

**Historical Society of Beaudesert Inc.**  
**The Smoke Signal**  
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*Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.* Soren Kierkegaard

On the road from Beaudesert to Boonah, the backwaters of the Wyaralong Dam present a unique photo opportunity as an old silo comes into view on the banks of the dam waters. Beyond, lie remnants of a dairy, piggery and farm-house. It is yesteryear running parallel with life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: looking backwards while still moving onwards.



This particular location was captured by Gold Coast artist Phillip Middleton in his oil painting *Wyaralong Dam*, on display at the Boonah Regional Art Gallery between 12 February and 21 March.

Phillip realised that this was a scene from another time, lying forgotten beside the modern changes of the dam. Set beside the speeding cars and trucks on that busy highway, the reflections in the water made it a place of calm.

*Figure 1 Painting: Waralong Dam – courtesy Artist: Phillip Middleton*

Wyaralong was once part of the Dugandan run, and over time much of that land was divided and sold for grazing. Originally, the indigenous Ugarepul people hunted and gathered throughout the area.<sup>1</sup>

In 1903 Colin Philp purchased one of the bigger blocks (10,000 acres) which later became the dam site. It remained in the Philp family for over 100 years. During World War II the 23<sup>rd</sup> Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force which was based at Archerfield, used one of the nearby paddocks for target bombing practice, and over the years a few of these bombs were dug up in the process of farming, but are now well submerged in the waters of the dam. The average depth in the river channel is 14 metres.

From 1923 to 1937, Albert and Karvalena (Lena) Venz took on share farming of this particular tract of land known as *Spring Farm*, where the silo still stands. Albert and Linah had six sons and nine daughters, providing many hands to help with the work, and the girls did not escape their share of chores. The Venz family were toilers with a good work ethic, working seven days a week from daylight till evening on their share farm-dairy.

The Sabbath was observed however, with only essential jobs being done that day, like feeding the pigs and milking the cows. It was milking by hand into a bucket, with the cream going to the factory, and the separated milk fed to the pigs. Corn was hand-picked and horses were used for ploughing, planting, and cutting the hay with horse-drawn mowers.

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<sup>1</sup> Our Lifestyle, Beaudesert Times July 2010

When bulk milk collection came to the district in the 1960s there was then no separated milk left for the pigs, and the small farm piggeries closed one by one.

Nerelie Teese in her book, *Hurricane Lamps & Handmilking* describes dairy farmers thus: ‘...the daily provision of one of the world’s most important food groups is indeed noble work done by noble people.’

Indeed, ‘noble work done by noble people’ (Ailsa Rolley)

*Figure 2 Albert and Lena Venz of Spring Farm, Wyaralong (photo courtesy Laurie Sims family collection)*



*Figure 3 At Wyaralong farm: In the German wagon, Arnold and Alex Venz with horses Punch and Hector*  
Photo courtesy Laurie Sims family collection



*Figure 4 Father: Albert Venz (hands on hips) with his 6 sons: L-R Harold, Cecil, Alex, Arnold, Ronald, and Ozzie Taken at Nindooindah share farm. (courtesy Laurie Sims family collection)*



Figure 5 - One of the 9 daughters, Olga Venz at 17, under the pepperina tree at Wyaralong. Married George Sims, Photo courtesy Laurie Sims



Silo – Spring Farm, Wyaralong constructed by P Hertz, Beenleigh –Photo L Sims

### *Westwood Cottage* (by Susan Weymouth)

Mid 2018 the museum was told that a 120-year-old neglected workers cottage in town might be demolished to make way for development. A quick look into the history of the cottage, we believed it was originally located in the Lamington area as a worker’s cottage for employees of Buchanans saw mill. When that mill burnt down in the 1920s the Buchanan’s started a new saw mill in Beaudesert and bought the workers cottage into town with bullock teams and horse drawn sleds. Several cottages were placed on blocks in close proximity to the new mill, and our cottage named *Westwood* was one of them. We asked the current owner to let us have it, and they agreed – if we paid for removal of cottage and clearing the block afterwards. We had no funds available to do this.



A committee of 5 people believed it could raise the money to save *Westwood*. Thus, a “Save *Westwood*” campaign set about raising funds from supportive towns-people donating cash and very generous sponsorship from businesses and a gambling grant. One Tuesday in November at midnight, *Westwood* on the back of a truck, crawled the 2.4 kilometers through our main street to the museum.

First thing we found was the old girl needed a new roof – and during that job. replacing of major beams. But Rod Andersen constructions came to our rescue and did the job of the roof.

Due to the unplanned-for expense of the roof we needed another way to get *Westwood* ready for the

Museum to use. The one-bedroom cottage needed total rewiring, painting inside and out, verandah repairs front and rear, putting battens under the house, and interior repairs where teenagers had been vandalizing and trying to set fire to *Westwood*, while it had stood empty and covered by overgrown shrubs for 2 years.

We enlisted the help of 3 government programs that skills unemployed and troubled youth with skills and assistance finding jobs. Yourtown organization found 6 local boys and 2 local girls to bring *Westwood* back to life, over 21 weeks. Yourtown paid their wages and we paid for the materials. The teens learnt aspects of carpentry, painting and Work Health and Safety, and many other skills to attain work. Within 2 weeks a young man found a full-time job. During the ensuing weeks others would leave to go to a job as an apprentice plasterer, painter and mechanic.

Our team of workers would eventually shrink to 4, one of those being a great young man named Bodie, who was fantastic to have on site in every way, and who on graduation day when he introduced me to his lovely girlfriend, told me he had 2 job offers to choose from. I found myself genuinely happy for him and I might even say proud that we may have helped him on his way

As you can imagine the quality of work was not to a great standard, with teens being taught and told to do things they may not want to do, and things did not run smoothly at times in our dealing with government agencies but at the heart of the program was assisting disadvantaged teenagers to find work. I had the privilege of dealing with, and a time working with these teenagers directly, who all had different issues to deal with in their lives. But I am pleased and hope that we might have had a positive effect on their lives by allowing them to work on *Westwood*. And *Westwood* is all the better for their time with us.

#### New Publication

David Mason has published his most recent book:  
*Men and Women at War: World War II 1939 – 1945*  
The Beaudesert District Contribution

This book is a reference work containing most of the names of the men and women from the Beaudesert District who served in World War II. It contains 408 pages and a 21-page index of names and localities of residence and places of enlistment. Where possible it contains Battle Honours or summaries of service. As a self-published book, the initial print run has now been distributed to historical societies and others.

To ensure public availability of the book, multiple copies have been presented to the Scenic Rim Library Service from where they may be borrowed or referred to. In the event that anyone wants a personal copy they will be available at cost for \$50 each plus \$15 postage, by calling the author David Mason on 0419664364. The author is a member of the Historical Society of Beaudesert.

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Every care has been taken in the editing of this issue of the  
Smoke Signal and in the event of errors, the editor apologises.

Annual Dues \$15 now due.