

## Talk to the gathering of the Franklin Families at Yea on Labor Day weekend March 9 – 11 2013.

### Meg Dillon

Greetings to audience of Franklin families & friends gathered in Yea this Labor Day Weekend.

Thanks to traditional the Taungurung owners for the welcome to their lands.

Acknowledgement of the work done by family members over last 30 years to collect material about the family history especially Auntie Irene Lawrey, Bernadette Franklin, Lorraine Padgam & Angela Tenbuuren. I also acknowledge the work that Sandra Smith [Museum of Victoria] and Carol Yates [Koorie Heritage] and Annette Sax did to assist Irene Lawrey in her quest for information. They have very generously shared their research with Carol and me. I also want to acknowledge the many hours that Carol Sonogan, my team partner, has put into this continued search for information about the earliest days of both John Franklin, Yabbee, also known as Billy Hamilton, and Mary Ligomunning. Thank you for inviting us to present some of our findings.

The Life of John Franklin, your Aboriginal ancestor, is an important example of a traditionally born Aborigine who successfully stepped through a cultural door, into the very dangerous and disturbed period of the early settler history of Victoria. Like all his tribal relations of the Nira Buluk people he had to find a way of surviving the near total destruction of the ancient culture of his people and learn a way of co-existing and thriving in the totally different European culture that the settlers established. The hundreds of Franklins gathered here this weekend are a testimony to his success at survival. Many thousands of Australians are rediscovering the Aboriginal ancestors in our families, and John Franklin's story is part of this quest to find them and honour them.

### TEXT

#### Part 1:

#### The Early years:

This is the period when there is the least information about John Franklin. Why?

- He had no birth certificate. As an Aboriginal baby born just before or just at the time the Goulburn [PP area] was being settled, B D. M records had not been established by the Government administration. Capt Lonsdale [Chief Magistrate] and later Lieut Gov La Trobe had great difficulty setting up the administrative structures for the new settlement.
- Family stories and later records of his marriage & death certificates are contradictory and confusing. John Franklin could have been born c. 1837 or 1847.
  - No birth certificate
  - Marriage certificate in 6 March 1874 in which John Franklin claimed he was 27 years old, which would mean he was born in 1847.
  - The birth certificates of his children indicate the 1847 or 1848 date. John Charles [JF 29 etc Albert JF 47; etc Will Henry [JF 32]; Geo Edward JF 43; Arthur Franklin –jf 38
  - Death certificate 20/10/1921. Reported by son Herbert Stuart Franklin. Certificate reported he was 84 years old when he died, which establishes his birth date as 1837.
- **How do we resolve this sort of a puzzle as a family or social historian?**

- Firstly I have to pay close attention to the investigations done by Auntie Irene Lawry, whom as you know started off the great search in the 1980s for the history of the Franklin family. Over the 30 years that she carried out her work she interviewed many family members some of whom were very old in the 1980s and had long memories of stories handed down by grandparents and others. As well she obtained professional help from the Koorie Trust, local historical society, Victorian Archives and the Museum of Victoria among other sources in order to track down as much official information as possible.
- Over this time Irene Lawry formed several very significant opinions about John Franklin's early days.
  - He was a Sugarloaf Creek man born of Aboriginal parents who came from Victoria and belonged to the Taungurung nation. His local clan was the Nira Buluk or creek dwelling people. John Franklin had confirmed some of this information. His marriage certificate states his parents were unknown but were natives of Victoria. He also noted his birthplace as Broadford. His death certificate, reported by his son Herbert Stuart, also confirmed that his parents were unknown.
  - By his own admission and by his immediate family's understanding he was an orphan who had no memory of his parents, as such he must have been separated from them at a very early age.
  - Irene Lawry also formed the opinion that he was born c. 1837 and was orphaned when a young child and found in the area near Kalatha Creek. She was more specific in another document when she stated : that the young orphan was found or taken "*in the vicinity of Mathinna Falls which flow into the Watts River near Fensham above Healesville*". <sup>1</sup>
  - Irene totally supported the information to this effect given to her by several important elders The first was
    - **Family Elder, Mary Franklin**, daughter of John Charles jr., told Irene Lawry that John Franklin was separated from his mother in a bush fire when he was about 5 years old. He was found by a man and given the name John Franklin. <sup>2</sup>
    - **Family Elder Matilda [Tilly] Cameron** [*Family Reunion, 1985.*] said:"*Up there in the bush to explore Australia, by Queen Victoria, he[ a settler] was exploring up there in Healesville, and there was an Aborigine Station called Corandeerck, lot of Aborigines up there, he was exploring up there around in Healesville and he came across a little black boy, he was about 3 or 4 maybe 5, no boots, no shoes, no clothes, no mother, so he took him, felt sorry for him, he took him, [he]couldn't talk...*"<sup>3</sup>
    - The map that Carol has already shown you supports several aspects of this view. The route that local tribal Aborigines took on annual food gathering expeditions travelled down beside the Yea River and into what is now the Healesville area to the Upper Yarra River. Kalatha Creek ran into the Yea River on this route. This is hilly country covered in dense bush. It regularly burns from lightning strikes, so finding a small boy 3-5 years old, alone after a local bushfire in this area is a very feasible.

<sup>1</sup> Irene Lawry, Document 2 of her Taungurung Speeches.

<sup>2</sup> Irene Lawry, 29 March 1996, told by Family Elder, Mary Franklin. Data Base, DB Rec 184

<sup>3</sup> Irene Lawry, told by Matilda [Tilly] Cameron, Family Reunion, 1985. DB. Rec 182

- Elderly resident of Yea told Irene Lawrey that John Franklin was 18 years old when Don Ferguson bought the Flowerdale Estate lease in 1857.<sup>4</sup>
- But for Irene the clinching evidence about John Franklin being born around 1837/ 38 was the eye witness evidence from her grandmother [Mable Rose Franklin wife of Herbert Stuart] his next door neighbour in Yea, who was his daughter-in-law and a regular visitor in the Franklin household. Mable Rose was adamant that John Franklin was a very old man when he died “every bit of 84 years”.<sup>5</sup> **What evidence is there for the alternative view that John Franklin was born in 1847?**

This date is considerably later, after the first settlement of the Goulburn River district in 1838. It possibly may have been more difficult for a settler to simply find a foundling child and take him home without reporting the incident to the Assistant Protector of Aborigines at Murchison, and even handing the child over to this person.

However, the most compelling evidence for his birthdate being either 1847 or 1848 was provided by John Franklin himself, when as an adult he stated his age on a number of official documents.

- In 1868 when he was treated at Kilmore Hospital for a facial injury, the hospital register recorded his age as 22 years. [Born 1848]
- When he married in 1874, his marriage certificate recorded his age as 27 years. [Born 1847]
- When his children were born their birth certificates stated John’s age: e.g.
  - Hannah in 1876, John’s age 28 years [Born 1848]
  - John Charles in 1877, John’s age 29 [Born 1848]
  - William Henry in 1880, John’s age 32, [Born 1848]
- In all cases when John stated his age on the birth certificate of each child, his age indicated his birth year was either 1847 or 1848.

It really isn’t known why John would knowingly give an incorrect age so consistently on each of these documents. Some family members believe that he may have been culturally embarrassed marrying so late in life, as tribal Aboriginal men would have been given wives at a much younger age. As his wife was only 21 years old, he reduced his age by 10 years to appear younger than he was. But he actually started this earlier than his marriage as the Kilmore hospital register proves in 1868. Did he actually believe he had been born in 1848?

Over the last two years Carol and I have researched extensively to try and find any further more official or even historical references to the young child John Franklin that could pinpoint his birth date and the name of the settler who first found him. So far we have found no conclusive evidence that would disprove the family memories that Irene Lawrey recorded.

Carol has talked to you about her extensive research into local orphaned Aboriginal boys most of whom were taken under the protection of Edward S. Parker the Assistant Protector of Aborigines at Franklingford near Daylesford and later at Murchison on the Goulburn River. So far none can be

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<sup>4</sup> Irene Lawrey, Audio interview, DB, Rec. 172

<sup>5</sup> Irene Lawrey Doc 3 of her Taungurung Speeches.

conclusively shown to be John Franklin [ and so disprove the story that Irene developed from family elders.]

While John Franklin had no birth certificate, I have attempted to find a baptismal certificate for him. A baptism record would confirm the year of John Franklin's birth and possibly name the family that fostered him also.

It is relatively certain that he was fostered by local Scottish settlers [ as I will explain shortly]. In the early 1840s they would have been Presbyterian and worshiped at the nearest church which was St Georges Presbyterian Church in Kilmore. On a Kilmore hospital record from 1868, John Franklin identified himself as Presbyterian [DB Rec 202]. He was also married in the St Georges Presbyterian church manse in 1874, something he would probably do if he was a congregation member. I have searched in both the Uniting and Presbyterian Archives, but neither have any records that go back to the 1840s for any Presbyterian church in Kilmore. The Uniting Church Archives did however have the Kilmore Wesleyan Church Register that went back to 1854. It did not list any John Franklin in its records. It would appear that the original Presbyterian Baptismal Register has been lost. A recent further search of reported quarterly baptisms returns sent to the colonial Govt of NSW has also failed to find any reports of baptisms from the Kilmore Presbyterian churches, although many would have been performed. Several more reels have to be examined, but the lack of any records surviving from Kilmore suggests they may have been destroyed.

We have found therefore no evidence that conclusively contradicts Irene Lawrey's research and conclusions about the earliest origins of John Franklin.

**One further issue arises from his early years: the question of who his mother was.** Some stories from family members and from old residents of Yea who knew something about John Franklin as a young man have believed that Mary Ligomunning [possibly sometimes also known as Mary Franklin or even Mary Hamilton] was John Franklin's mother.

Mary Franklin [Ligomunning?] was a local Aboriginal woman who most likely had a lot to do with the child John Franklin. However as John knew both her and her children [the Hamilton family] as an adult, it is fairly clear that had she been his birth mother he would have been able to identify her as such on his marriage certificate; and almost certainly would have passed this information onto his own large family of children and his wife Harriet. Both his marriage and his death certificate indicated he didn't know who either of his parents were and had passed this information onto his own children.

This is one of the key reasons that Carol and I believe she was not his birth mother but may have been a tribal relative, perhaps once promised to or related to a person of the same family clan: the Nira Buluk. If tribally related she may have had a tribal responsibility to take care of the young John. Another possibility is that she may have simply been working at the Flowerdale Sheep Station when the young orphan was brought there by the settler who rescued him around c.1842. As a young Nira Buluk girl she may have helped him adjust to settler life and helped to teach him English.

What is also known is that John Franklin acknowledged her children as his kin [William, Lilly, Jessie] and in later life [ early 1900s] he tried to find them at Corandeeck, Healesville where the three siblings had been sent between 1860 and 1863.<sup>6</sup> He also visited Jessie Hamilton who had married and left Corandeeck and moved to Madowla Park near Echuca probably around c. 1890 or later.<sup>7</sup> In

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<sup>6</sup> Irene Lawrey, told by Mary McNeil, DB Rec. 185.

<sup>7</sup> Irene Lawrey, told by Ivy Sampson, DB Rec. 186.

trying to reconnect with them, he was probably acknowledging his debt as a child to Mary Ligomunning and accepted that he had a family obligation and relationship to her three children. He wanted his own children to meet them and accept them as [tribal?] relatives and thus kin. Carol has indicated that tribal Aborigines may not have had a family category of "cousin". Close relatives were generally regarded as brothers/sisters. At another level he may have just seen them as the surviving remnants of the Nira Buluk and as such any of them were important to him and should be introduced to his children so that they could connect with their tribal forebears.

It is our supposition that Ligomunning was only a young girl of 13 or 14 or even younger, when she came into contact with John Franklin and he was probably 4 or 5 years old and could not speak English. Her child bearing pattern confirms this for us. It is unlikely she would have had one child in 1837 then had a childbearing gap of 12 years till her next child was born in 1849/50. Aboriginal girls of that time started having babies as young teenagers.

She appears to have been working periodically at the Flowerdale Estate at this time in the garden and possibly stayed there for some time after John arrived around 1842-43. She may then have returned to her tribe or have gone to Glenaroua Station which was on Sugarloaf Creek and closer to Kilmore where the Nira Buluk camped on both Sunday and Sugarloaf Creeks. She possibly started working for the squatter William Hamilton at Glenaroua in the garden or house at least periodically. She started having her children around 1849/50 [William 'Talgum'; Lilly 'Jerkunning 1853; Jessie 'Birring' 1858. They all had the name Hamilton recorded and they all had white fathers. Their name Hamilton may have come from the name of the Nira Buluk tribal leader, "Billy Hamilton" or Yabbee; or it could have referred to the name of the owner of Glenaroua Station, where she sometimes worked, squatter William Hamilton. There may be the possibility that one or more of her children was fathered by squatter Hamilton although there is no evidence of this. It was known that he fathered some children out of wedlock. He referred to them in his will as his "natural children". Whether or not any of these were Mary Ligomunning's children is not certain.

We have no evidence that either she or they ever lived at Glenaroua station. They and possibly she appeared to be at times at the protectorate at Murchison, later at Acheron. She did not appear with them when the children were shifted to Corranderk in c.1860 [William & Lilly] and c.1863 [Jessie]. One explanation for this could be that she was ill for some time and died around 1863 which necessitated her children being cared for at an Aboriginal Mission and Corrandeerk at Healesville was where a sizable group of the remnants of the Goulburn tribes resided. Irene Lawrey thought it possible that Mary Ligomunning was buried on the Flowerdale Estate.<sup>8</sup>

## Part 2

### **John Franklin and Flowerdale Station:**

I have previously mentioned that I support the family stories collected by Irene Lawrey that John Franklin was a Nira buluk orphan discovered alone near Healesville by a settler who took him home.

Who was this settler? And where did he live? Further oral evidence collected by Irene Lawrey from elderly residents of Yea suggests there was a very strong and early connection between the child John Franklin and the successful land owner Donald Ferguson of Flowerdale Station, located on the King Parrot Creek in the heart of Nira Buluk territory.

Both Irene Lawrey and Sandra Smith talked with older non-Aboriginal residents and acquaintances who shared the following stories with them, some of which had been passed down to them by their fathers.

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<sup>8</sup> Irene Lawrey, DB Rec 173.

- {Ron Drysdale} told Irene that the Aboriginal woman at Flowerdale, Mary Franklin, gave John her name of Franklin when she came to the Flowerdale estate.<sup>9</sup>
- Elderly Yea resident of Yea said that John should have been given the name Ferguson but his mother gave him her name which was Franklin.<sup>10</sup>
- Chester Draper, a cousin of Irene's mother, told Irene that John Franklin was reared at Flowerdale Estate. [DB Rec.177] [Elderly Yea resident; 25/9/95, collected by Sandra Smith]He believed Donald Ferguson was John Franklin's father and his mother to be Mary, an Aboriginal woman from the district who worked for Donald as a domestic servant for many years.<sup>11</sup> [DB Rec. 180].
- Another elderly resident confirmed that John Franklin was brought up on the Flowerdale estate, but also added that he was there with Mary Ligomunning in the very early period of settlement ie around the time Glenaroua was settled, which was c.1839.<sup>12</sup> We can assume he meant long before Donald Ferguson bought the lease in 1857.
  - While the parental claims are not true, there was clearly a close relationship between Ferguson, John Franklin and possibly Mary, so close that some locals assumed, as time passed, that Ferguson and Mary were John's parents.
  - It's also significant that at least one person suggested that the three were connected with the Flowerdale Estate in the very early days after settlement.

#### **Does this information also tell us how John Franklin got his name?**

- As discussed is it possible that Mary Franklin [possibly Ligomunning?] who was working at Flowerdale when the orphan arrived, gave him her name of Franklin?
- The name *Johnny Franklin* was at that time, also a slang name given to anyone who came over to Port Phillip from Tasmania. In 1842 the leaseholders of Flowerdale were the Mackenzies. Roderick Mackenzie shifted from Tasmania to Flowerdale in c. 1845. The Mackenzie family connection with Tasmania may have prompted the Mackenzies to approve the name John Franklin as a very appropriate name for the orphan, as it connected him to them, a family of "*johnnie franklins*" who had recently moved to the Goulburn River from Tasmania.
- But where does Donald Ferguson fit into this story? Donald didn't buy the Flowerdale lease until 1857.
  - However Ferguson had a continuing connection with Flowerdale and the Mackenzies since shortly after his arrival in the colony in 1841 as a 21 year old Scot. He moved to the district shortly after arriving and overlanded sheep and cattle for the Killingsworth Estate, just near Flowerdale. It was common for young ambitious men to learn the trade of sheep and cattle breeding by working for established estates as rouseabouts, drovers and later managers. Ferguson must have been a frequent visitor at Flowerdale during the 1840s because he courted and married Roderick Mackenzies daughter Jessie Mary. Sometime between 1845 and 1857 he managed

<sup>9</sup> Irene Lawrey, Audio interview, DB. Rec. 174.

<sup>10</sup> Sandra Smith, collected 19/3/93. DB. Rec. 213.

<sup>11</sup> Irene Lawrey, interview with Chester Draper; Sandra Smith interview with Yea resident, DB. Recs. 177, 180.

<sup>12</sup> Carol Yates notes, DB Rec. 204

the Mt Macedon Ranges Estate, also known as Steeles Creek Estate, for Dr Cain [Kane].<sup>13</sup> [Billis & Kenyon] [Obit.].

- Did Ferguson get to know the young orphan at Flowerdale? He certainly would have if John Franklin was brought up by the Mackenzies. It is clear from Franklin's later skills that the settler who fostered him taught him to read, write and calculate as well as to speak English, and he also got a thorough training in all the rural skills he used later in life to work; fencing, droving, harvesting, building etc. it seems probable that Franklin was brought up in the family home along with the settlers own children and probably attended their lessons with them.
- It's also possible that Ferguson and his bride took the young boy to Mt Macedon Ranges Estate when Ferguson went there as manager. We have no evidence of this at the moment, but welcome any further stories that you may have about this or other points I have mentioned.
- When Ferguson bought the Flowerdale lease in 1857, he was 37 years old and John Franklin was a grown young man around 20 years. It is clear from the collected local stories that he worked for Ferguson at Flowerdale for some time, but we don't know when this started or for how long. We can assume that after 1857 he worked at Flowerdale for Ferguson for some time, and that locals noticed the affection that Ferguson had for him. He appeared to be treated more like family than just a paid farm hand.
- There is one more very significant piece of evidence that connects John Franklin, as an adopted family member, to the Mackenzies, Fergusons, Aitkins and McLeishes [all Scots]. In 1902 an important society wedding took place at the Glenmore Estate, the home of the MacLeishes. Their niece Kitty Underwood was marrying Alfred Aitkin of Switzerland Estate. Members of the Ferguson, Mackenzie and Aitkin families as well as several other early landed families helped relatives of the bride and groom celebrate. This was a small but important local wedding that took up three columns in the *Yea Chronicle*, where every lady's costume was described and all the wedding presents listed. Yet John and Harriet Franklin were also included amongst the guests. This Aboriginal man held a very important place in the hearts of these families. His wedding gift to the young couple was significant too. It consisted of two emu eggs, surely a symbol of his origins and a reminder of the time long ago when he arrived in their lives as a lost boy.<sup>14</sup>

### **Part 3**

#### **Husband, farmer and father:**

#### **Marriage and family life:**

In 1874 both John Franklin and Harriet Tull were working as general servants at Doogalook Estate, which was then owned by the pastoral company Goldsborough and Co. Harriet Tull was 21 years old, born in Williamstown near Melbourne, and with English parents. It was at Doogalook that the couple met and decided to marry. They were married in the St. George's Presbyterian manse at Kilmore.

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<sup>13</sup> Obituaries, Donald Ferguson, *Yea Chronicle*, 20/9/1994, p.2; Kilmore Free Press, 20/9/1894; Billis & Kenyon for Killingworth Estate, Don Ferguson.

<sup>14</sup> *Yea Chronicle*, Thur. 5 June 1902, p.3

There is no record of the wedding in the local paper but it was common for simple weddings to be held in the manse rather than the church. One of the two witnesses was Alexander MacCrae,<sup>15</sup> the other Elizabeth Harper. Nothing is currently known about either of these people but possibly they also both worked at Doogalook or may have been connected with the local congregation. John and Harriet went on to have twelve children between 1874 and 1897.

### The married farmer:

- Irene Lawrey stated that they both worked on the Kalatha Creek Estate after their marriage and remained there until after the birth of their third child c. 1878.<sup>16</sup> Kalatha Creek Estate had formerly been called Island Estate, which had been split off from the original Murandindi run.<sup>17</sup>

As a married man with a growing family, John and Harriet would have initially occupied a simple married man's hut or cottage. These were often split log two room huts with an outside kitchen. Some had tamped dirt floors. They would most likely have been employed as a married couple with Harriet having extra duties in cooking or doing the laundry for the family of the leaseholders. By the 1870s the more prosperous leaseholders were building permanent coach houses, shearing sheds and workers quarters that were symbols of their acquired wealth. Four roomed weatherboard or brick cottages for married workers started to replace the rough crude accommodation of earlier days.

Life would have been hard for both of them. When their first child Hannah was born in 1876 John was working as a boundary rider,<sup>18</sup> a job he held during his employment there.<sup>19</sup> There is some evidence that at times he had to borrow money to make ends meet. A local court case in 1876, Mahoney v Franklin, was listed to recover 13s 6d and goods sold to Franklin.<sup>20</sup> The case was withdrawn before its hearing date indicating that somehow Franklin had found the money to discharge the debt.

With three children born it was time to work harder to provide a more secure life for them. His opportunity came when the Land Act was amended in 1878 making it easier for small farmers to apply for a lease of Crown Land. In 1879 he applied for a selector's lease of 80 acres at Glenmore about seven miles up the road from Kalutha Creek.<sup>21</sup> The Crown surveyor described this land as "poor and stoney... undulating at base of hills, poorly grassed, moderately timbered with gum, peppermint and stringybark...creek has a few holes in it that store water all year."<sup>22</sup> it was unusual for an Aboriginal to be granted a lease and the Yea Council had to lobby hard on his behalf to support his application. It is not surprising that Donald Ferguson was on the council and probably led the support. It was reported that:

*"It will scarcely be believed that this true son of the soil had great difficulty in obtaining his selection. The officials were against him, the red-tape system was against him, and, had it not been for the energetic action of the shire council on his behalf, John Franklin would have*

<sup>15</sup> Family stories suggest that this witness was Tommy McCrae, the Indigenous artist born in Albury in 1842, who resided in North East Victoria for much of his life. This is unlikely. He never went by the name of Alexander, but had at times been called Tommy Barnes.

<sup>16</sup> Irene Lawrey in video interview for DVD.

<sup>17</sup> Billis & Kenyon for station information.

<sup>18</sup> Birth Certificate information for Hanna Franklin. [DB, Rec 39]

<sup>19</sup> Birth Certificate information for John Charles Franklin and William Henry Franklin. [DB, Rec. 40, 43]

<sup>20</sup> *Kilmore Free Press*, 5<sup>th</sup> October 1876, Kilmore Police Court, Mahoney v Franklin.

<sup>21</sup> PROV, VPRS, 626/2614,/Seymour, Application for Lease or Crown Grant by Licensee of Land under "The Land Act 1869" as amended by "The Land Act 1878". Copy of John Franklin's application.

<sup>22</sup> PROV, VPRS, 626/2614,/Seymour, *Surveyor Dawson's Report*, Jan 23 1879,



*had to live a Government pauper in the land which a little more than half a century ago was every foot of it owned by his race. There are others at Coranderrk that might be advantageously transformed from paupers to farmers.”<sup>23</sup>*

To keep his lease John had to fence the land securely, build a residence and cultivate the land. He also had to pay 2 shillings rent per acre annually [£8 for eighty acres] which could be converted to purchase the land. Despite initial difficulties, by late 1879 John gained his lease and on George Edward’s birth certificate in 1882 John listed his occupation as farmer at Glenmore on the Yea River.<sup>24</sup>

It wasn’t easy for Franklin to meet his lease obligations with an ever growing family. He got quite a lot of fencing done and built a four room split log house with a bark rook for his family, but between 1879 and 1885 John frequently could not meet the rent payments on the lease and letters remain on file that he wrote to the Lands Office in Seymour seeking an extension of time to meet the payment. By 1885 the Lands Office was considering cancelling his lease, but they sent the bailiff, a local policeman from Yea, to inspect the property to see if John had met his other obligations including fencing and building a house.

The bailiff found that Franklin had made improvements to the value of £123. These included a 64 chain chock and log fence, a 30 chain post and rail fence and 85 chain brush fence much in need of repair. A four room slab and bark house had been built, value £30 as well as a fowl house, a pig sty a dam and a well. Three acres had been prepared for the cultivation of potatoes but this was not successful as the land was poor. Franklin said he took on other work to supplement their income including shearing, fruit picking and harvesting. The bailiff signed the required document saying that Franklin had complied with the conditions of the lease and was a “bonafide holder” as he and his family had resided for the 5 ½ years on the property. The bailiff pleaded on Franklin’s behalf that he:

*“had great difficulty to meet his rent and maintain his very large and helpless family. In fact were it not for the industry of his wife he would have been compelled to abandon the land.”<sup>25</sup>* Franklin was able to continue with his lease.

Despite Franklin’s difficulties in making a small farm pay, he was held up as an example of success. In 1887, a farming expert from Melbourne was invited to visit and write a series of articles about the future of farming in the district and the new advances that could improve productivity and encourage more people onto the land. He advocated the district change from grazing to agriculture and suggested that fruit and vegetable production, dairying and vineyards could be established around Yea on the Goulburn River, by small holders who could make more profits on small acerages. He was taken to see Franklin’s farm and said:

*One of the most interesting small farms I have met with in my rambles through-out Australia is on this road. It is owned-by a Victorian aboriginal who has taken to himself the name of John Franklin. He has about 250 acres in two blocks, and has formed a comfortable home for himself... John Franklin has taken unto himself a wife of pure European blood, and has a numerous young brood growing up. He is much liked by the people in the neighbour- hood, is honest, sober, and industrious and takes great pride in the success of his children at the local school.<sup>26</sup>*

<sup>23</sup> Alexander and Yea Standard, 25<sup>th</sup> March 1887, p.3

<sup>24</sup> Birth Certificate information for George Edward Franklin, son of John Franklin. Data base, Rec. 45.

<sup>25</sup> Prov, VPRS 626, 2614. Letter to Lands Office from bailiff dated 16 May 1885.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander and Yea Standard, 25<sup>th</sup> March 1887, p.3

The size of Franklin's farm was increased in 1892 when Franklin applied for and was granted a further 145 acres on Karaman [sic] Creek situated north of Mr E. Underwood's property<sup>27</sup> and had to insert several trespass notices to take possession of it.<sup>28</sup> He later sold this block in 1897 to the Macleishes<sup>29</sup>. Newspaper records in the 1890s describe the size of his two holdings at Caraman Creek as 240 acres. The Colonial bank held a mortgage over the 80 acre block in the 1890s and a Mrs Isabella Halpin [widow of Trentham] also appeared to have held a mortgage against his property. He continued to have trouble finding the annual rental for the lease of the second block throughout the 1890s.

Franklin was always a hard worker eager to increase his income.

The 1890s were a period of economic depression in Victoria when a financial crash in Argentina caused a following depression across the world. Financial speculation had run out of control internationally in the 1880s and European banks that had poured speculative money into Argentina and other colonies went bankrupt. In Australia, businesses and the farming community suddenly found that overseas credit had dried up. Many businesses were bankrupted and real estate values plummeted causing both city land and farms to be sold cheaply.<sup>30</sup>

Franklin tried a number of jobs to stay solvent. He agisted cattle on his land.<sup>31</sup> In 1892 he went gold mining on the Yea River [Muddy Creek] but abandoned the claim as it was inundated by water.<sup>32</sup> For a time he tried dairying on the Glenburn block as the coming of the railway to Yea enabled milk and cream to be sent by train to Melbourne. He was able to produce high quality product with 4.1% butterfat and get seven shillings and six pence per gallon for his milk.<sup>33</sup> Between 1891 and 1895 Franklin also tendered for and obtained a number of contracts from the Shire for road making or bridge repairs<sup>34</sup> and also appeared to work as a carter picking up and delivering parcels from the Yea Railway Station until 1900<sup>35</sup>. It was during this difficult period in 1897 that Franklin sold the farm block on Karaman Creek that he had bought in 1892. There is even some evidence that either he or his son [John Charles Franklin] worked periodically as a drover during these difficult years.<sup>36</sup> But more changes were to occur when he and Harriet moved into Yea in 1905,<sup>37</sup> bought a house at 84 Marshbank Street and Harriet opened a tea shop.

This period of their life in Yea township in the early 1900s opened up new possibilities for both John and Harriet as the whole family became involved in many community activities. John had time to join the International Order of Oddfellows, Anglesey Lodge and by 1907 was an office bearer,

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<sup>27</sup> *Alexander and Yea Standard*, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1885.p.xx Franklin later described his farm being on Karaman [sic]Creek.

<sup>28</sup> *Yea Chronicle*, trespass notices for land at Karaman Creek inserted on 25 May, 20 August, 17 September and 24 September 1891. Also *Kilmore Press*, 8 December 1892 notice granting application for land.

<sup>29</sup> *Yea Chronicle*, 19 August 1897, auctioneer's report.

<sup>30</sup> Clark, Manning, *A Short History of Australia*, Melbourne, MacMillan, 1981, [2<sup>nd</sup> edition revised, 1983],pp. 198-200.

<sup>31</sup> *Kilmore Free Press*, 13 March 1990, Franklin had to recover costs of agistment in court.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 15 September 1892, pp. xx

<sup>33</sup> *Yea Chronicle*, 5 March 1896, pp.xx

<sup>34</sup> *Yea Chronicle*, 5 February 1891, 7 May 1891, 9 March 1893, 10 January 1895.

<sup>35</sup> *Yea Chronicle*, 25 June 1891, 9 March 1893, 22 February 1894, 7 March 1895, 20 January 1896, 28 January 1897, 1 February 1900, 27 June 1900.

<sup>36</sup> *Yea Chronicle*, 24 May 1894, pp.xx , Item 87 Lorain's data base, marriage certificate of Walter I Franklin & Lily Patterson.

<sup>37</sup> Irene Lawrey, DVD interview, Franklins moved into Yea when her grandfather was 12 year old.

enjoying smoke nights and suppers at the Council Chambers with his fellow “brothers”. He remained a member of this male fraternity at least until 1919 and possibly beyond.<sup>38</sup>

In 1905 he was still strong enough at age 69 to come first in the “old buffers race” held at a sports meeting at Woodburne,<sup>39</sup> but was starting to slow down by 1912 when he fell from his horse while riding along the Molesworth Road.<sup>40</sup>

Throughout the war years [1914-1918] like other Yea residents, both John and Harriet contributed to local appeals to assist soldiers overseas and those who returned after the war. Harriet donated a case of pineapples to be auctioned for the Belgian Relief Fund in 1915; John subscribed to the Yea Red Cross in 1916 and donated a further 10/6 to the War Effort. In 1919 they donated a guinea [£1/1/0] to the Campfire Concert organised by the YMCA [Young Men’s Christian Association] to raise funds for incapacitated returning soldiers. Financially things seemed to be easier for the Franklins perhaps because of the success of Harriet’s tea shop and also because farm produce was in high demand and fetching high prices as the war progressed. Harriet purchased a one acre block of land in Yea township in 1916 and later her cookery skills were celebrated at the local Yea Agricultural Show when she won first prize of 2/6d for her sausage rolls.<sup>41</sup>

The Franklins melded fairly seamlessly into life in the small town of Yea, although later generations told of petty acts of discrimination that the Franklin children sometimes experienced. Irene Lawrey gradually perceived as a young child that this discrimination still existed in Yea against people of Aboriginal descent. Despite this three of Franklin’s boys played in the local football team for Yea in 1914 and two sons, Leslie and Walter Franklin, enlisted and fought in the First World War.<sup>42</sup> Like other local families they celebrated many weddings during this period as their children found partners and started to move away from their family home in Yea. This period marks the start of this second generations move to Melbourne. In 1914 Herbert married Mable Underwood in Kensington. In 1915 Charles married Maggie O’Brien in Richmond and the same year William Henry married Eliza Harris in South Melbourne. It appears that the Franklins continued to keep in touch with former local Aboriginal people who lived at Coranderrk, as in 1916 Walter Lance married Lily Patterson at Coranderrk.<sup>43</sup> The children’s marriage certificates variously list John Franklin’s occupation as labourer, grazier or drover illustrating his active pursuit of work even into his 70s.

On 20<sup>th</sup> October 1921, John Franklin died aged 84 at his home in Marshbank Street, Yea. He was suffering from cancer of the oesophagus and heart failure. It was said in his Obituary that he died playing cards at his home, having won the previous two rounds and that he was a “most known resident of Yea” who had resided there since a boy. A large number of people attended his funeral attesting to the much greater prize that he had won over his lifetime: the respect and love of a great many people in his local community.

Harriet remained in Yea and died there in 1926.

Finish.

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<sup>38</sup> *Yea Chronicle*, 12 December 1907 Brother Franklin installed as a “Left Supporter of the Grand Noble” [LSGN], 4 June 1908, 2 February 1916, 21 December 1916, 19 June 1919.

<sup>39</sup> *Yea Chronicle*, 6 April 1905.

<sup>40</sup> *Yea Chronicle*, 14 August 1912.

<sup>41</sup> *Yea Chronicle*, 12 October 1916, 27 November 1919.

<sup>42</sup> *Yea Chronicle*, 3 June 1915, 1 June 1916, 14 September 1916, 18 October 1917, 12 September 1918.

<sup>43</sup> Loraine’s data base, records 84,85,86,79. Marriage certificates for these weddings.

