



COALFIELDS LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 67

JUNE 2023



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Welcome to Tumblebee, the official newsletter of the Coalfields Local History Association Inc.

Aims and Objectives

To discover, record, print, preserve and teach the History and Heritage of the specified district. The specified district being all the land situated in the Cessnock Local Government Area. Primarily known as the Hunter Valley in general

The Coalfields Local History Association Manages the Edgeworth David Museum, Manages and maintains the Jim Comerford Collection and offers assistance with Family History Research and inquiries.

Office Bearers

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Secretary	Lexie MATTHEWS	0409452555
Treasurer	Peter ALLEN	

Committee Members

PATRONS

Catherine PARSONS
Meryl SWANSON MP

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LIFE MEMBERS OF EDGEWORTH DAVID MUSEUM

Brian ANDREWS OAM (Deceased)
Lexie MATTHEWS
Cheryle SHOESMITH

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The affairs of the Association shall be conducted by the management committee, which includes the office bearers of the Association. Members of the association are welcome to attend and observe at any meeting and may take part at the discretion of the chairperson

GEORGE TAYLOR

The Plantman

THE CENTRAL COAST EXPRESS

February 2000

Death of 'The Plantman', 85



Burbank Nursery, Tuggerah, founder George Taylor, known as The Plantman, has died at the age of 85.

Mr Taylor died last Wednesday at Killarney Vale Nursing Home but news of his death was withheld by family until after a private funeral on Friday.

Mr Taylor, who had been in ill health for more than 12 months, is survived by his wife Joyce, son Clifford and daughter-in-law Judy, grandchildren Anne, Sonya, John and Gary and great-grandchildren Josh and Sophie.

Mr Taylor was a self taught botanist who developed Burbank Nurseries into one of the world's leading seed producing operations. At the height of its success the nursery employed 40 people and on one single day sold a record 306,000 seedlings, or 25,000 bundles.

In 1959 the company made aviation history when a DC6 aircraft carried 30,000 gerbera seedlings weighing 2.54

tonnes to Melbourne, Launceston and Hobart. This was the largest airlift of plants ever flown out of Sydney Airport.

"He was a remarkable man who was probably born before his time," son Cliff said on Monday. "It's not too much to say that the success of the plant industry today, and many of the innovations we have seen over the years are the direct result of dad's incredible knowledge and planning".

Born at Abermain, near Cessnock, in 1915, Mr Taylor began raising dahlias from seed in the family garden at the age of eight. Also at that time he was able to walk along rows of chrysanthemums and correctly name them because he said "they reminded him of the faces of the men who had founded the strains".

Leaving school at an early age because there was no provision for him to learn botany, he worked at various nurseries and in 1931 became the first president of the Newcastle Junior Farmer Movement.

In 1946 he bought 20ha of virgin land at Tuggerah where he cleared and formed 14km of seed beds to begin plant production. Four years later Mr Taylor obtained a contract to produce plant seeds and seedlings for Woolworths.

Not one to rest on his laurels, he believed that as people's leisure time increased they would spend less time in the garden and would lose interest in the intensive care of annual plants.

He decided to specialize in the production of a shrub that was hardy and easy to maintain. He chose the azalea. It was this decision and the continuing success for which Mr Taylor will be best remembered. Azaleas such as fire dance, snowdrift and Gretel were introduced from overseas and in 1968 his efforts were rewarded with the production of silver anniversary, the first of the "wonder azaleas"

Mr Taylor produced 250,000 of them for release in 1972 at a price that was affordable.

Mr Taylor's fame spread overseas and in 1972 he was approached to produce a plant that could be used by the United Nations Environmental Committee as a symbolic plant for all mankind.

The plant became “only one earth” of which the first two years royalties were donated to a green survival fund organized by nurserymen throughout the world.

Mr Taylor was subsequently awarded the British Empire Medal and Rotary International’s Award of Excellence in recognition of his service to horticulture.

In his later years Mr Taylor pioneered the production of plants by Genetic Engineering, a project which has been carried on by his family at Tuggerah.

“Dad was a bit of a dreamer who believed we should work with nature and technology,” Cliff said.

Indeed George Taylor was an incredible man. Coming from the humble beginnings of the mining township of Abermain, where he was born on 16 January 1915, he succeeded in becoming a renowned and accomplished horticulturalist. After attending Cessnock High school, where he was refused the opportunity to study Botany formally, he proceeded to teach himself the art of horticulture. He read everything he could find on the subject and put that knowledge into practice. He experimented with plant breeding and genetics. He was determined and single minded in his pursuit of horticultural knowledge. Since Horticulture, Botany and Gardening were deemed “women’s activities” George was faced with a lot of negative criticism and he had to overcome immense hurdles to achieve his ultimate dream.

The fact that George Taylor was denied a formal education in his desired field led him to embark on a path of self education. During the course of gaining knowledge he came across the teachings of Luther Burbank, a renowned Horticulturalist. Burbank had a profound influence on the young George Taylor. So much so that George named his Burbank Nursery after him.

While working with his father at his Griffiths Road nursery, George’s efforts were noticed by a visitor with connections to Commonwealth Steel. He was employed by Commonwealth Steel as their head gardener and he was only eighteen years of age. He remained in this position for a little over ten years. The purchase of twenty acres of virgin land at Tuggerah was transacted in March 1946. With hard work and determination this land was to become the place where George could freely explore his forward thinking ideas on plant production, plant breeding and genetic engineering. As a commercial endeavour the nursery became a success when it began producing seeds and seedlings for Woolworths in 1950.

George’s innovation did not stop at plant production but extended to areas of weed and pest control and improved packaging and transportation of seedlings. With typical George Taylor foresight he realized that gardeners would have less time to spend in their gardens tending to annuals so he concentrated his efforts in developing shrubs, namely Azaleas. Over the ensuing years he would develop many award winning and new varieties of Azalea. His efforts and knowledge became well known internationally. For the 1972 United Nations World Environmental Conference held in Stockholm he was invited to produce a plant that would be symbolic of all of mankind. That plant was an Azalea named “Only One Earth”, and now grows in the Natural Garden in Stockholm.

With commercial success and international renown achieved, George had dreams of using genetic engineering to increase plant production and develop medicinal means of disease control. Burbank Nurseries expanded into the area of Genetic Engineering in 1982 with the opening of it’s Laboratory. Specializing in genetic engineering and tissue culture it is still one of the world’s best. With the rising cost of continuing the Scientific research George Taylor sought financial assistance from Australian avenues. Denied the assistance that he needed George Taylor turned his attention overseas and in 1987 joined with the Japanese Oil company Koa to form Burbank Bio-Technology Pty Ltd, a division of the Burbank Tissue

Culture Laboratory and Technology Pty Ltd, a division of the Burbank Tissue Culture Laboratory and Research Centre. Yates Ltd purchased the Laboratory in 1999. George Taylor had been retired for several years at this stage. In 2001 the Laboratory was purchased by Ramms.

By 1999 George was experiencing serious health problems which lead to his demise on the 23 February 2000. No headstone marks the resting place of George Taylor (his ashes were scattered over the nursery), his deeds and accomplishments say it all.

Sources

The Central Coast Express newspaper

A Spark of Nature's Fire, David A.I. Seargent, Equilibrium Books

Notes supplied by Clifford Taylor



ONLY ONE EARTH AZALEA

BOXING AT NEATH



This photograph was taken about 1910 in the bush at Neath. The name Neath Stadium was probably something of a local joke because this type of boxing was illegal. The 'Stadium' was probably no more than a proving ground and training area for would-be boxers. It could have been used also to settle grudges in both bareknuckle and glove fights. Bets were probably taken on the side.

Proving grounds were scattered throughout the bush in the Weston-Abermain-Neath areas and were used not only for boxing but for cockfighting. They were often raided by Police. It is believed that Jack DONOGHUE, the first man to tutor the young Les DARCY was present at this day. Donoghue nicknamed 'Navy' because of his occupation, worked on the construction of the South Maitland Railway line. A former professional boxer, he won the lightweight championship of the north at Cessnock in November, 1906, when he defeated Sid BROGAN. Earlier in his career, in October 1902, he was beaten by Bob WHITELOW at the Victoria Theatre in Perkin St.

Donoghue moved to the railway camp at Thornton in late 1910 with his team of horses and drays and it was while he was there that he employed a 14 year old James Leslie DARCY to drive a horse and dray. He used his camp as a training area and it was in the bush at Thornton in 1911 that the young Darcy fought 'Guvner' BALSER. Donoghue later left the area and Darcy joined up with Mick HAWKINS and went on to fame and a tragic, early death.

'Silver' JACKSON, the ringmaster the day the photograph was taken, fought also at the Victoria Theatre, in 1904, against Morgan JAMES, of Stockton. Jackson was in the corners of both Joe SHAKESPEAR and Billy McNABB when they fought Les Darcy in September and October, 1913.

The bush was not the only area used for boxing in the Coalfields. From 1905 bouts were advertised as taking place at Milgates Hall, Kurri Kurri; Aberdare Hall, Cessnock; Jewells Hall, Weston and Sharp's and Garratt's Halls, Abermain. Joe Shakespeare trained youngsters in the 'bush at Neath' and the site where the picture was taken was probably the training ground.

Boxing historian, Mr Bob POWER, believes the prices board in the picture was probably used at some previous location, although the prices indicated, 3/-, 2/- and 1/- were the charges at the time. The ring would have been used for training established and aspiring boxers.

The 'stadium' walls were made of sacking and even dogs were allowed in.

Information from an article that appeared in the Newcastle Herald 9 July 1984, Titled A Boxer's bush Training Area.

Photograph donated by Allan COTTOME

FRED DAVID

Fred DAVID was born in Abermain. He went on to become one of the State's best amateur boxers.

CESSNOCK ADVERTISER

Thursday 5 February 1970

A former Abermain boy, who became the New South Wales amateur middleweight boxing champion in the 1930s, has died in Sydney. He was Fred DAVID, of East Sydney, who died aged 57 years.

A large number of leading figures in the boxing and business world attended his funeral at Rookwood Cemetery, on January 13th. Among them was a close personal friend, world championship referee and former Australian lightweight champion, Vic PATRICK.

Mr Patrick said this week, "Fred David was a great mate of mine. He boxed with Fred HENEBERRY, one of the greatest Australian boxers. Heneberry beat Ken OVERLIN, and Overlin left Australia and went to America, where he won the world middleweight title."

Mr Patrick said he and his wife frequently visited Fred David and his late mother, Mrs David, at their home in Forbes Street, East Sydney, to spend many hours talking about boxers and boxing.

Mr Patrick said, "His vast experience helped many young boxers and he was always a soft touch for any old pugilist who had fallen on hard times. I will miss him greatly and the fight game will be much poorer for his passing. I know Tony MADIGAN wanted Fred in his corner at the Rome Olympics. It was a great disappointment to them both that a series of factors prevented Fred making the trip, particularly as Madigan was considered unlucky not to gain the decision over world champion Cassius CLAY (later known as Muhammad Ali)."

Fred David was the youngest son of four sons of Mr and Mrs Peter DAVID, of Charles Street Abermain, and also travelled through outlying areas of the Cessnock district selling clothes. The family left Abermain when Fred was fifteen, to live in Sydney.

At that age Fred, who had already shown considerable talent as a boxer, began training at the gymnasium of the late Jack DUNLEAVY, doyen of Australian boxing trainers.

Fred made his climb to the top of the New South Wales boxing world at a time regarded as the golden age of boxing in Australia. He fought regularly with many of the all-time greats, including Ron RICHARDS, Fred HENEBERRY, Hocky BENNELL, Joe HALL, Ken OVELIN, Leo KELLY, Kingfish DIXON and Max ROSENBLOOM, former world light heavyweight champion.

Fred David turned in a number of amazing performances during his early years. In one tournament he won his heats and final in an accumulated time of only one round (three minutes).

Regarded as a shock puncher, in one fight against Ray MORELLI – from whom he won the New South Wales title in 1939 – knocked Morelli down for a count of nine, and again for a full count in a fight lasting only 26 seconds.

At this time Jack Dunleavy offered Fred £1000 to turn professional and he turned it down to concentrate more on his family business.

The four David brothers initially established a jam factory in Sydney, and then went on to open a chain of grocery stores. They later converted to wholesale grocery, and their business, David's Pty Ltd., developed into one of the biggest wholesale grocers in New South Wales. Mr Fred David and his brothers, Alf and Phil, have retired from directorship of the business. Mr Joe David has remained on in the firm.

Frederick Henry DAVID was born on 13 September 1912, at Charles Street Abermain. His parents were Mary (nee BOB) and Peter DAVID.

His father and mother were both born in Syria. Fred's father was a hawker. His brothers and sisters were Alfred (born 1901), Joseph (born 1902), Phillip (born 1904), Alma (born

1908), Delia (born 1910) and youngest sister Edna, also known as Kathleen (born 1914). The Davids left Abermain in the mid 1920s. Fred continued to show promise in the world of amateur boxing, however when he had an offer in the late 1930s to turn professional he turned the offer down, opting to devote his time to the family business. He died on 9 January 1970 in Sydney and is buried in Rookwood cemetery.

Fred's father Peter's occupation initially was as a Hawker. A Hawker is a type of street vendor "a person who travels from place to place selling goods".

In the birth records of the two of his children born at Abermain it states that he was born in Syria. He was most probably Lebanese. Lebanon was at one time a province of the Ottoman Empire, so most Lebanese were classified generally as Syrians, Turks or Asians right up until the 1950's.

The earliest Lebanese immigrants to Australia settled in NSW in the late nineteenth century (around 1876) . Many Lebanese were forced to leave their country to escape economic hardship and religious and political persecution by the Ottoman Empire. Immigrants tended to be mostly young males looking for a quick monetary return with the intention of returning home.

Many of the Lebanese immigrants began their working lives as Hawkers, buying goods in the cities and selling them in rural areas. Most of these Hawkers eventually went into business such as retail, warehousing and manufacturing. As was the case with the David Family. In 1912 Peter DAVID was a hawker, in 1914 he was listed as storekeeper in Abermain.

Family was an important focus in Lebanese communities. This would have played a big role in Fred DAVID's decision to give up his boxing career.

The DAVID family went on to become very prominent businessmen.

1927 - Opened their first "corner store" in Woolloomooloo NSW, followed by six more shortly afterwards.

1935 – Opens a wholesale warehouse in Redfern NSW to support their expanding business. They saw this as an opportunity to support other independent retailers. They established the first professionally organized voluntary retail group and offered Retail Service programs.

1946 – Peter DAVID died

1959 – Mary DAVID died

1968 – Purchased Harbottle Brown & Co and entered the liquor market

1980 – Pioneered technological improvements being the first to introduce scanning and Labeling innovations which improved wholesale and retail ordering.

1987 – Liquor group renamed Australian Liquor Marketers (ALM), servicing hotels, liquor

stores and licensed premises in both Australia and N Z .

1988 – Introduces global retain banner IGA. (Independent Grocers Alliance)

2000 – David's Limited replaced by Metcash

2005 – Metcash purchases Foodland Associated Limited

2010 – Metcash acquires Franklins bringing it under the IGA banner and also at this time Mighty Helpful Mitre 10 becomes part of the Metcash family.

2016 – Combination of Mitre 10 and Home Timber & Hardware to form the Independent Hardware Group

2020 – Metcash acquired 70% of Total Tools (the largest tool retail network in Australia)

2021 – Metcash increases interest in Total Tools to 85%

SOURCES

www.metcash.com

Hawkers, Habidashary & Hospitality

Cessnock Advertiser Newspaper



TREVOR KING OAM

FROM BOXING TO SAVING SOULS

Trevor KING was a professional boxer, who had a very successful career despite having to overcome many childhood obstacles. Born in Cessnock NSW on the 13 September 1930 he battled life's odds from the age of 11. He lost his mother and was forced to live with an alcoholic father. He developed Rheumatic fever that saw him bed ridden for twelve months. It was around this time that Taff THOMAS entered his life. Taff had been a tough professional boxer, beating three times Australian champion Hughie DWYER. He would steer Trevor to a remarkable boxing career.



Within four years, Trevor KING, wippet thin as he was would undertake his first professional bout at age 15. His age caused a problem because the ring doctor had to be convinced that Trevor was 17. His 23 year old opponent, Crow HORN was dropped in every round. This victory was to be the first of many. By the age of 20 Trevor had compiled an impressive record of 31 straight victories. He experienced his first loss to Swiss boxer Sigi TENNENBAUM. His career record comprises 60 wins from 61 bouts

Trevor KING gained the NSW Featherweight title in 1952 and was preparing to take on the KO King Elley BENNETT for the National Title. In 1954 he signed up to fight the Empire champion Roy ANKARAH in Singapore, however the National title challenge took precedence. In March 1954, three weeks prior to the National bout King was knocked off his motor bike in Auburn NSW. Gangrene set in but he refused to have his leg amputated. He was told he would never walk again without a cane. Undeterred he rehabilitated himself and 6 years later he was back in the ring. In 1961 he stopped the Kiwi lightweight champion in 5 seconds. Tragedy continued to plague Trevor KING when he developed hepatitis and suffered a head injury in a car accident. His career was now over.

Not having boxing to occupy him Trevor's life spiraled out of control. He was drinking, smoking and gambling, sometimes visiting the race track twice a day until one day in Parramatta he was saved by the voice of a young Salvation Army Officer. She became his wife. He became a religious minister and opened the "Caring & Sharing Mission" in Sydney's North.

Trevor KING battled life's odds and still came out on top with grace, focus and persistent determination.

Trevor traveled to the US where he worked at the Betty FORD counseling clinic. On his return to Australia he became a Salvation Army Officer and founded the "Westside Mission: at Ebenezer in NSW in 1964. This mission assists people with drug and alcohol addiction and behavioural problems. The program runs for one year and has a 98% success rate for those that complete the one year.

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

Friday 15 February 1997

HERO WHO PACKS A PUNCH IN THE NAME OF LOVE

By Nick PAPADOPOULOS

Mr Trevor KING has been bashed, stabbed and shot in his long career as a crime-fighter, anti-drugs crusader and Good Samaritan.

"When you see something happening and you feel capable of helping you do so." Mr KING said.

And on the banks of the Parramatta river in drizzling rain on Wednesday night 67 year old Mr KING did precisely that. In the process he saved two men 69 year old Jack HISLOP and his 67 year old mate Peter- from being robbed of their money, coats and shoes by two thugs armed with a knife.

He not only deflected a punch from one of the muggers with a left hook, sending him crashing backwards and disarmed the other, sending him screaming in pain. He also made them return the money and coats and put on the men's shoes and tie their laces.

Mr KING a former Australian featherweight boxing champion and ex-Salvation Army Officer who runs Westside Mission at Windsor for troubled youths. He was in Parramatta on Wednesday to pick up his daughter when he stumbled upon the mugging.

"I couldn't believe my eyes" Mr HISLOP, an alcoholic who has spent the past four years sleeping in parkland beside the Parramatta River, recalled, yesterday. "One minute we were getting robbed and the next thing these two blokes were putting our shoes back on."

Mr KING then gave the muggers, aged about 20, some money along with his business card and urged them to call so he could help get them back on the straight and narrow. "I think they learn a bigger lesson this way, rather than going away bitter and nasty," Mr KING said. Mr HISLOP-stunned by the events-said one of the robbers walked away with tears in his eyes. "We were all overawed." He only discovered the name of his saviour when he too asked for a business card.

"When I looked at it I knew who he was, I'd seen him fight.....and knock out Ray COLEMAN and beat Elley BENNETT ."Mr HISLOP was so moved by Mr KING's actions that he called the Herald.

He said one of the robbers had been calling Mr KING "pops" until he got "hit in the chops". It was the nicest left hook I'd ever seen in my life. "I tell you what it gave me a pretty good thrill".

Mr KING, who is not a big man only 173 cms tall and weighing 73 kilos, relies on skill and technique, not strength, and uses his image as a harmless old fellow to his advantage, when he runs into trouble. First he takes out his false teeth, which he says helped act as a "smokescreen" because thugs tend to underestimate you.

Erupting in laughter at being labeled a "hero", he said his motto in life was: "Do unto others before they do it to you". And what drives this Good Samaritan? "You'll probably laugh, mate, but it's love. I know it doesn't sound very loving banging someone on the chin or breaking their arm, but love is a tremendous driving force and without that I couldn't do it".



SOURCES

WWW.boxingforum24.com>trevorking
Sydney Morning Herald

MUSEUM REPORT

The Edgeworth David Memorial Museum is a valuable asset to the communities of the Cessnock LGA, providing historical and heritage items for visitors to peruse, however it serves a much wider purpose in that it is an extremely valuable resource centre. Many people visit the museum to find information and research information for projects that they may be interested in. We have had seniors groups visit our museum as well as school children and community groups. Our dedicated volunteers deliver workshops and presentations to schools and other community organizations. The aims of the Coalfields Local History Association are “to **PRESERVE, PROTECT & PROMOTE**” the history of Cessnock LGA. We take our aims very seriously and endeavour to uphold them.

Unfortunately due to changes in Council policy The museum **COULD** be faced with being homeless once again. About four years ago the museum which was then housed in a demountable building in the grounds of the Kurri Kurri High school was forced to find other premises. (The school needed the additional space). The move proved to be a very difficult task due the amount of material required to be moved, the fragile nature of some of the items and the impact of Covid-19 restrictions. The museum is now established in it's new home and organized. It would be a shame to be faced with having to move again, as well as the fact that it would be difficult to find premises suitable to house our magnificent collections.

It is with great sadness that we recently bid farewell to three of our valuable volunteers. Ean SMITH, (our president for some time) has resigned due to health issues. Bill HOLLAND, who was also our President and Vice President for a time and Dennis CROOKS who was our Assistant Treasurer for a short time. We wish all three the very best for the future and extend our sincere thanks for their contribution to our organization.

The planning for the up coming commemoration of the Centenary of the Bellbird Mine Disaster is progressing really well. Almost all events for the program have now been confirmed. Coal Services and the MEU have come on board with planning and financial assistance., which should result in a truly professional event. Many thanks to both Coal Services and the MEU for their support on this important historical occasion.

A very exciting development that has arisen from the planning of the Centenary of the Bellbird Mine disaster is the fact that amongst the items housed at the museum there is a chart that was donated. The chart was used in the original Inquest into the disaster. It shows the positions of the bodies of the miners and horses. As far as we have been able to ascertain it is the only such chart in existence. As an off shoot of the commemoration the MEU has kindly offered to finance the preservation of the chart. This project is currently underway with the assistance of Kim WELLER and John MURPHY.

For those interested in Family History and Genealogy the Museum holds a collection of resources relating to Family History research as well as some donated family histories. There is also books pertaining to local history and coalmining (which was a major part of our early history). There is a collection of newspapers in hard copy that can be accessed for research purposes. Best of all the expertise amongst the volunteers is a valuable asset.



MEETING TIMES

General meetings will be held at Abermain Bowling Club
Corner Armidale & Goulburn Streets Abermain at 3.00 pm on the third Tuesday of every second month

Tuesday 20 June		3.00 pm Abermain Bowling club
Tuesday 15 August		3.00 pm Abermain Bowling Club
Tuesday 17 October	AGM	3.00 pm Abermain bowling Club

MUSEUM OPENING TIMES

The Museum is open Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays 10.00am to 2.00pm.
Other times by appointment.

A GOLD COIN DONATION IS APPRECIATED

The Museum is located in the Abermain School of Arts Building 209 Cessnock Road
Abermain.
Parking available at rear of building

Association's Area Interest

The specified district of the Coalfields Local History Association Inc's area of interest is all that land situated in the Cessnock Local Government Area (LGA), primarily, as well as the Hunter Valley in general

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