

THE YALLOURN BAND & THE BILL FLEMING STORY

FROM THE NEWSPAPERS 1934

MORWELL ADVERTISER 7th JUNE 1934 PAGE 9

INTRODUCTION:

The following news article, regarding the Annual General Meeting of the Yallourn & District Band, was published in the 'Morwell Advertiser' in June 1934 and reported on the highlights, activities and financial situation of the band during that year.

The Yallourn Band is an absorbing story in the history of the town; and this website and various other texts refer to the importance of the band throughout the six decades of Yallourn's existence. The origins of the Y&DB are not exactly clear but it is believed that several local workers, with a love of music, contemplated forming a band as early as 1921. The idea took hold and with the patronage of Sir John Monash and recruitment of other enthusiastic musicians the band became a reality, flourished and, in time, gained a reputation as 'one of the best' in Victoria.

While Charles Turner is the most celebrated of all Yallourn bandsmen, the story which is included in this article centres on another of the other great contributors to the musical culture of the town of Yallourn - Mr Bill Fleming.

Bill Fleming was an extraordinary character and this story highlights his dedicated contribution to the Yallourn music scene and his experiences as a soldier and a POW during WW2.

THE NEWSPAPER ARTICLE :

JUNE 7th 1934

MORWELL ADVERTISER

PAGE : 9

Yallourn and District Band.

At the Annual Meeting held last Tuesday evening, the following office bearers were elected:

- President: C. Boehm and G. Dickson Brown.
- Secretary: N. P. Bolger.
- Asst. Secretary: W. Fleming.
- Committee representing the public: P. Harry, G. N. Bedford, E. Garret, H. Lynch. J. E. Turvey.
- Trustees: T. Hill and W. M. McRitchie.
- Auditors: J. Cullen and T. E. McGowan.
- V.B.L. Representative: H. A. L. Binder.
- The Committee representing the bandsmen: A. L. Williams, A. Forbes, R. Gould, P. Cameron and R. C. Wiggins.

The following report was submitted to the meeting:

Several changes in the playing personnel of the Band took place but the Band has been able to keep up to full playing strength. Young players are being trained and encouraged, and it is hoped that in the near future most of the vacancies which occur will be filled from the ranks of these young players.

The services rendered by Mr J. C. Turner as Bandsmaster have been most satisfactory, and he has devoted a great amount of time to the training of the bandsmen. He has kept abreast of the times in providing and teaching suitable musical compositions which have been appreciated during the recitals given by the Band at the rotunda.

Appreciation of the services rendered by Mr Williams, the Band Sergeant, who has been the principal coach of the young aspirants for positions in the Band, was expressed by the Committee; also to Mr J. Amos, the Drum Major, whose services have contributed in no small manner in bringing the Band up to such a high standard in the drill and marching section. The bandsmen's interests have also been well looked after by Mr H. A. L. Binder, who is the Band's delegate to the Victorian Bands League.

To the playing members of the Band the public of Yallourn owe a measure of thanks for the self-sacrificing manner in which they have devoted their leisure time to practice in order that they might provide enjoyment for their fellow citizens.

During the past year the Band has competed in one band contest, which was that held at South Street, Ballarat, where they succeeded in gaining second place. The general opinion of bands men who attended this competition is that the playing of the Yallourn Band reached the highest standard it has ever attained. Several soloists also competed at this contest, but only one succeeded in catching the Judge's eye.

Early in the year the Band held a local Solo Competition. On the 24th September last the Yallourn Band took part in the Massed Bands performance on the Melbourne Cricket Ground, and created a very fine impression, whilst marching through the streets, and on the ground. Whilst in Melbourne for the Massed Bands Recital, the Band broadcast a programme from Station 3AR, which was commended by the Broadcasting Company, and well received by listeners.

Later in the year the Band was again 'on the air' during a broadcast description of the Commission's workings at Yallourn. In addition to recitals given at the Yallourn rotunda and the Hospital, several performances were given in neighbouring towns within an area extending from Warragul to Bairnsdale.

For the year ended May 29th, 1934, the finances of the Band were maintained satisfactorily. Receipts from all sources amounted to £307/4/3, whilst expenditure totalled £426/3/11, leaving a debit balance of £118/19/8. The balance sheet as at 29/5/1934, reveals a surplus of assets over liabilities of £404/15/1.

The members of the social committee were commended on their efforts during the past twelve months. To those members who are actually interested in band affairs it is quite apparent that without the efforts of the social committee the band could not retain the standard which it has attained.

The committee expressed its appreciation of the services rendered by the honorary auditors, Messrs J. Cullen and H. E. McGowan. The financial success of Band recitals has been facilitated considerably by the Press, to whom the committee extended thanks for publishing programmes and giving publicity to Band affairs generally.

It has been the desire of the committee to establish a suitable building in which the Band could practice, and the bandsmen could hold their own social functions. With this object in view the General Superintendent was approached about the middle of last year with a complete scheme, together with a suggestion that the material be supplied by the Commission and the labour provided by the bandsmen, but to date no definite reply has been received to this proposal.

The public of Yallourn were thanked for their continued practical and financial support which at all times has been given generously, and with an earnest desire to elevate the Band to a status worthy of the town.

BILL FLEMING AND THE EARLY YEARS

William James Fleming was born in Bulwell, a suburb of Nottingham, England in August 1906. He was the son of William James Fleming Sr, a coal miner, and Emma Fleming. Bill had a brother Ted, and sisters Elsie, Nell and Doris, all of whom except Elsie eventually migrated to Australia, settling in Yallourn and surrounds.

Bill left school in Bulwell at the age of 13 and began work at a colliery in the mines. He learnt to play the cornet at an early age and played with the Hucknall Excelsior Band, a champion band in the English Midlands, and began to develop what was to become a life-long passion for bands and music.

In 1928 Bill migrated to Australia to join his older brother Ted, and began work in the coal mines at Wonthaggi. They lived in Korumburra and within months he was appointed to the position of bandmaster of the Korumburra Brass Band. They were soon joined by the rest of the family, although sister Elsie married in 1921 and remained in England. In 1929 Bill successfully applied for the position of Assistant Bandmaster in the newly formed Yallourn Band, and moved to Yallourn. He settled into the South Camp, and began work as a labourer before becoming a greaser and fireman at the Yallourn Briquette Factory. Ted soon joined him in Yallourn and worked as a bricklayer with the SEC. Unlike Bill, Ted had no active interest in music but was a talented golfer, winning the Yallourn Golf Club championship in 1935, 1936 and 1937 before suffering a back injury and subsequently leaving Yallourn.

Bill met Mary Nancarrow who worked in the general store and they married in 1934. They moved to a house in Southway to start their married life, which was to continue until Mary's passing in 1980.

Bill continued to work at the Briquette Factory for the rest of his working life, punctuated by his service in WW2. He obtained a position on staff in the Briquette offices as Operations Records Officer in 1948, became a Technical Services Officer in 1959 and continued until the close of the factory in 1971. Although Bill was due for retirement he was employed to work for some months after the factory closure to assist with the personnel dispersion and ultimate closure of the factory. He found working alone in the factory to be quite different and sad in many ways, but was happy to continue his 43 year association for a little longer.

BILL FLEMING & THE YALLOURN BAND

The background to the formation of the Yallourn Band is not unlike those of the colliery bands in the mining villages of England during the 19th century. From the earliest days of

Yallourn, the SECV commissioners appreciated the importance of music in the lives of workers and encouraged the formation of a town band with both moral support and direct financial aid for the purchase of instruments. The formation of the Yallourn and District Band was mentioned in an article in 'The Sydney Morning Herald' in August 2014...

In Victoria's southeast, the State Coal Mine in Wonthaggi was the springboard for the Union Band, which merged with the Wonthaggi Town Band in 1935. In 1922, workers at the State Electricity Commission coalmines in the Latrobe Valley formed the Yallourn and District Band. The state utility contributed £400 to help buy instruments and uniforms. 'The SMH' August 20th 2014.

The inaugural Yallourn Band committee meeting was held in November 1925 and the elected office bearers were listed as: F.E. Morton, H.I. Roberts and J. Turvey.

Bill Fleming's name was first mentioned in this research sometime in 1929. He was 23 years of age when he took his place in the band. In that period, there were at least five cornet players... Bill Reid, Alf Welfare, Bill Daniels, Frank Schneider and Bill Fleming.

Bill loved music and joining the band was a natural progression in his life. Not only was Bill an adept and versatile musician but, as shown in the newspaper article above, he was an active member of the band committee from the earliest times.

Bill played many instruments but was best known in the band for his playing of the soprano cornet. In a chapter entitled 'Trumpets, Trombones & Tintinnambulations' in the book 'To Yallourn with Love' the following is stated...

"Outstanding among these (bandsmen) were: Keith Smith (double bass), Aleck (Sandy) Douglas (euphonium), Pat Noonan (E flat bass), Bill Reid (solo cornet), Reg Gould (trombone), Bill Fleming (cornet), Bill Daniels (trombone) and Alf Welfare (cornet)." Page: 19

Bill was also a fine conductor; and was the Deputy Conductor of the Yallourn Band during those occasions when Charlie Turner was unable to take 'charge of the baton.' A comprehensive story about Charlie Turner, written by Noel Dickie, was published in YOGA's 20th Anniversary booklet (1996). While Charlie deservedly received wide acclaim for his inspirational role in the Yallourn Band, the contribution of other members, such as Bill Fleming in the success of the band should not be underrated and it is quite true that... "A successful band beats with one heart."

The band was highly regarded throughout the district and the history of the town is dotted with occasions and events where the band played...

"The Yallourn Band will render a program of popular items in the Band Rotunda on Sunday afternoon next, commencing at 3.15 p.m. (weather permitting). In response to many requests the band has decided to hold another Community singing night in St. John's Parish Hall, on Monday next, the 27th May, commencing, at 8 p.m." 'Morwell Advertiser' May 23rd 1935.

A search of country newspapers of that period indicated that the band travelled far and wide to perform recitals and participate in state-wide competitions; the travels of the Yallourn Brass Band included trips to: Melbourne, Echuca, Bendigo, Ballarat, Warragul, Stawell, Morwell, Sale and Bairnsdale. Several photographs show Bill Fleming and his friends ready, willing and able to 'blow up a storm' at such contests.

It is known that in 1933 the Yallourn Band 'swept the pool' at the Stawell competition and won every division of the program against other bands from Hamilton, Nhill, Warracknabeal, Warrnambool, Stawell and Prahran City. The rivalry between such bands was fierce and when the news of the victory broke in Yallourn it created a swell of public pride.

The Yallourn Band throughout its history played a major part in many ceremonial occasions, including the welcome for the Governor of Victoria, Lord Huntingfield when he visited Yallourn in May 1935...

"After the playing of "God Save The King" by the Yallourn Band, His Excellency inspected the Guard of Honour composed of members of the local militia under the command of Lieut. McGowan. The Governor accompanied by the conductor, Mr. J.C. Turner, and the Drum Major, Mr. J. Amos, then inspected the Yallourn and District Band. Morwell advertiser May 23rd 1935

In 1936 the Yallourn Band enhanced its reputation even further with a fine performance which was aired on radio station 3AR (ABC Melbourne) and was ...

"...also in demand for radio broadcast programs." YOGA publication 1996. Page: 43.

The band was an integral part of township life in Yallourn and gave regular concerts in the band rotunda in the Yallourn gardens. The rotunda, which was officially opened in 1929, became the centre of enjoyment for the people of the town in those early days. It is not hard to imagine how 'free music for the people' lifted the spirits of all. A photograph, taken by J.P Campbell, fully captured the essence of those memorable Sundays in the beautiful town gardens...

"...Band recitals were given in the Rotunda every Sunday evening at 8.30 pm after Church in the summer and at 3.00 pm in the afternoons in the winter. The gardens around the Rotunda

were gay with colour, and the townsfolk flocked to hear their Band. It was the regular afternoon outing in winter, and the gardens were packed with appreciative listeners.” Latrobe history/word press website.

Bill’s responsibilities over the years with the band included periods of service on the committee as well as Bandmaster when Charlie Turner was unavailable. He assumed the Bandmaster position on Charlie’s retirement in 1965 and continued as Bandmaster into the latter days of the band.

His contribution to the band was suitably recognized by the awarding of a Life Membership.

OTHER MUSICAL INTERESTS

Bill Fleming had two other major interests in the musical activities surrounding Yallourn.

The first of these was his involvement in the Yallourn Orchestral and Choral Society. He joined the orchestra in the late 1940s when it was under the baton of Mr. W. F. Connolly and later Mrs. W. F. Connolly. He played the French horn throughout his time in the orchestra, and officially took over as conductor of the orchestra in July 1947. He continued in this role, conducting the orchestra in many concerts, mostly in the Yallourn Theatre, until the late 1950s, after which he reverted to playing the French horn throughout the rest of the Orchestra’s existence.

Bill’s other major musical involvement was with the Moe Choral Society. He was the inaugural conductor and musical director, and was heavily involved in the choir for many years. The choir had its opening performance at the Moe Music Festival in 1956 and practiced weekly in the Moe Fire Station. The choir performed with much success throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, receiving recognition for their performances in concerts, competitions and eisteddfods. Well known Moe pianist Judy Hall OAM was a great support to him in all of the choir’s activities.

THE WAR YEARS & IMPRISONMENT

In the pre-war period and the early years of WW2, Bill, along with many other Yallourn Bandsmen, joined the 52nd Military Battalion which was at that stage a unit of Australia’s part-time military force. They comprised a major part of the battalion band.

In February 1941, Bill Fleming applied successfully to the SEC for permission to join the army full-time and enlisted with the 2/29th Infantry Battalion as a private (VX 39866). Very soon his

obvious band skills and experience saw him promoted to the rank of sergeant and the role of Bandmaster of the 2/29 Battalion band, which was comprised of some 60 bandsmen. In July, the battalion was posted overseas to Malaya. Upon arrival in Singapore the band gave regular concerts under the baton of Sgt. Fleming, including a recital requested by General Gordon Bennett in the famous Raffles Hotel.

In December 1941, life changed for the battalion band when Japan declared war and all music and instruments were packed away whilst the battalion prepared for imminent military action. During battle Bill's duty became that of stretcher-bearer. The invading Japanese forces landed in Malaya in February 1942 and the 2/29th battalion was charged with the Herculean task of holding the advancing Japanese Army at bay at Bakri.

'The Brisbane Courier Mail' reported on the battle at Bakri on 23rd January 1942...

"Heavy Fighting...Wednesday's Singapore communique reported heavy fighting in the Bakri-Bukit Payong area of north-west Johore. It added: 'Enemy aircraft were active during the day, making low dive-bomb and machine-gun attacks on our forward troops. Fighters, which carried out offensive sweeps on Tuesday near Bakri in support of our troops, encountered a formation of a type 97 planes, which jettisoned their bombs when intercepted...'"

History shows the allies suffered a stinging defeat and an unexpected capitulation at Singapore...

"February 15th ...Singapore the great naval base and fortress considered to be impregnable, today surrendered to the Japanese...In the worst turn so far of the southwest Pacific war, thousands of allied troops have been made prisoner of war, including 13000 Australians..."
'Chronicles of Australia' Page: 383.

Bill Fleming was among a large number of soldiers cut off from the retreating battalion at the fiercely fought battle of Muar Road. Most of the battalion were then captured at the fall of Singapore. Being left to their own resources however and now behind enemy lines, those cut off from the main force attempted to find their way back to Singapore. Bill and a party of 4 more from the 2/29th, together with 2 Indian soldiers, took to the jungle overnight and managed to evade capture. At one stage, they concealed themselves in the jungle as a convoy of a dozen tanks and over 200 lorry loads of Japanese troops passed them on the way to Singapore. After two weeks of battling their way through jungles and swamps they arrived at a small native village. Here they were told that Singapore was under heavy attack and that return was impossible. After obtaining a rowboat, 2 pairs of oars and a small supply of bananas and rice, they concluded that their only option was to try to row from Malaya to

Sumatra across the open sea. With little food and very difficult conditions, they managed to row the 50 or so miles to Sumatra, taking turns to row and bail water from the leaking boat. After several more journeys they arrived at the RAF aerodrome at Pakenbarae. Bill and others went to work loading ammunition for RAAF Blenheim bombers until advancing Japanese troops forced their withdrawal to Padang. He was then moved to Batavia in Java where he was assigned duties at the hospital. He continued here until the Japanese invasion was complete and he was captured, starting his term as a POW on 13th April 1942. After some weeks, he was transported by ship and then truck to Thailand for duty on the Burma-Thai railway, eventually being re-united with many from the 2/29th. He spent time in Changi, but a lengthy period at Thailand No 4 Camp, amongst others.

During this period Bill's wife, Mary, received a telegram on 3rd Feb 1942 notifying her that he was missing in action. She was not to hear of his survival until receiving a telegram some 17 months later on 24th June 1943 confirming his status as a POW in Thailand.

"The 2/29th spent the next three-and-a-half years as prisoners of war. Concentrated in Changi goal, the battalion was used to supply labour for work parties, first in Singapore and then in other parts of Japan's Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. Men were sent to Burma and Thailand to work on the railway, while others were sent to Java, Sumatra, Borneo, and Japan." Australian War Memorial website.

Bill was one of more than 130,000 Australian, Indian and British troops that were taken prisoner at as a result of the defeat at Singapore, which was described by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill as ...

"...the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history, as the remaining 130,000 troops surrendered just a week after the first Japanese invasions, on 15 February 1942. Around 7,500 Allied troops were killed during the battle."

Much has been written about the ordeal suffered by the prisoners who built the 420 kilometres of the Burma-Thai railway through the rugged jungles, often in the worst of weather and under the relentless and brutal supervision of the Japanese prison guards.

More than 2000 Australians died on the railway, which included the infamous cutting at Hell Fire Pass. It is written in one text that for every sleeper laid on that railway line one man died in captivity.

"The prisoners' sufferings on the railway have come to epitomise the ordeal of Australians in captivity. The railway camps produced many victims, but also heroes who helped others to endure, to survive, or to die with dignity." 'Australian War Memorial website'.

At one stage of his imprisonment at Thailand No 4 Camp Bill assisted the POW Camp Medical Officer Colonel Ernest Edward (aka Weary) Dunlop during surgical operations on Australian POWs. In such primitive and unhygienic conditions, surgery was 'high risk' and rudimentary, but many lives were saved because of the skill and care of men like Weary Dunlop. Bill described him as a man whose name will live in the memories of all POWs at Thailand No 4. In later years, as with many other ex-POWs Bill spoke rarely of his POW experiences, but was always willing to talk about Weary Dunlop.

Weary Dunlop is a legendary figure in annals of Australian wartime heroes. Weary (born: 1903) was taken prisoner by the invading Japanese forces when serving as the MO at Bandoeng, Java in March 1942. Weary was a POW until August 1945

Today a memorial plaque stands at Hell Fire Pass in tribute to Weary Dunlop's gallant actions and selfless care for others. It is recorded that following his death (in 1993) a portion of Weary's ashes, were scattered at Hell Fire Pass..

During his internment Bill was also forced to undertake physically demanding tunneling as well as heavy construction work, and as with many others suffered badly from malnutrition. He also developed a severe tropical ulcer. This resulted in several stints in the makeshift camp hospital. This ulcer was never completely healed and resulted in subsequent skin grafts and hospitalization on several occasions after the war. Bill was released from captivity on August 17th 1945, his birthday.

Life in the Japanese POW camps was appalling and death was always close at hand; and despite the efforts of Weary Dunlop and other medical staff, thousands of Australian soldiers, died in imprisonment...

"...In total around 22,000 Australians were taken prisoner by the Japanese during the war and 8,000 of them died in captivity." 'Australian Geographic'

The ordeal faced by Bill Fleming and his comrades of the 2/29th Battalion can be explored further in books such as: -

- 'No Lost Battalion- An Oral History of the 2/29 Battalion A.I.F.' by John Lack.
- 'Surviving Captivity' by Bob Christie (Bob, like Bill Fleming, was a POW from 1942-45).
- 'Escape from Malaya: Wal Snowden's Story' by Wal Snowden.
- 'The Changi Book' (edited by Lachlan Grant) was launched at the Australian War Memorial in August 2015. The book is a collection of essays, poems, photographs and sketches based on the first-hand experiences of prisoners of Changi during the Japanese occupation of Singapore.

The 2/29th Battalion Nominal Roll (alphabetical order), on which Bill is listed, runs to some thirty pages and names every soldier who served with the Battalion, together with their enlistment, rank and company details. The roll also indicates 'if, how and when' a soldier of Battalion died on active service. It is a most sobering exercise to read the list of war dead from one battalion.

Despite Bill's years of hardship and deprivation, he was one of the more fortunate young men of Yallourn who enlisted in the military forces during the war. Bill 'came home' but it is known that sixteen other soldiers from Yallourn paid the 'Supreme Sacrifice' during those years of conflict. The following local men died on active service during World War:II :- F.W. Adamson, C.P. Angus, G.R. Berwick, D.G. Bourne, J.F. Brien, J. Crilly, J.H. Dardwell, F.F. Edmonds, W.P.B. House, L.A. Kennedy, J. Lyon, R.W. Pritchett, J.B Reilly, S.G Skinner and R.H. Turner.

The war ended in the Pacific with the formal surrender of Japan on September 2nd 1945. At that time, Bill Fleming was a POW in a camp in Siam (Thailand). On the 14th September 1945, 'The Argus' and 'The Sydney Morning Herald' published the following article indicating that Bill and many other listed soldiers were alive...

*"A further release of names of Victorian prisoners of war reported alive in Siam was made yesterday by the Army Department. These names have been taken from the lists brought to Australia on Tuesday night by Lieut-Colonel Williams. Further lists will follow as released by the Army section, which is working on the lists 24 hours a day.....**FLEMING. W.J., Sgt. Yallourn, Inf....."***

Mary was delighted to receive a telegram notifying her of Bill's imminent return to Australia. She was reunited with him at the Royal Agricultural Showgrounds upon his discharge in October 1945

The following extract regarding Bill Fleming was published on the 'Word press/Latrobe history' website...

'Bill Fleming was listed as 'Missing' in Japanese held territory, and others just managed to escape ahead of the Japanese army. Mrs. Fleming never gave up hope that her husband was alive, and after some years her faith was vindicated, when she received a telegram to say that he had been a Prisoner of War in Japanese hands. All the town rejoiced with her, and very soon after that Bill was home again with his friends and dear ones, though still needing care and medical attention.

He soon recovered his health and continued to give his services to the Band for many years, until his health deteriorated. He served as Band Sergeant for a number of years..."

It is known that other members of the Yallourn Band including Charlie Turner, Paddy Noonan, Bill Daniels and Bill Dinsdale volunteered for military service during World War 2.

PART :4 1945- BACK HOME

Bill Fleming returned to life in Yallourn, resuming his employment at the Briquette Factory and moved with Mary into a house in 19 Broadway West. There they settled and began a family, having a son Ian and 2 daughters, Rhonda and Gayle. With the arrival of the girls, they moved to a larger house at 6 Fernhill in 1954. This was to be their home until the Yallourn Resettlement.

Bill's life became a mixture of family, work and music. He was always busy with band, orchestral and choir commitments, which he approached with enthusiasm and dedication.

Bill continued to work at the Briquette Factory for the rest of his working life. He obtained a position on staff in the Briquette offices as Operations Records Officer in 1948, became a Technical Services Officer in 1959 and continued until the close of the factory in 1971. Although Bill was due for retirement, he was employed to work for some months after the factory closure to assist with the personnel dispersion and ultimate closure of the factory. He found working alone in the factory to be quite different and sad in many ways, but was happy to continue his 43-year association for a little longer.

Bill became an active member of the Yallourn RSSAILA (Returned Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen Imperial League of Australia...later to be known as the RSL). Other well-known local members in that era included: C.Boehm, H. Nairn, D. Alston, V. Smith, W.H. Wallace, G. G. Fogarty, L. Buckle, V. Johns, O. Emmerson, W. Short, C.J. Pennington, F. Stott, L. Clegg and H. Warren. Bill was an active member of the RSL throughout his post-war years in Yallourn with several stints on the committee, and at one stage was secretary.

With life returning to some 'normality' following the cessation of the war, the Yallourn Band went from strength to strength and, as can be seen from the press cutting below, the Yallourn Band, despite a ten point handicap, dominated all facets of the competition against Warragul and Leongatha in February 1946...

Yallourn Band's Competitive Win

“ON Saturday last the Yallourn Band added yet another honour to its already long list. Competing against Warragul and Leongatha bands, and conceding ten points handicap, they won comfortably for both marching and music. However, their win in no way detracted from the performances 'of the other contestants, who put on a really fine turn and received' the congratulations of the winners and the applause of the spectators. Much more can be expected of these bands in the near future. Allowing for the ten point handicap against Yallourn, the results are as follows:

	Yallourn	Warragul	Leongatha
Inspection ..	20	19	20
Marching ..	88	81	73
Music . .	71	60	52
Total . .	179	160	145

It is worthy of note that the maximum number of points for inspection was 20, We extend congratulations to Yallourn.” ‘Morwell Advertiser’ February 7th 1946.

One of the best days on the social calendar for hundreds of SEC workers and their families, in the post-war Yallourn era, was the train trip to Frankston for the Annual SEC Picnic and it was a memorable day for young and old alike. On arrival of the train at the Frankston station, Bill Fleming and the other band members marched to the Frankston Oval and played ‘wall to wall’ music throughout the afternoon as others soaked up the picnic atmosphere at the beach or joined in the program of fun events in the park.

Bill and fellow members were mentioned in the published results at the South Street Bandsman Competition in Ballarat in October 1954. In the Septette Division (a composition for seven instruments), Yallourn received 84 points and finished third ...

Septette:

1. C. Raine, N. Croft, H Tierney, A. Foley, H. Kennedy, E. Sincock, A. Hayman, Preston - 90 points.
2. H. Harvey, N. McMahon, W. Baker, M. Richards, R. Trenaman, R. Lower, D. McFarlane, Broken Hill - 86 points.
3. H. Ross. A. Amos. W. Fleming, A. Forbes, W. Whateley, A. O'Brien, F. Menner. Yallourn - 84 points.

‘The Argus’ October 29th 1954.

In Bill's position as Yallourn Band Sergeant, one of his most important duties was the role of bugler, which he performed at RSL burial services and Anzac Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies. Bill's enthusiasm, as a member of the Yallourn Brass Band, never waned and he rarely missed an event when the band performed at community gatherings and celebrations. The band engendered great pride and was an integral part of the community...

"How proud we were of them (the band) on the day the Queen visited Yallourn. They never missed an ANZAC parade, starting with the Rats of Tobruk dawn ceremony, Yallourn and Moe parades and then the Thorpdale parade..." Noel Turner 1996

Other family names mentioned in relation to the Yallourn Band during this research regarding Bill Fleming were: Ross, Kite, Harvey, Warren, Forbes, McKee, Smith, Armstrong, King, Collins, Menner, Robertson, Amos, Butler, McWilliams, Welfare, Whately and O'Brien.

In 1973 Bill was saddened by the passing of his great friend and band leader Charlie Turner. Charlie had suffered ill-health for a number of years and his death had a demoralizing effect on the band for some time. Charlie, Bill and their friends had witnessed substantial changes in the band over the years and all had played their part in bringing music into the lives of the people of Yallourn.

During the 1970's the membership of the Yallourn Band declined and consequently the band relocated from Yallourn to the Newborough Public Hall and was re-named the Yallourn and District Band.

Bill served the SECV loyally for 43 years and he can be seen in a photograph standing alongside other employees who had given twenty or more years of service to the SECV. A copy of that photograph is reprinted in 'Yallourn Was' on page:180

As the demolition of the Yallourn township gathered pace, Bill and Mary Fleming left their home at 6 Fernhill in 1977 and began a new life at Banksia Village in Newark Avenue, Newborough. They were very thankful to the thoughtful assistance that they were given by George Bates and the Yallourn Resettlement group in this process and especially so to Geoff Ryan who was most helpful at a personal level. This was a traumatic move for many longtime Yallourn residents. Mary embraced the move enthusiastically, enjoying the close proximity of many old friends. Bill was less keen to leave but was encouraged by the fact that their immediate neighbours in Banksia Village were their long-time friends, Alec and Elva Wiggins. Alec had been the longest serving bandsmen of the Y&D Band and at one time had also been the bandmaster. The Fleming and Wiggins families are briefly mentioned in Meredith Fletcher's book called 'Digging People up for Coal'...

"Bill and Alec had a forty-eight year association through the Yallourn Band." Page: 190.

Bill and Mary remained in their Banksia Village unit for the rest of their lives. Mary passed away suddenly in 1980. At this time, Bill was in Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital undergoing more surgery to treat the recurrent tropical ulcer from his POW days. Bill passed away soon after in 1981.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Sincere thanks to Ian Fleming for his kind assistance in providing information relating to Bill and his family.

Resources used in this story about Bill Fleming included:-

- *National Library of Australia.*
- *World War: II Nominal Roll.*
- *'The Chronicles of Australia'-Penguin & Chronicle Books 1993.*
- *Australian War Memorial publication: 'The Changi Book' Ed: Lachlan Grant (2015).*
- *Various local and national newspapers.*
- *History of the Latrobe Community Concert Band-this website.*
- *Other articles from this website regarding Charles Turner and the Yallourn Band.*
- *'Latrobe History' website.*
- *1996 YOGA publication Pages 42-43.*
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- *'The Railway Man' by Eric Lomax (1995)*

This article 'From the Newspapers' is part of an on-going project regarding the history of Yallourn. A full list of titles in the series is available by contacting Julie George at Virtual Yallourn.

This story has been posted and presented by Julie George and researched and written by Roger Spaul in collaboration with Ian Fleming and his family in June 2016.

The above article from the 'Morwell Advertiser' has been faithfully reproduced. The only amendments to the original copy are the font style, font size and spacing, so as to enhance the article for purposes of posting on the Virtual Yallourn website.

THE END