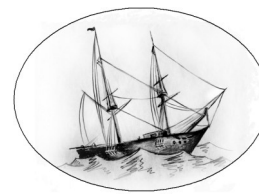


Past and Present

Newsletter of the Yankalilla and District Historical Society

August 2026

<https://www.yankalilladistricthistory.org.au/>

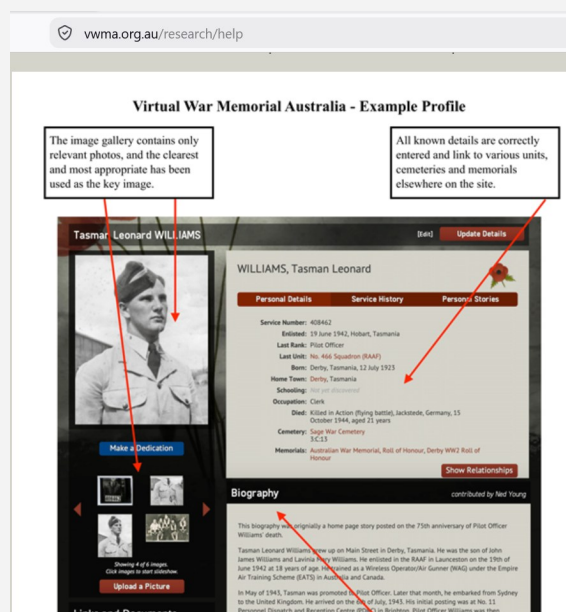


Virtual War Memorial

Last year we had an article about the site and the need to add names from our area. Since then Nigel Pile has been tracking down names and we now have the opportunity to have expert guidance from Mr Peter Williams on how it is done. If you have a relative or are interested in local people who have served, check out the site

<https://vwma.org.au>

It has interesting stories beautifully displayed. There are step by step instructions on the site about adding information.



Come along to the Friday talk in September and hear about the project. Send us some details and Peter will walk us through a submission. See details on page 4.

From The President

As you read this we will be meeting for our annual Strategic Plan review where we reflect on our Society to see if we are meeting our aims and complying with regulations as well as planning for the next twelve months.

One of the achievements we are most proud of is our website. The digitization of the vast amount of local history material we have collected and its organization to make it accessible has been a steep learning curve for our team. In a world of AI algorithms we have a responsibility to make sure the material we publish is correct as our resources become a source quoted widely, entering into aggregations beyond our control. Errors can be perpetuated far beyond our district.

How should we celebrate our 50th birthday in 2027? if you have any ideas please don't hesitate to share them. A major event will be the launch of the Myponga book that Marilyn McLaren and Margaret Morgan have been working on. It will encompass the history and people who are part of that history, an epic task worth waiting for.

One of the things we will be considering is whether our monthly meetings are popular enough to continue with. The bimonthly Friday talks in the library are always well attended but the Monday night meetings are more challenging for those of us who travel a long distance at night. The committee meet monthly so the business of the society is in good hands. Perhaps we should have monthly Friday talks with alternate months including society business? Or perhaps include a half hour of YDHS business before the Friday talk? Would a weekend meeting attract more members? We are open to suggestions.

Don't forget to get your photos in for the Yankalilla Show. Nigel Pile recently took this lovely picture of the Biddle Cottage with its roof on.



Sue Speck

0448 438 974

**Yankalilla, Rapid Bay & Myponga
Agricultural & Horticultural Society Inc.**

This year the show is on 3 October 2026
9am - 4pm

<https://www.yankshow.com/>

Myponga Post Office - Spot the difference. This lovely, thatched post office was on Pages Flat Road, near Myponga, ca. 1908.



Many thanks to Rob Kirk for the above image, YDHS collection 9141, colourised by Chat GPT. I am fascinated by the way the program imagines detail and renders the image in such a realistic way. One difference to spot is the window on the left of the picture has been increased from six panes to twelve. On closer inspection (easier if viewing on a computer) the signage has a modern font and “Savings Bank Agency” has become “Bank Agency”. A smart milk churn has replaced one of the containers in the front and the single item on the right near the stacked boxes has become a group of pottery vessels.

The Myponga Post Office first opened on 22nd May 1844. Throughout its early history, the office was often run out of local residences or general stores by community figures. This building is nearer to the Old Sellick Hill Road than Myponga township, what is now Pages Flat Road, then the main road over the ranges for the stagecoaches.

Charles Forbes established himself as a general storekeeper in Myponga in the 1860s and took over the local post office duties there. He held the position until his death in 1898.

A later post office in the area was managed by a number of women: Mrs Spencer, followed by her daughter Mrs Baxter, and then Mrs H. Stock (nee Baxter).

There was another Post Office on Section 687 at Myponga Beach, (also known as Myponga Jetty, YDHS photo 7594) and still there today, now a private home. The post office and store was the home of Ethelbert Heber Hewett from about 1865 to 1874.



Image from Myponga Community Group, from a Facebook page called The Surf Chasers.

Ethelbert Heber Hewett

Charles Thomas Hewett bought this land in 1863 and in 1867 transferred section 683 and part of section 687 to his son Eldad, and another small part of section 687 (two roods ten perches) to his son Ethelbert Heber Hewett, generally known as Heber. Heber married Jane Norman, the daughter of John Norman, on 20 June 1860 at St Stephens Church Willunga. The young couple must have moved about quite a lot, as their first child was born at Aldinga, their second at Goolwa, and the third at Cape Jervis. All three children were girls. In a newspaper report Heber, was described as a carter. However, his business could not have been very successful as he was declared insolvent in September 1863. They went to Cape Jervis to live and work, but while he was there Heber was accused of stealing a bullock and in December 1863 he was tried, convicted and sentenced to 12 months hard labour. His father got up a petition to have the sentence remitted, which petition was signed by a number of prominent people in the district, and the result was that Heber was freed after only a few months in jail. C.T. Hewett argued that the case should have been tried as a dispute of ownership and that his son had not intended to steal the bullock.

After this incident Heber returned to Myponga Jetty, where he was a storekeeper, and also for a few years had charge of the jetty. It is not certain when this cottage was built but the Hewett family was certainly involved in collecting the mail, and it is very likely that they used this cottage as the post office until they left the district.

In total Heber and Jane had thirteen children, nine girls and four boys. He died at Crystal Brook on 21 September 1908. His wife Jane died 30 March 1915.

Rob Kirk and Margaret Morgan.

Volunteer Rifles.

In 1854 in response to the Crimean war and a perceived Russian threat "The Volunteer Military Forces Act" was passed leading to the formation of many Volunteer Rifle groups. As South Australia was not a penal settlement there was no army unit present in the early days, the police force having both civil and military duties. And the Volunteer Rifles were able to assist. William Randall raised a company called the "Finniss Vale Mounted Rifles" at Second Valley. They remained one of the largest groups outside of the Adelaide area. In the early part of 1861 a group of men at Yankalilla made application to form a group in their area, Captain Randall was keen to assist and offered some spare rifles. The practice ground was the beach north of the Normanville Jetty and by the end of May about 40 volunteers had been sworn in. Mr Herbert was appointed as Commander and Recruiting agent followed by John Heathcote. Many joint exercises were held and there was much comradeship in the following years.

From "The Second Valley" by Ron Blum. Article below from the Adelaide Observer.

Sep 1862 / Page 3 / THE WEEK'S NEWS.

YANKALILLA.—The Yankalilla volunteers mustered in strength on Tuesday, and, with the exception of four or five recent recruits, appeared in their new uniform for the first time. The cause of their muster was the presentation of a flag by the ladies of the district. The company fell in at 12 o'clock, and after two hours' drill a substantial luncheon of bread and cheese and beer was served out on the ground. At 3 o'clock they again fell in, when the presentation took place. The lady of Captain Heathcote was deputed by the fair donors to act on their behalf, which she did by delivering a suitable address and presenting the flag to Lieut. Foale, who, on behalf of the company, returned thanks to the ladies in a neat speech. The company fired a *feu de joie*, and gave three hearty cheers for the Queen and the ladies. Skirmishing drill was resumed till 5 o'clock, under the able direction of Drill-Instructor Slater. During the day an immense concourse of spectators was on the ground, including many of the fair sex, and the encomiums passed upon the martial appearance of the company was general. The flag is a beautiful work of art, and cost £18. In the centre is a large kangaroo, surmounted by a crown, grass-trees, &c., around which is a band bearing the inscription, "Yankalilla Rifles," again surmounted with the rose, shamrock, and thistle, and the Union Jack in the corner. In the evening there was a soiree held in the large room of the Royal Hotel, lent for the occasion. Most of the volunteers, with their wives and friends, were present, with several ladies and gentlemen by special invitation. The evening was pleasantly passed with music, songs, recitations, and dancing.

NORMANVILLE.—TO be LET on Lease, the **ROYAL HOTEL, NORMANVILLE.** The House contains about Fourteen well-finished Rooms, Billiard-Room with Slate Table, handsome Bar, fitted with Counter, Beer-Engine, &c., large Kitchen Range, a Six-Stall Stable, and two lock-up Coach-Houses; convenient Cellarage and Out-Offices: Well of good Water, &c.

Immediate possession if required.

CHAS. ROWLAND,

142cv

38, King William-street.

The Adelaide Observer article mentions that the gathering of the Volunteer Rifles was in the Royal Hotel. This hotel was in Jetty Rd. between Field and Herbert Streets.

Timeline Royal Hotel

1860: John Dean applied for licence (Advertiser 28-9-1860)

1861: Dean's infant son died (Register 23-1-1861)

Grounds of Royal Hotel rejected as site for Yankalilla Show (Register 15-2-1861)

Lease of Royal Hotel advertised – description of hotel (Register 25-5-1861) See advert above.

Lease to B.Pascoe withdrawn (Register 10-12-1861) [Pascoe had brewery]

1862: Hotel being used as temporary home of telegraph station (Register 6-10-1862)

1866: Royal Hotel (long closed) being used to house men working on jetty (Observer 26-5-1866)

Inquest held at hotel (Southern Argus 29-9-1866)

1868: hotel mentioned (15-2-1868)

1872: Wheal Mary mining company's office was at the hotel (Chronicle 20-7-1872)

John Norman returned to Normanville about 1866 and lived in Royal Hotel until he died in 1873

1866_20 N: in pencil – John Norman occupier 1 acre Royal Hotel £50

1867_20 N: John Norman occupier, Robert Norman owner 1 acre Royal Hotel £50

1873_18 L: John Norman occupier (in pencil change to R.Norman) R.Norman owner, 1 acre & Royal Hotel £30

1874_17 M: Robert Norman owner occupier £23

1880_14 M: Robert Norman owner occupier £15



Coming Events

September General Meeting.

7pm Monday 14th September 2026

Yankalilla Library.

Peter Filsell will present a talk about the Centenary of the Yankalilla Memorial Park. Now home to six sporting clubs with a range of facilities used by other sports and events, it is a major community precinct in our region. <https://yankalillamemorialpark.org.au/>

September 25th FRIDAY LIBRARY TALK



**Peter Williams
VIRTUAL WAR
MEMORIAL**

Learn about the Virtual War Memorial Australia at the Friday Library Talk on 25 September, where Chairman Mr Peter Williams will be the guest speaker. The Virtual War Memorial is Australia's largest online memorial honouring Australians who have served in conflicts from the Boer War to Afghanistan. Peter will demonstrate the site and has asked for information from four to five members about a family member who served Australia in any conflict. To nominate a relative, please email Emanda at e.fretwell@bigpond.com with the person's full name, service number if known, conflict served in, any other relevant details, and photos if available. The first replies will be forwarded to Peter for possible use in his presentation. During the talk, you may also be invited to share personal knowledge if you wish.

25th September 10.30 – 12.30

Yankalilla Library

**Check with the Events page on our website
yankalilladistricthistory.org.au**

**Email us
yank.hist.soc@gmail.com**

**Volunteers will be at the library for local
history consultation every Wednesday from
10am to 12.**

**Email yank.hist.soc@gmail.com if you have a
specific inquiry**



Museum News

The AGM of the Yankalilla Museum was held last Sunday and chairman Rob Ryan reflected on the year's achievements. A new shed was purchased and erected to house the megafauna and indigenous displays and Rob commented that the megafauna life size diprotodon Toto is probably the most photographed thing in the district. Currently pavers are being laid to connect all the buildings allowing wheelchair and walker access. On display were scale models made by Don Binney of the Farmall A and Farmall H tractors from the museum. The formalities were efficiently dealt with, the committee re-elected with the addition of John



King. Following the election of the committee Taylor Lupp gave a talk about using a metal detector to locate historical artefacts at Cape Jervis on the site of the lighthouse keepers cottages and at Rapid Bay at the site of the first encampment of Colonel Light's survey party.

A delicious afternoon tea followed.

Community Archives.

Did you know that YDHS has a community archive? Material lodged with us includes minute books and photographic collections and other material like research notes. Material is being added all the time but you can see what is held by going to the research page on our website and clicking on the "view Community Archive" link. This will bring up a list of materials currently held. If you wish to view the material you can contact our archivist by email yank.hist.soc@gmail.com or come in to the Yankalilla library on a Wednesday between 10 and 12.

