

## ***PIONEERS OF MOE, YALLOURN AND MORWELL***

**Doug Farley YHS 1953** - wrote - "When I started school at Yallourn High in 1953, I had no idea that my great, great grandfather, William Robert Farley, originally owned all of our school site. In fact, he was the squatter on the old Merton Rush Run which was approx 24,000 acres and its borders were the LaTrobe River, the Narracan River, the Morwell River and the Wilderness Creek towards Yinnar and therefore took in all of Yallourn. So when I started at Yallourn it was exactly 101 years since he acquired the run.

William Robert Farley was a convict and his crime was sheep stealing. He was tried at Dorchester Dorset, England on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1830. He sailed to Australia on the convict ship "Burrell" from the Port of Plymouth, leaving 27<sup>th</sup> July 1830 and arriving in Sydney on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 1830. The Burrell was the last convict ship to arrive in 1830. Soon after arrival, he was 'disposed of' to Public Works on the Sydney Benevolent Asslyn which was built as a poor house for the destitute. The 1837 muster indicates that he was in the District of Cook NSW perhaps involved in building the Blue Mountains Road.

From Sydney in 1839, he went to Portland Bay Victoria with Surveyor Charles Tyers and the famous Australian explorer Edmund Kennedy. Mr CJ Tyers was appointed by Governor Gipps to survey and lay out the township of Portland and also establish the border between NSW and South Australia...but before this, we believe that in 1836, William travelled with Sir Thomas Mitchell on his historic journey to Australia Felix. Historic records indicate that those convicts that travelled with Mitchell to Portland were then selected to go with Tyers, due to their experience.

On the 13 September 1842, Gippsland was proclaimed a district and Charles Tyers was then appointed Commissioner for Crown Lands for Gippsland. At the time, William Farley was still a convict labourer and no doubt assigned to Tyers on a permanent basis. In his "ticket-of-leave", Tyers requested William Farley's transfer to Gippsland as a Border Policeman. Thus William was one of the first civilian policemen in Victoria. Tyers arrived at Port Albert on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 1844...but firstly they had set out for the Port via an overland route, but their first 3 attempts were frustrated and they eventually went by Sea. William Farley was with Tyers when he attempted these journeys, including the first Tyers journey in Gippsland. William Farley spent many years working with Tyers on various "projects" whilst generally still in the convict service. He did major road works for many years cutting trees and building bridges, etc...then amazingly in 1843, William travelled with George Augustus Robinson on his search for the Isolated Tribes of Sth-Eastern Australia. During this journey, he cut the first wheeled track from Westernport to Port Albert.

He remained a Border Policeman until 1846. He received his Conditional Pardon on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 1847, and then in October 1847, he was appointed by Governor LaTrobe to establish the Gippsland Track (old Gippsland Road) and was paid 150 pounds for his services.

In 1853 he married Mary Ann Maxella. Little is known about Mary or who her family was. We do know that she was about 16 when she married William on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 1852 at Bruthern Creek via Woodside. Also from the children's birth records, they indicate that she was born in the East Indies (South East Asia). She bore 10 children, which is amazing in itself, taking into account the likelihood that there were very few other women around to assist both in childbirth or on-going family support.

Their first son, James, was born at the homestead on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 1852. James was my Great grandfather and he was the first white child born in the "LaTrobe" Valley region of Moe, Newborough, Yallourn and Morwell.

In December 1852, Tyers wrote to LaTrobe to recommend the offer of William Farley to build a bridge over the Moe swamp section of the Gippsland Road, with the approaches being logged and corduroyed:

William planned to build the bridge 6 metres wide for 150 pounds and would guarantee it to stand up in the worst floods and he promised: "I also agree that it shall be tested

by the first flood of the next winter before I demand payment. When it could not resist, will forfeit the whole amount".

C.C.L. Tyers stated in a memo to LaTrobe, dated 30 October 1847, that: "I should observe that with the exception of Farley, know of no man in this District competent to the performance of such duties".

The Merton Rush licence was taken up by William Farley from 1853. Initially the run was held by a Henry Scott between 1846 and 1853. William Farley held the licence to 1859, when he handed it onto Westrop William Waller and George Haxell. During the period, he had taken up his pre-emptive right of 160 acres around the homestead block and this being the first private landholding in Shire of Narracan. He planned to purchase the pre-emptive right in 14th September 1853 and secured it 1859. Henry Scott had established a small Inn called the Eagle Inn.

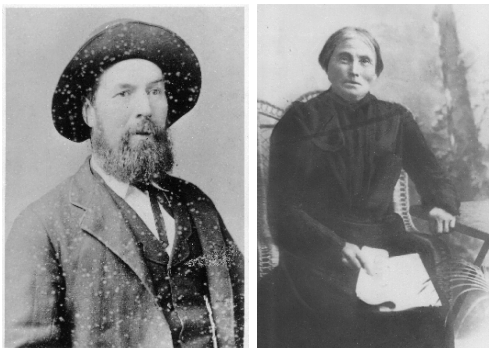
When William and Mary Farley took over the run, the improvements consisted of a slab hut residence, men's huts, stockyards, and cultivated paddock. The Eagle Inn was continued and run by the Farleys and the homestead and Inn was situated approximately 300 yards from the bridge over the Narracan Creek on the Old Sale Road, on the South side. It can be found just on top of the ridge/high ground. He remained with Mary and his family on this freehold section until at least 1863 when it appears they sold and moved to Rosedale with the children.

William Farley used to "escort" people across the Moe swamp where they used to stay at his Inn. The area between the two river crossings, the LaTrobe and Narracan. was commonly called "Farley's New Cut". The road over the crossing was made from gum and wattle samplings laid on top of one another and was called a "a corduroy road". In recent times the old "Corduroy" Road was unearthed and samplings were laid up 20 high. This was due to continual traffic forcing them further into the soft ground and mud.

Merton Rush was subdivided in the 1870's and the "Merton Rush homestead area for the eastern section was eventually established on the Morwell River on the site of Driffield. The subdivision was done after William Farley left Merton Rush. It was William's wild cattle that led to the legend of the Haunted Hills. Early settlers said that the cattle went wild because the hills were haunted.

In 2002, the City of LaTrobe named one of its Wards 'Farley Ward' which covers the Moe area and 'Merton Ward' being all of the Newborough area to the edge of the open cut.

I hope you all find this story interesting, and it gives you an idea what I do with my spare time. I'm a bit sorry I didn't know all about this when at Yallourn High, and it has always been a surprise that the Farley Family owned our school.



*William Robert Farley c1813 to 1875, and  
Mary Ann Farley (nee Maxella) c1836 to 1904*