

# ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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## NEWSLETTER

No. 98 JUNE, 2013

### THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ALFRED WILLIAM CLARK, VICTORIAN POLICE OFFICER (1873 - 1895) Orbost's Second Policeman

- by Lois Crisp

#### THE SEARCH BEGINS

When Judith Hunt, a born and bred Orbost district resident, became interested in her family connections, imagine her surprise to find that her great-grandfather was a very early policeman at Bendoc, and later, the second policeman at Orbost.

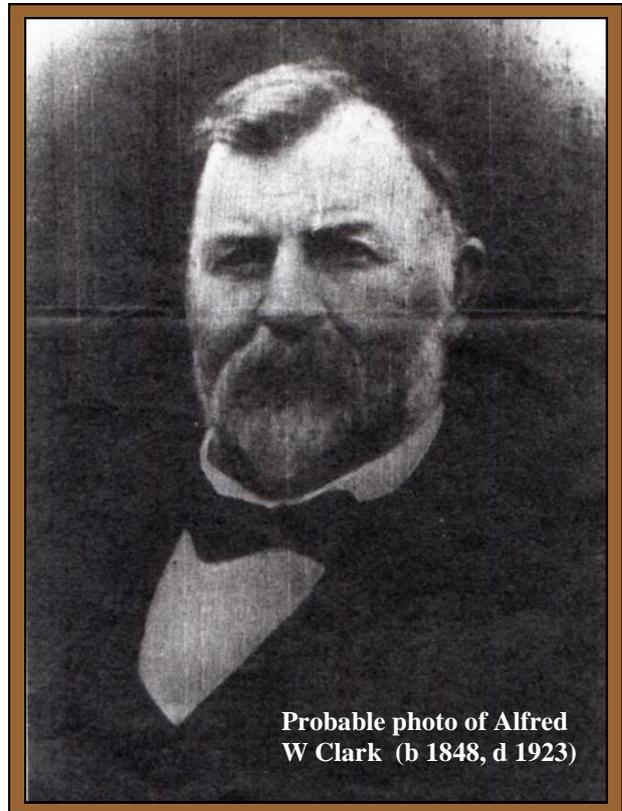
**The first policeman was Mounted Constable William Allen Priestley, appointed to the new station of Orbost on 17th August 1886.**

Judith Hunt's father was the son of Rose Kendall (nee Clark), one of the three children of Alfred William Clark's first marriage to survive to adulthood.

#### ALFRED WILLIAM CLARK

Alfred William Clark was born in 1848 at Leura near Camperdown (Victoria), to John Clark and Maria (nee Bishop), the seventh of nine children. John and Maria Clark had migrated from Gloucestershire with their first five children born between 1832 and 1840, sometime after the 1841 England Census was taken.

Their next child, Elizabeth, was born in Australia in July 1845. At the time of the



Probable photo of Alfred  
W Clark (b 1848, d 1923)

baptisms of Elizabeth, Alfred and younger brother Henry at Kilnoorat Presbyterian Church

just north-west of Camperdown, in 1850, the family was living at Leura and John was employed as a dairyman.

Both parents died in 1860 when Alfred was 12 years old. Five of his siblings were then in their 20's and all were living at home. Their father's estate was shown as £15,000.

#### **BUTCHER, DEALER, VICTUALLER**

By 1870, Alfred Clark was listed in the Council Rate book as a butcher, leasing a house and shop, and in 1873 as a dealer leasing a house and stable. On 23rd August 1870, he married a young widow, Kate Hull, whose first husband had died shortly after their marriage in 1868. (Kate's father was William Wright, one of the trustees of Alfred's mother's accounts so the Wrights were well known to Alfred's family).

On his marriage certificate, Alfred's occupation is shown as 'Victualler'.

Alfred and Kate had two children while they lived at Camperdown, Alfred James (born 1871) and Liliias Victoria (born 1873).

#### **MOUNTED CONSTABLE**

Later in 1873, Alfred joined the police force and was posted to Cranbourne. His Victorian Police Form 15 (Record of Conduct and Service) gave his registered number as 2542 and his date of appointment as 22nd August 1873. He was then aged 25 years, 5 feet 9 inches in height, with grey eyes and fair hair. His 'calling' had been 'dealer'. His official title was Alfred Clark - Mounted Constable. No doubt he was well used to handling horses before he joined the police force.

Another son, William John was born at Cranbourne but died within two years. A daughter, Rose, was possibly born there too.

Alfred's independent spirit was soon to become evident. Even though every report on him remarked on his intelligence and excellence as a constable and bushman, he was guilty of so-called misdemeanours. Consequently, on 18th March 1878, he was moved from Cranbourne to the Depot. The conduct form states, "*His removal rendered necessary through his own misconduct*". Another form, dated 5th April, noted "***This is a hardworking zealous and well-conducted Man and I am sorry to lose him from my district but his own indiscretion has rendered his removal necessary***".

#### **BENDOC**

Shortly afterwards, he was transferred to Gippsland, banished you might say, to Bendoc.

He certainly suffered personal tragedies there. Firstly, five year old Liliias died on 5th August 1878. An infant male born in 1880 at Bendoc also died. Another son, Thomas (born 1882) died on 31st October 1886, followed on 6th December 1886 by the death of Alfred's wife, Kate Clark. All are buried at Bendoc.

This left Alfred Clark with Alfred Henry (aged 15), Rose (aged 9), and Thomas (aged 4).

While at Bendoc, Constable Clark was charged with misconduct in relation to the escape of a prisoner, David Frederick Stanford. Stanford escaped "*whilst en route from Bendoc to Bairnsdale*" on 4th February 1880. The prisoner was in temporary charge of Constable Meagher (?) at the time. Clark pleaded not guilty but was held responsible and received a "severe reprimand".

**Still, his Conduct and Efficiency report of 1882 stated that he was a very intelligent and excellent constable and splendid bushman, deserving promotion and transfer from Bendoc.**

#### **WALHALLA, TOOMBON**

It was in August 1887 that he was granted a move from Bendoc and took up duty at Walhalla until a Station at Toombon, a little north of Walhalla, was formed. It was on 30th September 1887 that he took charge of the new station at Toombon.

#### **MARRIAGE TO CATHERINE (KATE) SIMPSON**

Two months later, on 29th November 1887, Alfred married Catherine Simpson at St John's church, Maffra. Catherine was aged 22 and had been born at Cabanandra near Bonang to Thomas and Mary Ann (nee Standen) and was well used to living in remote locations. It is possible that Catherine Simpson was housekeeping for Alfred. (Her life has been documented by Jenni York in Orbost & District Historical Society Newsletter 85, March 2012).

#### **ORBOST**

After three months at Toombon, he asked for a transfer to Orbost and took charge of that station on 11th February 1888.

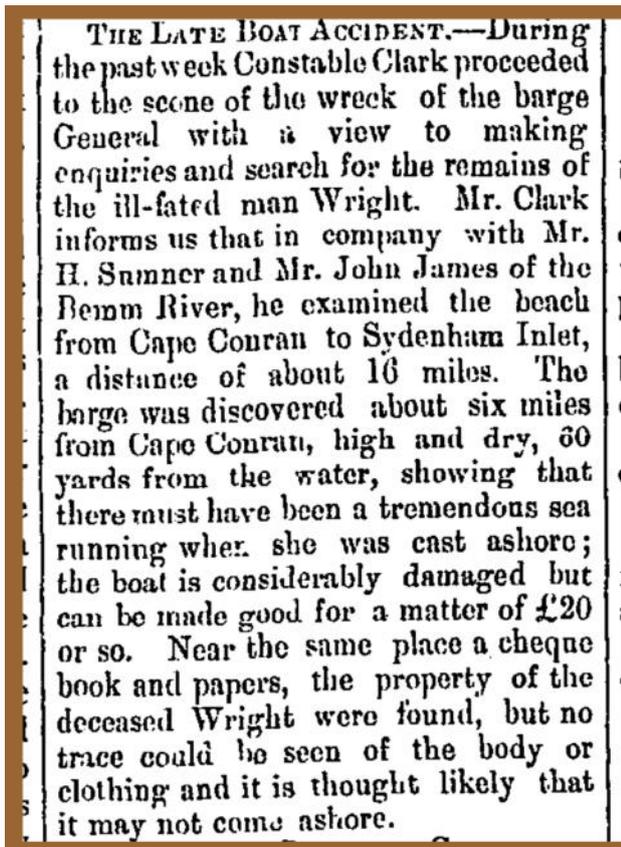
On 30th April 1888, Sam Richardson of the Brodribb Saw Mill notes in his diary that Const. Clark was present at the Magisterial

Inquiry into the death of "Old Bill Benson" at Brodribb. The Magistrate was Jas. Cameron.

During 1889 and 1890, he was recommended a number of times for promotion and on 21st October 1890, he learned that his promotion to **Senior Sargeant** was to date from 1st December.

Among his many duties at Orbost were activities such as the search for Arthur Williams. Arthur is described in the Snowy River Mail 6th September 1890 as a lad of 18 years old with "weak intellect and troubled with a speech impediment". While helping his father on the farm about four miles from Orbost, he was sent home with two draught horses. He failed to reach home and when his father could not find him the next day, Constable Clark at once set out to look for the lad. Search parties were sent out and it was another four to five days before the lad was found in the Buchan area.

Several weeks later, as reported in the Snowy River Mail 20th September 1890, Const. Clark was again out searching for a lost person, this time, for a man named James Wright.



**THE LATE BOAT ACCIDENT.**—During the past week Constable Clark proceeded to the scene of the wreck of the barge General with a view to making enquiries and search for the remains of the ill-fated man Wright. Mr. Clark informs us that in company with Mr. H. Sumner and Mr. John James of the Rimm River, he examined the beach from Cape Couran to Sydenham Inlet, a distance of about 16 miles. The barge was discovered about six miles from Cape Couran, high and dry, 60 yards from the water, showing that there must have been a tremendous sea running wher. she was cast ashore; the boat is considerably damaged but can be made good for a matter of £20 or so. Near the same place a cheque book and papers, the property of the deceased Wright were found, but no trace could be seen of the body or clothing and it is thought likely that it may not come ashore.

It becomes obvious from a letter to the Snowy River Mail 9th August 1890, that there was concern about the intermittent lack of police protection in the district. "The want of another

*Police Constable for Orbost continues to be felt. Owing to the occasional absence of our esteemed and efficient representative of the law and order, Constable Clark, the town is sometimes for weeks together without Police Protection, a very undesirable condition of things in a place such as this. The local Bench are frequently unable from this cause, to properly carry out the law etc., etc...."*

While serving in Orbost, two offences were recorded against Alfred. One occurred in December 1890 - "**Castrating colts and receiving remuneration for his services**" (the focus being on receiving remuneration); and on 20th January 1892 - "Disobeying an order [which had been] published in the P G [Police Gazette] of 6th January 1892 page 3. whereby it was required certain information should be furnished to the Electoral Inspector and a Report of having done so, to the [Supt.] of Police". Alfred pleaded guilty and was "severely cautioned".

Also in 1892, Alfred's wife Kate (Catherine) gave birth to twins who both died at one day old. She already had two other boys and had "lost" a baby girl at seven days old. One can't help wondering what part all this family drama played in Alfred's neglect of his paper work.

#### **RESIGNATION FROM THE POLICE FORCE**

After seven years in Orbost, Alfred decided to tender his resignation. This took effect on 11th April 1895. The Snowy River Mail 3rd March 1895 reports, "Senior Constable Clark, who is retiring from the police force on compensation after 22 years of active service has been informed that his resignation has been accepted, and expects to be relieved shortly. Mr Clark's many friends in and around Orbost will be pleased to learn that he has no intention of leaving this district, having taken a farm on the Snowy River".

#### **CUSTOMS OFFICER AT THE BORDER**

However, not long after, in 1895 (see Jenni York's newsletter March 2012), Alfred moved his family back to the Bendoc area where he was to become employed as a customs officer. A report in the Snowy River Mail 20th May 1901 shows that "Messrs. Clarke (sic) and Porter, customs officers of the Border, seized at Cann, 70 pigs which had been smuggled over the Border."

## DELEGATE

The Clarks had settled on a 800 acre property which they called "Leura", located six miles from Delegate, where they had a seven roomed dwelling, orchard, barn, stable and yards. This property was advertised for sale on 18th March 1914 in Snowy River Mails leading up to this date.

**RICH AGRICULTURAL AND  
GRAZING LAND**

— — —  
**Delegate, N.S.W.,  
Wednesday, March 18, 1914**

— — —  
At 10.30 a.m.

**P**ERCY JONAS, Bombala, and J. W. BIRD and CO., Orbost (in conjunction) are instructed by Alfred Clark, Esq., who is leaving the district, to sell at Delegate, as above, his well-improved property,

"LEURA,"

Consisting of 800 acres of splendid agricultural and grazing land, 6 miles from Delegate, well watered and subdivided, 7-roomed dwelling, orchard, barn, stable, yards, etc.

— — —

Full particulars on application to the auctioneers.

## WALLAUGARAUGH AND THEN TO TOORA

From Delegate, the Clarks moved to a property at Wallaugaraugh. An article in the Snowy River Mail 10th March 1916 gives a partial outline of his life from his first appointment at Bendoc until his final move to Toora (South Gippsland) where he again named his property "Leura" in memory of his childhood home. Two of his sons remained in the Wallaugaraugh area and are buried at Gypsy Point. A third son, a drover, eventually moved to Bega.

Alfred Clark died on 16th November

1923 at "Leura", Toora, aged 75 years. His wife, Kate (nee Catherine Simpson), died in 1938, aged 73 years, at Wonthaggi.

**SOME PIONEERS.**

Mr and Mrs Alfred Clark and their family passed through Orbost this week en route for Toora, where Mr Clark has purchased a farm. Two of his sons remain in the district, and will carry on the business on Mr Clark's property at Wallaugaraugh. It is just forty years since Mr Clark arrived at Bendoc, and took up his duties as a mounted constable. His district then included Mallacoota, the Cann, and Orbost, what there was of it. On this locality becoming settled, Mr Clark was removed to Orbost, and remained here for ten years or so until he retired from the force and went on to the land. After carrying on a farm on the Marlo road for a short time, he removed to Bendoc, and remained there until a year or two ago, when he changed to Wallaugaraugh. Mr and Mrs Clark must be reckoned among the oldest pioneers of this district, and are widely known and respected from the Snowy River to the Border. They have thirteen children, including those by Mr Clark's first wife, and Mrs Clark, who is very far from being an old woman yet, has seven sons, two of whom have gone to fight for their country. They will be an acquisition to the South Gippsland township they are removing to, and we cannot allow them to leave here without some reference to their long and honorable connection with Croajingo-land and Snowy River.

## FIRST SIX POLICMEN AT ORBOST

PRIESTLEY, William Allen	1886 - 1888
CLARK, Alfred	1888 - 1895
HALL, John	1895 - 1898
CURTAIN, Michael	1898 - 1905
ANSTEE, Leonard George	1905 - 1910
SIMPSON, Arthur James	1910 - 1927

## SOURCES USED IN THIS NEWSLETTER

- Births, deaths, marriages registrations (NSW & Victoria)
- Snowy River Mails, with help from Lindsay Thomson
- Information supplied by Judith Hunt (Orbost), Dot De Geus (Mallacoota), Victorian Police Museum, and Camperdown Historical Society .