – from Camperdown and from further afield,
 This edition contains a quick report on the Christmas Breakup of the Society with a couple of photos; notification of our Event for Members and Friends for this quarter; as well as an offer of some volunteering work which one (or more) of you might be interested in doing at home for us.

The current Exhibition at the Heritage Centre/Museum has been keeping us all very busy for the past couple of months. Entitled **“Our Inspiring Women – Out of the Shadows”** it features eight women of Camperdown and District who have made their mark in history but, as often happens, have not been properly recognised. We are trying to rectify this omission with this exhibition. One these women, Frances Curdie (who was always known as “Mrs. Curdie, wife of Dr. Curdie”) is featured in this newsletter. You may be surprised at her own personal achievements. The Exhibition also features many artefacts and items of clothing from the era.

We are happy to welcome new members Maree Hogan, Karen Richardson, Dorothy Hunter, Kevin & Maree Murray and Gerard & Moira Ryan to the Society and hope that we’ll be able to meet and greet them at one of our functions before too long.

Gillian Senior Newsletter Editor

Camperdown

Heritage Centre

241 Manifold Street
 Camperdown 3260
 PO Box 243
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Opening hours

Tuesdays and 1st Sunday
 of month, (Market Day)
 10am-3pm
 Or by appointment:
camperdowndhs@gmail.com
www.camperdownhistory.org.au

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**From the Heritage Centre Collection:
 MANUAL TYPEWRITER c. 1910-20s**



Made by L. C. Smith & Corona Typwriters Inc.
This typewriter can still work – just! We have it in our current exhibition with the display of material used by the Victorian Suffragette movement – some more ‘Inspiring Women’ of their day.

COMING EVENTS: January 2016 - MARCH 2016

Tuesday 2nd February

**7.30 pm at the
Camperdown Heritage Centre**

Our Inspiring Women

Out of the shadows

This special event will give members and guests the opportunity to view our wonderful exhibition about "Inspiring Women" of Camperdown and district.

There will also be presentations about a selection of the women by the members who researched them.

Members: please bring a plate of supper

Visitors most welcome



**Isabella Taylor nee Dawson with Aboriginal informants, c. 1870
One of our Inspiring Women**

Tuesday 8th March, 10.30 am: Executive meeting at the Heritage Centre

HERITAGE CENTRE JOTTINGS AND NEWS

CAN YOU HELP? WE ARE LOOKING FOR

Photo of John WIGGINS (1830-1918) – Leura Hotel owner from 1860s to 1918.

Wiggins 3X great-granddaughter visited the Heritage Centre recently searching for an image of John Wiggins. She has numerous family documents and artefacts but neither the family nor our Historical Society have any. He was involved with many organisations including the P & A Society and Racing and Coursing Clubs.

If you have **any** photograph/s containing John Wiggins please call in, phone or email so we can arrange a copy for our researcher. We would also love to have a copy for our own collection.



Leura Hotel c.1865. Labelled in our collection as "Walker's Leura Hotel"

A HOME-BASED JOB FOR YOU?

Are you a member who would like to volunteer but can't get into the Heritage Centre? Or perhaps you'd rather contribute in your own home and in your own time, when it suits you?

We are looking for someone who has a computer and would like to help us by entering some of our paper records into an Excel Spread Sheet.

We have lots of loose-leaf documents that need to be recorded electronically. Once they are in our data base, they can be quickly and easily searched – instead of us leafing through hundreds of separate documents.

We would provide you with the whole thing all set-up in your computer, and all you would need to do would be to enter date, name, details, etc. And the work can be done whenever you feel like it.

Does this sound like you? Or perhaps you know someone who would be interested?

Please contact us if you can help – call in to the Heritage Centre any Tuesday between 10 and 3pm or send us an email on camperdowndhs@gmail.com.

OUR CHRISTMAS 'BREAK-UP'

We had a good turn-up of 31 members at 6 o'clock on Tuesday 5th December last year to celebrate the end of the year and enjoy an evening together at Timboon House. It was a perfect evening for a picnic in the gardens and, after a very interesting talk from Moira and Gerald Ryan – the current owners – all were invited to wander through the house, for which we were very grateful.

It is currently being run as a B&B as well as a private residence, and lots of work has been done in fitting out the



Sitting back and enjoying the evening and the talk.

rooms as well as the old stables to

accommodate guests in luxury. A most interesting and enjoyable way to end the year.

The Timboon House B&B website has lots of information and photographs

<http://timboonhouse.com.au/>



"Stables" accommodation.

AN APOLOGY

We published a photograph in our last Newsletter and wrongly stated that it was of Norma Wynd's brothers. We were quickly corrected. The three men are actually Norma's husband, Neil and his brothers Wally and Lindsay.

(Thanks Merle for passing on the info.)



OUR INSPIRING WOMEN – Come and see who they all are.

We have been asked a couple of times – Why have you decided to write about the women of Camperdown and District? And our answer is – because we have already written three collections of biographies covering the lives of important Scotsmen and we thought it was time that the women were recognised.

Of course, finding the women's stories has not always been easy. The men were the ones who wrote the histories and in the early days of Australian settlement, they usually only wrote about the men. The women around them – whether wives or daughters, teachers or nurses, servants or society women – were simply 'there' – part of the furniture; part of the general background of their lives. They bore the children, kept the house, provided food and clothing and that was the extent of the men's knowledge of them.

And so we began our research.....

OUR INSPIRING WOMEN

Francis Esmé Desailly – 1889-1950
Community Leader & Fundraiser

Frances Curdie – 1929-1900
Early Pioneer & Amateur Botanist

Nurse Agnes Yates – 1851-1930
Nurse & Private Hospital Operator

Elizabeth Dalziel – 1845-1942
Bullocky & Farmer

Isabella Taylor (nee Dawson) – 1842-1929
*Student of the language & culture of
Western Victorian Aborigines & champion
of their interests.*

Rosine Duverney – Unknown dates.
Innkeeper & Early Settler

Two Mrs. Glens – Contrasting Lives
Janet Glen – 1829-1883
First wife of very early pioneer
Rachel Glen – 1867-1909
Second wife of established settler.

LIST OF WRITERS and RESEARCHERS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO OUR CURRENT DISPLAY OF INSPIRING WOMEN

Maree Belyea

Sue Cole

Andrea Falk

Bob Lambell

Heather McDowell

Gillian Senior

Jan Whamond

Ray Watkins (Photographs)

POSTER DESIGNED BY

Carolyn Whamond

One of the very special women we discovered was Frances Niel Curdie who, until we began searching, was known only as Dr. Curdie's wife. She turns out to have been a very intelligent, well-read and well-educated woman. She was highly regarded by – and a personal friend of – Baron von Mueller, the Government Botanist for the then Colony of Victoria in 1853, and later Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne and founder of the National Herbarium of Victoria.

We feature the biography of Frances Curdie in this Newsletter.

Frances Niel CURDIE, nee Purves (1829-1900)

Frances (Fanny) Niel Purves was born at Thurdistoft, Caithness, Scotland on 12th May 1829 to James and Frances Purves (nee Niel). Frances had two brothers and three sisters.



The young Frances Curdie

Her father was a large scale agriculturalist in Caithness and her mother was of French descent. Frances received an excellent education at a girls' school in Edinburgh.

After what appears to be a short courtship, on August 16th 1853 Fanny Purves married Daniel Curdie at Thurdistoft, Caithness, Scotland.

She was twenty-four; personable, well-educated and serious-minded and had all the qualities he was seeking. She in return was presumably swept off her feet by the attentions of the handsome, worldly and intelligent colonial.

Daniel Curdie, born 1810, was also a native of Scotland and had trained as a doctor at Edinburgh University prior to emigrating in 1839, firstly to Sydney then shortly thereafter he overlanded south in search of suitable grazing land. In partnership with his nephew Daniel MacKinnon, he gained possession of "Tandarook" and "Jancourt". He combined agricultural pursuits with practising medicine, as he was the only doctor in the district at the time. The partners divided their lands, with Curdie taking "Tandarook", where by 1851 he had improved the land and built a cottage allowing him to take an extended trip touring many European countries and visiting family and friends in England and Scotland and importantly, seeking a suitable wife.

Two months later the newlyweds left London and arrived at Melbourne in January 1854. What strange sights and experiences greeted the now pregnant Frances – a town bustling with crowds of hopeful gold miners, summer heat and noise, then the long and tiring journey to her new home. "Tandarook" would be her home for the rest of her life - distant from and very different to her home in the Scottish Highlands and Edinburgh in many ways.

The original cottage was quite comfortable but as their family grew, with seven girls and three boys born between 1854 and 1872, additions and alterations continued over many years to accommodate the large family.

Cooks and housemaids were employed and occasionally nursemaids and governesses, but for the most part Frances Curdie brought up the earlier children herself and gave them their first lessons, which of course included French.

The Curdies welcomed aboriginals to their property, recognised as a safe haven when skirmishes were taking place between tribes. Frances' early letters back to Scotland indicate that aborigines were helping in the house after other staff had headed to the gold fields.

Social outlets consisted of visits to adjoining stations of friends and the MacKinnon relatives.

Frances had two sisters in Victoria, Mrs Sutherland in the North East and Mrs Agnes Turnbull in the Wimmera, both too distant to allow regular contact. Agnes Turnbull's husband died on a return visit to England and Agnes, the mother of three young children, returned and re-married a Mr Dean but unfortunately she died suddenly two years later. Frances & Daniel Curdie willingly added the three orphaned nieces to their family.

Bad times also visited Frances and Daniel when they lost two daughters aged 5 and 3 to the diphtheria epidemic of 1874. How helpless they must have felt.



Tandarook Homestead c. 1890

When their eldest daughter Mary's marriage to S. G. Tangye faltered Mary, with her three daughters, were also given refuge by her parents at "Tandarook".

Frances was very supportive of her husband as he took on positions the Hampden and District Roads Board, Railway League and Shire of Hampden. Her interest in education would have encouraged and assisted Daniel in his interest in Melbourne University and his push for a school at Camperdown. The Curdie name is synonymous with the beginning of the Presbyterian Church in the Western District and is perpetuated in the foundation stone of the now Uniting Church. The spire of this church is known as the "Curdie Spire". It was erected in 1936 from a bequest in the will of their daughter Mary Tangye, in memory of herself, her husband and her parents.

"Tandarook" played host to many important guests including educationalist James Bonwick and close friend Baron von Mueller, designer of Melbourne Botanical Gardens. The couple, being highly educated were sought after company by intellectuals of the period.

Frances' interests included botany and horticulture. She collected specimens for the National Herbarium of Victoria at Curdies River, 1887-1890, 1896; and Gellibrand 1888-1889 for Baron von Mueller, with whom she corresponded until his death in 1896. He had gifted her an inscribed copy of E. Cooper (1876) *Forest Culture and Eucalyptus trees*. Her interests complemented those of her botanist and scientist husband.



***Sprengelia incarnata* - one of the Herbarium specimens collected by Frances Curdie.**

Camperdown Heritage Centre has in its possession a seaweed collection attributed to Daniel Curdie but it is very possible that some of those specimens were actually collected by Frances.

Frances was a prolific reader and letter writer who corresponded with friends and family locally and abroad on politics and current affairs.



A very confident-looking Frances Curdie

In 1872 Frances wrote to her nephew in Scotland,

"The natives have almost disappeared from this district and there are none at the sea-coast where we go for change in summer & where they must once have been numerous – so much has civilisation done for them."

One 1934 newspaper article on Frances and Daniel Curdie states:

"It was often noted that at their hospitable table, the usual country topics, such as markets, cattle and sheep, etc., were generally absent, more intellectual subjects being liberally discussed."

The article continues:

"Mrs Curdie, resembling her husband in strength of character and breadth of sympathy, she was admirably fitted to the wife of a pioneer, bravely and cheerfully facing all the hardships and discomfort of bush life. Highly educated, the practical attention she gave to botany and horticulture caused Baron Van Mueller to regard her as one of his most enthusiastic friends. While taking a keen interest in current politics and the affairs of her native land, she closely followed the international relations of the Empire in her extensive reading of newspapers and books."

Frances (Fanny) Niel Curdie died on 25th June 1900 and is buried in Camperdown cemetery with her husband Daniel who died in 1884. Seven of her children are buried close by.



An older Frances - in mourning.



A collection of lace mourning wear in our exhibition: bonnet, gloves, collars, handkerchief and veil.



A wonderful addition to our display: A needlework sampler stitched by Frances in 1842, when she was 13 years old. Donated to us by Gina Black.



Wedding at "Tandarook" of Agnes Curdie and Archibald John Black. 1893.