



President's Report

Well, it's that time of year again for the first newsletter this year. After torrential rain dumped around 200mm on the district on the night of Friday 4 February and into Saturday, many locals woke to find water lapping at the door, driveways rutted and washed away, mud and debris blocking roads, and drains unable to cope. Those less fortunate suffered internal damage to their homes and businesses. It was a bad note to start the year. Now that the rain is over it is down to business. The Caretaker hut drains are now finished. Work on the rest of the drains around the huts will be started in the next month or two. New corrugated iron roofing has now been completed on the Big Shed, Caretakers hut and huts 07 and 08.

Now we can go forward with the solar array for the Big Shed. We are looking at getting a 5000W 24 Volt system, which will supply all the power needs for lights, fridge, projector and amps speakers. A big thank you to Jim McNabb for getting the Caretakers hut 12 Volt power supply up and charging and running again. Painting/spraying of the huts with the recommended conservation paint is in progress. I would like to thank the members of the Friends of Kurth Kiln, Parks Victoria Gembrook office staff and all participants of the festival, the dignitaries, the groups, the volunteers and the visitors for their willingness to help and participate, and the time and effort they gave to make the 2011 Heritage Festival such a success.



I have worked on our old 4hp Ronaldson Tippet petrol engine. It is now up and running, with a new Champion D21 spark plug.

The Queens Birthday weekend Historic Machinery Festival was a great event, both for the public and for the Port Phillip Historical Machinery Society Members. We sat down on Saturday night to a roast dinner with some vintage engines running in the background. A good three days was had by all. I would like to thank our Friends Group members and Parks Victoria Gembrook staff on behalf of the Port Phillip Historical Machinery Society for their help over the weekend.

On Monday 20 June the Gembrook Primary School Grades 3/4 Students came for the day and helped with a Revegetation Project funded by the Bendigo Bank (see page 4). Henriette and our Ranger Andy Musgrove did a great job organising the activity. Following the field work a sausage sizzle barbeque was a welcome break during which Kate Drummond from Melbourne Water gave the students a talk on the health of our waterways and the

connectedness of the Victorian waterways. Alfred spoke about the Kurth Kiln history and gave a short guided tour. After lunch Ursula led a bushwalk along the waterways through our natural bush environment.

Well, that's it for now. So, a big thank you again to all the volunteers, to Parks Victoria and to our Friends of Kurth Kiln members for their ongoing conservation work on our historic site and its natural environment.

Gary Pendlebury

Coming Events

The Friends of Kurth Kiln meet regularly on the second Saturday of the month for a meeting and maintenance Working Bee at Kurth Kiln, plus other days as required. Friends and Visitors are welcome.

July	9	August	13	September	10
October	8 AGM - Flora Survey 5 Seniors Walk	November	12	December	10 combined Friends Groups Christmas Breakup

The 2012 Kurth Kiln Heritage Festival has been set for Sunday 15 April

WE WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS: Max, Pam and Jessica Lewis, Graeme & Heather Bruce Kathleen, Maris/Arnold, Annie Wylaars and Family

CONTENTS

PAGE 1
President Report
Gary Pendlebury
Coming Events
New Members

PAGE 2
Ranger's Report
Andy Musgrove
Eucalyptus
P. O'Shaughnessy
Editorial
Alfred Klink

PAGES 3-4-5-6
AROUND THE KILN
Heritage Festival
Re-vegetation
Henriette v Niekerk
Kurth K Flooding
P'ham School
SOS Students
Machinery Fest
by Ursula Klink
Free Trees
by Ron Clarke

PAGE 7
AMONGST FRIENDS
A New Program
by Clinton Muller
The Bio Link
Adam Shalekoff

PAGE 8
REFLECTIONS
Beenak Tragedy
by Ted Gramlich
Membership Form
Application & Renewal

This Newsletter is published by the Friends of Kurth Kiln: a group of people concerned with the preservation of the heritage in the Kurth Kiln Site.

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Ranger's Report

Hello all, I hope you are keeping warm this cold winter already. It certainly has been a wet start in our Parks this year starting with the floods on the Black Saturday Memorial weekend (a little ironic). The Bunyip State Park received 165mm of rain in 24 hours. I was working that weekend and every creek crossing had breached its banks through the Park causing significant road and asset damage.



Recovery from this event is still the priority for us at Gembrook, and Parks Victoria has implemented this year, its Seasonal Track Closures which includes the Four Wheel Drive and Trail Bike Tracks in the north of the Bunyip. This is to prevent further damage on these tracks and protect the watercourses until the weather allows access later in the year. The tracks will be open again near the Melbourne Cup weekend in November.

In a nutshell some of the projects that have been completed recently and some that are just around the corner include:

- Lawsons Falls Picnic Ground completed - a Fire Recovery Project
- Gates installed around the Four Wheel Drive Track Network
- Helmeted Honeyeater release of 10 birds in the Tonimbuk Road area
- Predator Control Program is winding up with 250 bait stations across the Bunyip Ridge Fire Area. Results to be compiled soon.
- Burn Planning and Preparedness continues for the up and coming summer.
- Nash Creek Camping Ground re-development is due to be completed by the end of next month
- Kurth Kiln gate strengthening and Track closures to commence over the next few months.

Plenty of work for us to keep us busy for a while yet. I have had the chance to catch up with a few groups about the Friends Group Support Plan and twelve month calendar which has been great to get a draft down on paper. This helps guide activities and provides good information to support any applications for Parks Victoria Grants which have opened recently. They are due on the 17th August and the process for getting an application is to contact me and we can get things started. There are a couple of Groups I still have to catch up with to establish a similar plan. I am looking forward to working with you all over the next 12 months and getting into our great outdoors.

Regards Andy
Contact Ranger
Mobile 0428 148 275

Editorial

We take pleasure in presenting our Issue 24 of *The Kiln Newsletter*. A busy and eventful first six month of this year is reflected in this publication. Our Heritage Festival with the historic Stage Coach supported by the Yarra Ranges Council on page 3, the Port Phillip Historic Machinery Club event on the Queens Birthday weekend on page 7 and the Revegetation Project with the Gembrook State Primary School funded by the Bendigo Bank on 20 June on page 4, plus activity reports and reflections. Funding grants are the life-blood of an active volunteers group. They provide motivation and core schedules to build activities around. Our current grants implemented, ongoing or pending are: Festival Support - Bendigo Bank; Repeat Publication - GVEHO; Waterchannel Interpretation Boards - Shire of Cardinia; 2012 Festival Grant - Shire of Cardinia; Gas Producer Interpretation Display - Public Records Office; Heritage Assessment - National Library; Equipment - FAHCSIA. Alfred.

Conservation Work

Eucalypts

Pat O'Shaughnessy sent us the following summary of his presentation at Kurth Kiln in May. Many people wanted to know more about our native vegetation and we hope that Pat will come back one day.



Eucalypts are found in almost every vegetation type in Australia excluding only the highest peaks of the Australian alpine country, rainforest communities and arid areas. Even in arid areas they line the ephemeral water courses.

There are over 850 species in the genera *Eucalyptus*, *Corymbia* and *Angophora*. (Only 4 species can be found overseas, namely in New Guinea, the Philippines and Timor).

Eucalypts occupy a range of habitats including alpine areas, moist temperate areas, and the low rainfall zones. They vary greatly in form, ranging from massive trees almost a 100m high in the case of mountain ash, to low shrubs about 5 m high in the case of *E. pauciflora* (snow gum). Some are entirely gum barked others are entirely rough barked. They have adapted to fire in a variety of ways, ranging from massive seed shed in the case of mountain ash, to the production of epicormic shoots from the trunk and main branches in many other species. As a group they are still in the process of evolution as indicated by the many viable hybrids that can result from cross pollination.

Eucalypts in the field are not easy to identify as it can be difficult to match fallen fruits and buds on the ground with those on the tree often 20 - 30 m above. But with a bit of effort you can obtain a working knowledge of local eucalypts. Identification depends on the type of bark, type of leaves, shape of the flower buds and the shape and arrangements of the fruits. In eucalypts, the petals and sepals of normal flowers form a cap or operculum and this is shed and the stamens form the flower. *Corymbia ficifolia*, the West Australian flowering gum, is a good example of how spectacular the flowers can be.

Around the Kurth Kiln area a number of Victorian species can be found such as *E. obliqua* (messmate stringy bark), *E. viminalis* (manna gum), *E. dives* (broad-leafed peppermint) and *E. cypellocarpa* (mountain grey gum).

For those who may be interested in learning to identify eucalypts in their natural state, a good book is "Trees of Victoria and Adjoining Areas" by Leon Costermans, 6th edition reprinted in 2008. If interested, I can obtain a copy for you, so let Ursula or Alfred know.

Finally a plea to farmers - a temporary fence put around old trees for about five years would allow seed from these old paddock trees to germinate and produce saplings which would grow beyond grazing reach, thus maintaining the Australian landscape.

Around the Kiln

The 2011 Kurth Kiln Heritage Festival

The Friends of Kurth Kiln sincerely thank Chris Templer, O'Shannassy Ward, Shire of Yarra Ranges, for organising funding to help make the 2011 Kurth Kiln Heritage Festival a success.

April is traditionally the time for our annual festival; beyond the summer-days of total fire-ban and before the rains start. That is the theory, anyway. Following five days of beautiful sunshine it started to rain heavily the night before. But the Gods took pity on us. Sunday was overcast and dry. By 10am everything was ready, machinery unwrapped, displays uncovered, tents ready for trade and the blacksmith forge ablaze. Volunteers were chatting with each other, admiring their various displays and, as the Weathered Heads Bluegrass Band started tuning their instruments, the first



visitors started to drift in. At the stroke of 11am Cr. Chris Templer from the Yarra Ranges Council officially opened the



displays of the Gembrook Craft group and the vintage tractors. The kids really took to the ball game and the face-painting show. But the highlight of the day was definitely



Cr Chris Templer with his mother Alicia, who is very involved with the Hoddles Creek Red Cross

festival, commenting on the valuable work volunteers do and the necessity to support such activity in the local community. The Hoddles Creek Red Cross group again catered for food and drinks with a range of beverages, sweets and barbeque selections. The band, having found their rhythm, provided lively entertainment. The wood-chopping and the blacksmith demonstrations proved to be a popular attraction, as did the



the colourful stage-coach robbery, enacted by the horses and riders from Mill Valley Ranch, in which a box of seedlings (intended for a re-vegetation project later with the Gembrook Primary School students, see next page) was stolen. This was followed by a fast game of Siberian Huskies racing down the Kurth Kiln straight.

It was a fun-filled day and everyone of the 350 plus people seemed to have a good time. Our thanks to all the participants and especially the Rangers and Staff of Parks Victoria Gembrook.

PS. The box of seedlings has since been recovered. AK

Re-vegetation at Kurth Kiln - 20 June 2011

The Friends of Kurth Kiln invited the students of Gembrook Primary School to take part in a re-vegetation project at Kurth Kiln Picnic area. The principal thought it was a good idea, and it was decided that Grades 3 & 4 A, B and C classes would take part in the project.

Although the weatherman forecasted wind, rain and hail for Monday, the day turned out to be a lovely mild winter's day at Kurth Kiln. When I drove up the road to the Kiln, I was so pleased to see the sun reflecting on all the water puddles in the road and there was not a single cloud in the sky. The teachers arrived at 9:00 and the students were dropped off around 9:30. They were all full of energy and ready for planting. A couple of parents were so kind to take part in the day's activities and they helped supervising when everybody arrived.



We divided the students into two groups. Ursula, some parents and teachers took the first group for a bushwalk, while the second group started with the planting.



Ranger Andy Musgrove demonstrated to the group how to dig a hole, plant the tree, put the stakes and protective cover around the plant and water it. He also put great emphases on safety while digging the holes and working with the bamboo stakes. Then the

fun started. The students divided into groups of three, dug holes, planted the trees, watered them and soon there was not a clean hand in sight. Some of them even had mud on

their faces, but they all enjoyed it and did a really good job. Jasper had marked out the area to be planted and put all the potted seedlings on the right spots so there was no



confusion as to where to dig the holes for the new plants.

When the first group arrived back from the bushwalk they all had morning tea, and Alfred spoke to the students about the history of Kurth Kiln and the charcoal driven motorcars. He let them handle pieces of charcoal and some of them even drew pictures on cardboard. The two groups then changed roles. By 12 o'clock all 200 plants were in the ground and watered. Well done to all the students!

During the week prior to the re-vegetation day, the students had drawn lovely pictures of trees, flowers and slogans on the protective covers, which now made a fantastic display



After a lovely barbeque lunch, prepared by Ursula, Garry and some parents, Katie Drummond from Melbourne Water



spoke to the students about the waterways, catchment areas, erosion, pollution and nature conservation amongst other things. The students interacted very well and I guess the paths for some future rangers and nature conservationists were laid. At the end of it Certificates of Appreciation for the work done were handed to nominated students for each of the three classes



The last activity for the day was a long bushwalk where all of us took part. It was a lovely walk and Katie spoke again to the students about farming practices and the importance of undergrowth next to the rivers. The children were picked up by their parents between 2:30 and around 3:00 and all of them said they want to come again.

Thank you very much for everyone who took part in the day's activities and made it such a success, and thank you to the Bendigo Bank for their donation to cover the cost of the project.

Henriëtte van Niekerk

Flooding at Kurth Kiln

After relentless rain, lightning and thunder, starting on the evening of Friday 4 February the Tomahawk Creek



resembled the Yarra River! Sightseers came to watch the torrent of water flow over the bridge-dam on Beenak Road.



Only a few intrepid (or perhaps foolhardy) people in four wheel drives crossed the bridge. We watched and we hoped and prayed that the bridge had not lost some of its supporting stability.



The dam at the back of the shed had overflowed and some of the water clearly had run through the sheds.

Checking the Thornton Bridge, we found the Tomahawk water barely below the bridge, from one end to the other.



It took a couple of days for the water to recede before it was safe to walk along the Tomahawk Track and check the Tomahawk Creek bridge. It had stood the test of the torrent. Slowly the vegetation along the Tomahawk Creek Track is recovering.

School Visit

Our SOS visit to Kurth Kiln Regional Park

On June 3rd our Year 9 SOS class from Pakenham Secondary College went to Kurth Kiln. We were there to find out about the history of Kurth Kiln, the bush environment of the Park and what activities are allowed in the Park area.



We were met by Ursula and Alfred who showed us around the kiln and inside the huts. Ursula told us about the Caretaker who lived there and Alfred showed us the gas producers and the water wheel. The huts were really interesting in that we got to see how simply people lived when they had to heat the water and have a shower that was a bag that was filled with water.

The huts were really small and really quaint! We also learnt about Ernest Kurth who designed and built the kiln. Alfred told us that the kiln was for making charcoal to fuel cars during the Second World War because petrol was rationed. He was able to explain a lot to us about the history of the kiln, how the charcoal was made in the kiln and how you had to have a special ticket to get fuel. The history of the kiln was really interesting.



We also learnt about the group they belong to called the Friends of Kurth Kiln, who work around the Park as volunteers. We were told that the trees had been cleared around the kiln area when it was built and that the Friends group had replanted a lot of them, as well as putting up fences in the park to mark off certain areas, and doing repair work to the kiln and the buildings. Alfred also told us that in the park people could bushwalk, ride horses, camp and go driving.

Our time at Kurth Kiln was an enjoyable and educational experience. The bush area is beautiful and we would like to visit again. Thank you Ursula and Alfred for showing us around and giving us a very nice morning tea.

From the year 9 SOS students Pakenham Secondary College



Machinery Festival

The two day event at Kurth Kiln was organised on the Queens Birthday weekend (Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 June) by the Port Phillip Historical Machinery Society Inc.

On Saturday, from morning until far into the night and all day Sunday, Kurth Kiln was alive with the sounds of engines, machinery motors, cars, truck, fire engines and motor cycles.



Husbands, fathers, brothers, young boys and even the ladies were fascinated looking at the engines, whilst others checked out the stalls, had their faces painted, went on treasure hunts and guided walks, tried out the jumping castle and admired the live snakes and a goanna.

At the big shed visitors watched nature videos and looked at the Kurth Kiln artifacts, the Friends of Kurth Kiln display and enjoyed delicious snacks on sale at the Hoddles Creek Red Cross tents.

The Port Phillip Historical Machinery Club awarded trophies to heritage section winners. Greg Young, Parks Victoria Ranger in Charge Gembrook Office, won the most impressive Vintage Truck prize. His 1946 Chevrolet vehicle is in immaculate condition, restored using all original parts and paint finish.



Greg showing his trophy.

Another winner was Russell Morgan. His trophy was for the best Club Exhibit. Russell owns a 1912 Triumph Motorcycle. It was purchased



some two years ago to prevent it being sold to a museum in America. It is a 225cc engine - two stroke mix fuel and has a two speed gearbox, and no clutch. I have to run and warm the engine in first gear then stop and change into second gear, using the lever mounted on the fuel tank. On the one piece handlebar is a twin lever mechanism which constantly requires moving in order to manage the fuel - air mixture whilst running. There is no kick start so you must run and bump start in conjunction with the depression lever. It has a matching pair of carbide lamps which are kept safe and will be mounted when the bike undergoes restoration.

The number plate is 1876 and is itself 100 years old though not registered to the bike. The bike is for show purposes only. It is run on every occasion that I attend and is a joy to own and ride".



Free Trees Scheme

Ron Clarke, member of the Friends of Kurth Kiln group, told us of the "Free Trees Scheme" and his involvement.

Ten or more years ago I joined a group calling themselves the "Free Tree Scheme". Land owners in various areas in Victoria would collect the seeds of native Eucalypts on their property and supply them to us together with all the necessary containers and potting mix. We propagated the Eucalypt seeds and cared for the plants and nursed them until the trees were 40cm in height. Then they would be returned to the original Landowners for planting out. We often helped with the planting.

I found it to be a very worthwhile and rewarding occupation. It was easy to do, and going to the property and helping with the planting was also very satisfying. I met some very nice people and landowners.

I grew them for about five years.

Ron Clarke



Amongst Friends Two Innovative Environment Project Programs

New Funding Program for Woori Yallock Landholders

Melbourne Water is piloting a new program, working with landholders to retain sediment and nutrients on-farm to help protect the health of waterways. The Water Sensitive Farm Design program is providing financial assistance and advice on sediment and nutrient management to graziers and horticulturalists in the Woori Yallock Creek catchment.

Water sensitive farm design is about improving the management of any part of the landscape that holds or carries water such as waterways, drains, dams, wetlands, gullies, seeps, soaks, springs, low lying or seasonally wet areas.

The innovative pilot program is part of Melbourne Water's River Health Incentives Program and is being trialled in the Woori Yallock Creek catchment initially. The Water Sensitive Farm Design program has been designed to improve on-farm management practices and support increased productivity, while helping to improve the health of waterways for the benefit of the broader community.

The program will provide incentives on a cost share basis for a broad range of works and activities designed to reduce run-off and improve the quality of water leaving properties. Eligibility for funding will be determined after a site visit to discuss ideas for works and activities. Activities considered for funding include, but are not limited to:

- Fencing off and revegetating water sensitive areas
- Farm track construction, improvement and drainage
- Shade & Shelter points away from water sensitive areas
- Erosion stabilisation and protection
- Sediment and nutrient retentions systems

The Water Sensitive Farm Design program is a healthy waterways initiative of Melbourne Water and is being delivered in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries. For more information and to express interest in participating in the program, contact **Clinton Muller** 0429 709 708 clinton.muller@melbournewater.com.au



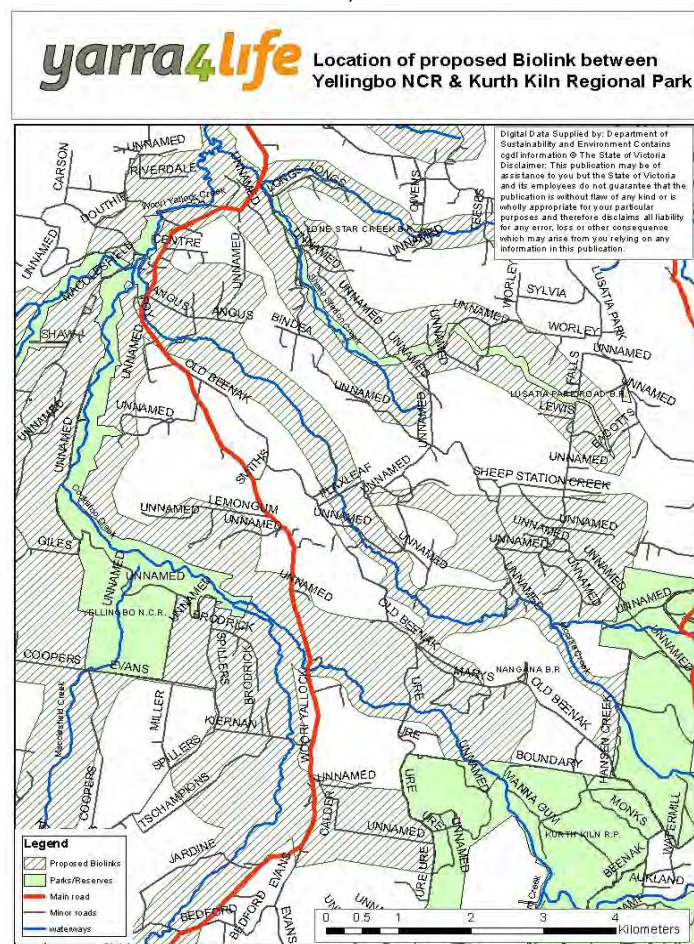
Creation of a biolink (The "Missing Link") between YNCR and Kurth Kiln

The *Judith Eardley Save Wildlife Association* has provided \$100,000 to improve the habitat around **Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve** in the Yarra Valley for Victoria's threatened bird emblem, the Helmeted Honeyeater. *JESWA's* contribution is helping to link the isolated conservation reserve to another regional park, Kurth Kiln, by protecting, improving and planting a corridor of indigenous vegetation that will enable the honeyeaters to expand their feeding and breeding territory.

JESWA was established 11 years ago by Peter Hannaford as a legacy for his late partner Judith Eardley who was an avid animal lover. In this time, *JESWA* has donated millions of dollars to a variety of projects to protect wildlife. These funds are raised mainly through a second-hand goods shop in Healesville's main street that is run entirely by volunteers.

Yarra4Life will write to all eligible landowners, inform them of their eligibility for funding and invite expressions of interest. Landowners may be eligible for funding to:

- protect habitat (by fencing to exclude stock, committing to a Covenant – for more information go to: www.themissinglink.org.au and www.jesavewildlife.org
- improve habitat (manage pest plants and animals and/or complete infill revegetation in existing remnant habitat)
- increase the area of habitat (revegetation around and between remnant habitat)



To be eligible for funding landowners will need to commit in writing to a Land Management Agreement (5 years or greater).

Adam Shalekoff,
Yarra4Life Program Co-ordinator

Reflections

A Beenak Tragedy

as told by Mr. Ted Gramlich

I stopped at the front gate and tried to imagine what the dilapidated weatherboard and fibro cottage would have looked like twenty years ago with its small but neat gardens and clean swept verandah. I turned to look at the three or four laurel trees that formed the right angle of the dirt roads at Basans corner .

Looking back towards the front of the house, I ventured through the partly open gate which had fallen away from one of its hinges and walked the fifteen paces to the front door. I had been told the story of the tragedy that happened here twenty years before, on the first day of August 1951, and had come to the house only because I was curious.

Let me pass on to you the story of the tragedy as it was told to me and with factual details since researched.

James Dodds lived at Basans Corner with his sisters Grace and Perl, his brother Leon and Grace's husband Albert Wills. It seems that James had for years worked at a sawmill in Powelltown and has been the main source of income for the household. The Dodds had no close neighbours and were two miles distant from the Beenak Post Office, which was run by Mr. James Hunter. Pearl Dodds had been Mr. Hunter's housekeeper for about fifteen years.

At about this time, James Dodds was put off at the Mill which in turn had an effect on his mental state. This probably resulted in him thinking that with no income to support the extended family its future would be grim. James Dodds took a pistol and first shot Grace who had tried to flee along the pathway to the road. She was found lying by the gate with a bullet wound to her back of her head. He then turned the gun on Albert. Leon, who was lying in bed in the sleepout, nursing a bad cold. He heard the two shots but paid no attention to them thinking that it was probably deer hunters. This line of thought most likely saved his life as James was not aware that he was there. James then walked the two miles to the Post Office where he found and shot Pearl before turning the gun on himself.

The murders were reported some time later by a timber worker passing Basans Corner who noticed Grace lying dead on the home's front path, and then travelled several miles to raise the alarm at Kurth Kiln Forestry camp. It is now sixty years since the tragedy at Beenak and a visit to Basans Corner will find no trace of the Dodds home. But a walk over the property will find the occasional fruit tree struggling to survive in what was once a productive garden.

But what of James Hunter, the Post Master who Pearl kept house for? You'll learn more about him in the next issue.

Footnote: Although unable to be proven, I was told that during legal proceedings after the tragedy, a bank savings account book was found in James Dodds' name having an amount of £52 current. This amount would have kept them all for a long time in 1951.

Friends of Kurth Kiln
Post Office Box 169
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Friends of Kurth Kiln

a part of the Friends Groups of *Parks Victoria*
Application & Renewal for Membership

I / we

M
First Name Last Name

hereby apply (renew) for membership in the "Friends of Kurth Kiln Group"

My/our membership category is: (tick one ✓)

- A Friend Membership at \$5:00 annual fee
 A Group Membership at \$10:00 annual fee.

My/our current address is:

City State Postcode

Telephone Fax

E-mail:

Signature: Date ... / ... / 20.....

The following details are helpful in the administration of the Group and for future reference. You may furnish this information at your discretion:

Occupation/Profession

Hobbies: age

Marital status: married single other.

Spouse's Name:

Children: under the age of 18:

We will immediately place your name on our mailing list and send you our current meeting dates, Newsletter and minutes. Payment of your Membership fee can be made at the next Meeting, or included with this application and sent to:

Friends of Kurth Kiln, Post Office Box 169 WOORI YALLOCK Vic. 3139

Telephone/Fax (03) 5967 4201;

E-mail: auk@c031.aone.net.au

Postage

To