



Lot 50–Kanyanyapilla, McLaren Vale

Bi-cultural Ecological and Cultural Regeneration

Newsletter No. 18, Spring 2020

Hi Everyone

News

New Banner Above

Time for an update and a winter image; last appearance for the February 2019 image and the first for Solstice 2020. Those juvenile River Redgums *Karra* are really making their presence known, some nudging 5m. Corker.

Rainfall & Planting 2020

As indicated in the Winter newsletter, this year had a great start to the planting season but then dried out in July, plummeting to only 28 mm from the average of 81 mm. Before this became obvious, the proposed 200 seedlings somehow had doubled to 400 and then trebled to 600. August back on track rainfall wise with 67mm, just above average, and September looking good. And planting can't be all head down, bum up.



Sandy & Elliot balancing on the log of life

And another two species have been introduced to L50K; *Banksia marginata* and *Banksia ornata*. Chester Schultz (Place Names Researcher) reminded me of Louise (Lewis) Piesse's 1844 article *A Descriptive Tour through Part of District C* (the Willunga Basin). Piesse was part of McLaren's 1839-40 survey team and in part he said: *Keeping along the plain four miles brings us to the grassy gully called Tartarchilla [Willunga Creek gully], ...The country in this neighbourhood is generally lightly timbered with She Oak (Casuarinae), the Honeysuckle (Banksia integrifolia), prevailing in any little hollow or gullies. The next gully is Cunyanyapella [Kanyanyapilla] in which the large tea tree (Melaleuca linariifolia) and reeds at once show that the water is permanent. There is some very good land in this gully, and it is superior to the last-mentioned gully of Tartarchilla*

Banksia integrifolia is an east coast species and botanist Martin O'Leary from the State Herbarium has confirmed that what Piesse was referring to was *Banksia marginata* *Silver Banksia*. Martin also advised that:

It probably also refers to the tree form of Banksia marginata, remnants of which occurred at the back of Aldinga Scrub not that long ago (well I collected some cones off a good tree around 30 years ago). That back end of the scrub was also swampy with remnant large old red gums (dead but young ones growing) plus a few patches of nardoo. There was also a patch of tree B. marginata down near Normanville, and extensive areas in the southeast. As the flowers were an important traditional food the description below is a nice glimpse of "farmed" Kaurna country. Banksia ornata is the only other native Banksia in SA and is not too far away in that it was part of the sand scrub vegetation between McLaren Flat and Clarendon.

The soil-sand of L50K is very similar to the sand country between McLaren Flat and Clarendon so *B. ornata* is another species for L50K. We will never know exactly what the vegetation was at L50K so I am using a combination of best available historical record, best available science and best imagination.



Banksia marginata (courtesy ANBG) & *Banksia ornata* (courtesy ANPS)

Thanks to Louise, Chester and Martin for advancing this one. See History Snippet for more on Louise.

River Redgum *Karra Eucalyptus camaldulensis*

Sometimes when planting a tree seedling there is the thought 'What does the future hold after initial survival?' About one in four seedlings don't make it out of the tree guard but from then on?

One of my favourite trees is the River Redgum *Karra*. It can have a life span of 500-1000 years, absorbs massive amounts of Co2 while producing correspondingly high volumes of O2, weighs in at 1150kg.c.m when green and 900kg when dried, has beautiful timber, a range of medicinal and utilitarian uses and it's all round ecological contribution and amenity value is well, just astounding, But it is also known as the Widow Maker because of its tendency to shed large limbs when under summer stress. Best not pitch the tent under an old fella.

Lost count but about 200 Redgums have been planted at L50K, settling in nicely for the centuries long haul. In appreciation of the tree and the L50K planting volunteers, over time I am taking them to see a magnificent one near Cambrai, my initial grow up place. Lex and I made a visit in July, that's her sitting on the ground.



Silent before the sentinel

This one is the equal second largest recorded in South Australia by eucalypt expert Dean Nicolle of Currency Creek Eucalypt Arboretum fame. It has a girth of 1400 cms at BH (Breast Height, 135cms above ground) and a height of over 30 metres (100 ft or a ten story building). A future newsletter will expand on this magnificent tree species.

Other Stuff

Residency Program

Apart from Carlotta having to return to Germany in March after only a few days on site because of Covid (good call), the residencies are ticking along nicely with three other participants Ash, Megan and Leigh visiting or staying over as and when they wish.



Leigh Corrigan on the Contemplation Stone

Although likely, I'm not necessarily expecting an immediate or defined outcome or product from the residencies; it can be a slow cooking process with whatever baker's delight on the table later.

Harris Scarfe's

Not that long ago at Harris Scarfe's you could buy just about whatever you needed, not just wanted or desired, but needed; cookware, hardware, sportswear, underwear, footwear and so on, all under the same roof. Many years ago in the pastoral country I came across the use of the term 'Harris Scarfe's' to refer to what may also be called the farm dump. But they weren't 'dumps'; they were the repository of generations of superseded, broken or worn out stuff, along with generations of bottles, containers and so forth. What came onto the property, stayed on the property.

So, if you needed a 3/8th left handed thing me jig you went to Harris Scarfe's and more often than not it was there, somewhere. Like all storage spots, some were meticulously curated, we spend so much time curating our collection of stuff don't we, and others were, well, just a jumble.

I adopted the term to describe my storage areas, first at my home in Goodwood and now at L50K. But at L50K it was getting out of hand, spreading horizontally like three corner jacks and pricking my visual sensibilities. It had to be contained and better curated, part answer; a small storage shelter with an enclosing compound. And a lot of time to build it, sort it and store it, still in progress. But better still, use the stuff where I could.

Swamp Deck Boardwalk

Yes, why store it? Why not try and use it for what it was intended? Much of the stuff at HS has an intended use or it's off to the recycle depot or last resort, the dump. Some salvaged timber and plastic decking boards were intended for a small boardwalk to the Swamp Deck, an act of faith that in some seasons there will be much rain and a marooned Deck. Turned out the timber wasn't up to the job so new had to be purchased and what would have taken an hour to store the decking took a week to use in a build. But the sense of satisfaction and practical application is immense.



We'll be havin' some fun, (Under the boardwalk), people walking above

Thanks to Dani who helped dig footing holes, mixing concrete and laying the deck.

Happening in the Hood

Branson Road Bituminising

Over the five years I've been at L50K, four vehicles have crashed into the corner fence and one into the Stobie pole adjacent the front gate. Two have missed crashing by centimetres and there have been hundreds of idiots playing silly buggers, fishtailing or screaming around the dirt corner. Gives a bit of jolt each time it occurs and fear of injury to innocents.

Council has been responsive to this problem initially with chevrons, reflectors and signage but the long term aim has been to seal the corner which after due process occurred in July. And not just the corner, Branson has been bituminised all the way to Main Road.



The stone is laid with the truck reversing, quite skilled driving really

Winter Watering

Grape production in the region is supported by the use of recycled water from the Christies Beach Wastewater Treatment Plant. Obviously water demand is higher in summer and lower in winter, summer demand exceeding daily availability so water has to be stored in large expensive, engineered lagoons. But what better way to store the water than in the ground where it is needed, so vineyards are irrigated in winter to boost soil moisture levels ahead of summer. We had some frosty mornings in August and in a vineyard near me, the water froze coming out of the risers providing elegant ice sculptures into the mid-morning.



Photo courtesy Anne Binns

History Snippet

Louis (Lewis) James Piesse

Piesse comes to our attention as a surveyor's assistant in the McLaren survey team for District C (Willunga Region) in 1839. He recorded some Kaurna language whilst there and about 75 words were published in the *South Australian Colonist* in 1840 making a valuable contribution to our contemporary knowledge. He recorded several place names in the Willunga Basin which he also located onto Sections, very helpful.

Who was he? Louis Piesse sounds French but no he was English, born and bred, and Lewis the pronunciation. Born in London in 1814 he came to South Australia in 1838 and was soon part of the survey party. In 1844-46 he was Storekeeper in Charles Sturt's expedition into the interior on his ill-fated search for the fabled inland sea, taking a whale boat with him. The boat was abandoned near Depot Glen north of Tibooburra. The noted explorer John McDouall Stuart, a colleague in McLaren's survey team, was also on Sturt's expedition.

Storekeeper was a respected and responsible position; Piesse doled out the daily rations to men near starvation suffering scurvy. Sturt's second-in-command James Poole died of scurvy near Depot Glen.

Piesse had one brother, Francis, in South Australia and another, Charles, in Western Australia. Another Septimus was a perfumer back in London, one of his scents being *Kiss Me Quick*. Louis left the colony soon after the Sturt expedition but had made several contributions to the public discourse while here and had apparently visited other Australian colonies.

He went to India and resided in Calcutta for an undisclosed period of time where he married Emma Hatheson in February 1848. He visited Timor, most likely that year, as an account of his journey was published in the *South Australian Gazette and Mining Journal* in January 1849. Part measure of the man and his interaction here with Aboriginal people can be gauged from his writing:

SLAVERY —Slavery prevails, but I must do the Dutch the justice to say, in its mildest form. I am even willing to admit that, in comparison with the life they would lead with the tribes in the condition of many of the slaves. Still it is bad in principle. No man has any inherent right to sell and buy his fellow-man. He (God) hath made of one blood all nations of men that dwell upon the earth, and the history of nations proves that it is a dangerous power to entrust to any people, however superior they may be in intelligence, and however they may boast of their civilization and Christianity. In fact it is one out of many examples that may be cited to shew that what is bad in principle, however it may be glossed over or speciously defended, is vicious in practice.

He concluded:

The Dutch are bad colonisers even to a proverb, but their government of Copang [Kupang] is something more, it is not worthy of the name of government, it is a system of mismanagement, guided by a low, crooked, wretched policy, that stamps them with indelible disgrace.—Calcutta Englishman

His occupation whilst in India is reported to have been an engraver of fine silver and a tea merchant. In Adelaide he had also been a land agent; what divergent occupations!

He was living in retirement at Dehra Doon (Dehradun) when he died in 1881. This town is in a valley that lies between the Himalayas and the Shivaliks, a far cry from our outback flat lands. A quaint topographical/linguistic connection is that the Indian town is also referred to as Doon Valley (Doon Vale) to our McLaren Vale (McLaren Valley).

Little would he be to know but his contribution to our historical understanding is invaluable, he was one of the few who recorded/wrote about the place apart from crops and fences. If you would like a copy of Piesse's *Descriptive Tour through Part of District C*, let me know.

Emma, his widow, returned to Adelaide to live with friends where she died in 1886. She was buried in the Payneham Cemetery.

History Writing - Marsden Szwarcbord Foundation

Susan Marsden, former State Historian, and husband Michael Szwarcbord have established the Marsden Szwarcbord Foundation (MSZF) to:

Address a significant cultural and funding gap in Australia by establishing a philanthropic organisation to directly fund the production of historical literature.

It actively promotes and helps to enrich Australian culture. As one of the few philanthropic organisations in the country supporting history, we focus on historical writing in a great variety of forms, media, and audiences. A registered charity, we support literature, establish grant programs to enable writers of works of cultural, artistic and historic merit. We have sponsored projects including an Aboriginal archive, oral histories, a history fellowship, and education programs.

Sue is a former colleague when I was inaugural Secretary of the South Australian Heritage Committee in the 'old days' 1978-81. She has also braved camping over at L50K on a cold night. For further information on the Foundation see: <https://www.facebook.com/MSzFoundation/>

Cheers Gavin

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