



The Croaker

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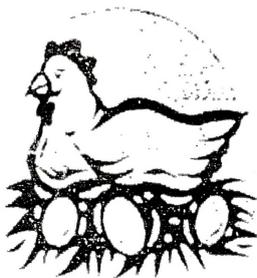
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RAYNER'S FREE RANGE EGGS - BIRREGURRA:

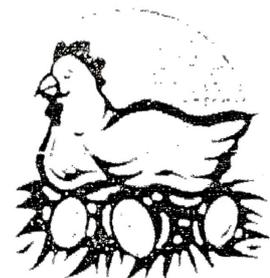
For sixteen years now Annette and Stuart Rayner have provided us with our free-range eggs. With the definition of what 'free range' actually means recently in the news, it's time to explore how true free-range egg farming operates in our region.

The Rayners currently have 1000 Hy-line Brown chickens, housed in their movable shed on a hectare of land. The hens come to Rayners as sixteen-week-old pullets, 'work' for 12 months and are then rehomed to families and schools in the district.

The hens' ranging area is cropped with a weed called, appropriately, Fat Hen! Stuart used to sow turnips, barley and canola for them, but each year after that had been eaten, the weed just appeared and the chooks love it - so now Rayners go with the natural flow. Fat Hen grows to a metre high, and Stuart mows a track through it to allow the hens to wander. Even so, it only takes the mob three months to reduce the crop to bare earth.



**RAYNER'S
FREE RANGE EGGS**
LIDGERWOODS LANE, BIRREGURRA 3242



Inside the shed there are roosts, the chickens' high protein vegetarian food and water. Every morning after Annette and Stuart have collected the eggs, outside they come into their yard - with more food and water available, protected by electric fencing to deter foxes. That protection has been there from the start, but in their first year of operation, wedge-tailed eagles threatened the mob, so now the chickens have the extra security of two beautiful Maremma's to look after them.

Rayners Eggs operates well within the new national 'free-range' guidelines. While those standards require a maximum of 10,000 hens per hectare, Rayner have just 1000 and will build slowly to 1500. In addition, there are no national requirements for foraging crops like Fat Hen, so many 'free range' hens are only able to walk on bare earth or concrete, nor are outdoor food and water required, reducing the incentive for the hens to come outside. While the Rayners' shed opens out extensively on three sides, many sheds have only one or two small openings, again discouraging hens from venturing out. For more on the differences between Rayners' standards and what is supposed to be 'free range', see <http://www.theage.com.au/business/retail/free-range-eggs-ministers-sign-off-on-a-controversial-definition-20160330-gnus1j>

It is a real shame that the new national standards do not extend to these measures, but we can rest assured that our eggs come from hens with safe, varied and well-provisioned lives.

Stuart delivers eggs across the region three times a week, and we thank he and Annette for the eggs they donated to the recent Festival's Hall Committee barbeque. Those egg and bacon rolls went down a treat, and we're glad the Rayners and their guests really enjoyed the Festival this year, as we all did.

You can purchase your eggs at the Deans Marsh Store or call in directly.

Rayners Free Range Eggs: Lidgerwoods Lane, Birregurra. **Phone:** 52 36 2090

Deb C.

DEANS MARSH PRIMARY

SCHOOL NEWS:

CONGRATULATIONS: To Prep/1 teacher Liana Sinclair who married her partner Ben during the recent school holidays. On the last week of Term 1 we had a special school assembly including a mock wedding to help celebrate Liana's wedding. Thanks to the Grade 4/5/6 class for their efforts to make this a fun activity for all of us and especially for Liana.

SPORTING SCHOOLS: This term we will offer Netball and Football after school commencing next week. Netball sessions will be held with parent Karen Hart beginning on Tuesday 19th April for five weeks from 3:15-4:15pm. Then Football sessions will be held with parent Jen Bush commencing Wednesday 25th May for another five weeks from 3:15-4:15pm. These sessions are offered free of charge and all students are welcome to attend. For students to attend a permission form must be completed by parents prior to students attending the program.

TELSTRA ADSL CONTACT Changed arrangements:

All of you with ongoing ADSL questions, issues or concerns need to know that our main contact inside Telstra, Bill Mundy has left that organisation.

Therefore any of you who have his number as a contact will need to instead contact Jim Boag based in Telstra Countrywide Ballarat who has been here several times with Bill. Jim knows the issues you may be trying to deal with and can be contacted by email at Jim.Boag@team.telstra.com or on 53 38 6070.

When Bill's replacement is in place - he is to be based in Bendigo apparently - I will attempt to resuscitate discussions I was having with Bill about better cheaper internet access for Pennyroyal. Having established a good working relationship with Bill, Duane Dalton and their teams over the last two years, it is both surprising and disappointing to have to start again - but we have no choice sadly.

Deb Campbell

Sports News from the Swamp:

In years to come the Deans Marsh Festival could well become known as the 'Grand Toss Off'. So popular are the tossing games at the Festival with tossers from all over the state and overseas travelling to show off their tossing expertise. Jak from New Zealand a clear winner on the day in the Gum Boot Toss, made the journey specifically to demonstrate his skills and share his experience and techniques. Lisa from the Mornington Peninsula tossed a festival record to win the Open Women's.

The High Ball Toss was only decided by a spurious delivered toss. Matt Koferd (Melbourne) the eventual winner and Hamish Wishart (Inverleigh) went catch for catch. The toss machine (kindly supplied by the Swamp Rats Cricket Club) was set at 150kph, the balls were going out of sight, Matt and Hamish with their non preferred hand were still catching them. Next year we will be blind folding them.

Luke Sayers after having a hiatus from tossing last season was welcomed back and did not disappoint. The large crowd gathered around the sheaf toss installation. It went toss for toss between Luke and celebrity tosser Mark Drayton, with Luke clearing the bar at the maximum height to claim his fourth title.

The Deans Marsh Gift, Open Men's was won by Hayden Wallis and Charlotte Martin was the Open Women's winner (Charlotte also won the U16's).

Blackwood Cup (Swamp Rats v Wye River): In a first in eleven seasons the Blackwood Cup was a tie. It was decided after much deliberation and consultation that due to some questionable scoring methodology, which had both teams winning, the only result to another fantastic cricket match between the communities was a draw.

There were many highlights and several nominations for the coveted man of the match award. Nik, Jamie and Col from Wye, and Swamp Rats; Dan, Dylan and Doctor Dick. The Senator Richard di Natale received the nod from the panel and delivered a stirring speech about the strength of our two communities. Thanks to commentators Rob and John for another fine performance.



THE CROAKER MURMURINGS - APRIL/MAY 2016:

Zac Zdybel played at Skilled on Saturday 16th where he kicked two goals playing for the Geelong Falcons. He is trialling for the Victorian Country State under 18s.

Word is getting out, and local community members are eager to get behind the Winchelsea Asylum Support Group. The next meeting is in May, so if you want to be part of your local community that supports asylum seekers here's your chance. Contact Jenny Mathieson for more details.

Louise Brown wants us to get our vocal chords ready. The 2016 OMM choir rehearsals begin after the Queen's birthday weekend. In addition - it's official so put it in your diaries - OMM is booked to perform at the Birregurra Festival on Sunday the 9th October 2016. (As an aside our choirmaster was most impressed with Genevieve Picot's singing in The Dressmaker "3 Little Girls" – did you all recognise her?)

When our young ones show an entrepreneurial spirit, it is always great to see how the community supports them. Mid-March, Ruby Weatherhead organised her second annual small music festival. Richard & Jennifer Morrow agreed to host the event at Jinda Park. From Saturday afternoon to Sunday morning, around 600 local and Melbourne people attended to hear bands from Melbourne, and bands "Velvet Bow" from Aireys Inlet and "The Attics" from Colac. Jennifer said the delightful and well-behaved crowd left the property "with not even a cigarette butt left on the ground." Well done Ruby, your friends and volunteers for ensuring the event was a successful one.

The resignation of Ruth Hamilton is a blow but we congratulate her on her new role at the COGG. We wish you well and thank you for your energy and input as Cottage Co-ordinator. New opportunities are here for someone else to fill that role now. Keep an eye out for the advertised position. By the way do you know who your DMCC committee members are: Lachie Stevens (Chair), Lucy Quarterman, Jane Gorman, Victor Goldsztein, and James Morton (Treasurer). We are always looking for new members and would welcome your interest.

The Big Barwon River walk took off for 3 nights in early April. Anyone can go on these annual walks and people who have gone on them enjoy it so much even if they can only make one night or a day walk. The walk is organised with farmers beforehand and as you walk through their land there is a chance to talk and walk through ideas, problems, and successes and generally exchange knowledge. This is what community does best, walking, camping, swimming (and kayaking apparently) along land where the mighty Barwon River flows. We hope to bring you more from Peter Greig in our next edition.

The Green's Re-election Campaign fundraiser held at Liz and Tom Reid's last week saw around 70 people attend and raise around \$4,000. It was a lovely relaxed event and Richard di Natale spoke and answered questions from the floor and told stories from the Senate. It was all very interesting and although I don't want to overshadow the talents of the speaker - I have to say the food was fantastic - no doubt because a lot of it was organically grown locally and the baklava from Future Cafe in Colac was just superb.

The Deans Marsh Singers and Gosling Creek Winery invite any OMM people to a workshop with "Co-cheòl". This acapella group is playing at 1.00pm at the Winery. It's on Sunday 24th April, it costs \$20 for the workshop that runs from 10 to 11am. Then stay for lunch and sit back with a glass of wine – the girls will begin their Sunday afternoon performance at 1.00pm.

Jane G.

INVITATION:

The 2016 Upper Barwon Landcare Dinner and Annual General Meeting

Guest speaker: Martin Scuffins - Raptor Handler and Wildlife Artist

Friday evening May 13th - from 6pm

Birregurra Golf Club Rooms

2 Park Lane Birregurra

\$30 a head

*Bookings are essential! Please RSVP by the **6th May***

52 36 2401 or mandy@ubln.org.au

Deans Marsh Festival Report:

Once again the Festival was a huge success, thank you to everyone who sponsored and supported the day especially Andrew Blankfield, Jill Stewart, Tom Reid, Mark Fagan, Brett Smartt, Renee Wigley, and of course a huge thanks to all the community groups: The Hall Committee, Cricket Club, Deans Marsh Primary School, The Red Cross and the CFA.

The community groups raised over \$8000 for their respective causes and the Festival receives 10% back from the groups to support next year's event.

As you are probably aware the Cottage took the reins of the Festival two years ago, so it would continue to be the yearly event the community has grown to love. The Cottage's aim is to ensure the local groups are provided with an opportunity to raise much needed funds and to promote a sense of community connectedness. The Cottage donates its time and many resources to the Festival and is proud to say that this year we saw 3000 plus people attend the day.

We have received a huge amount of positive feedback, which we would like to share with you...

"Thank you for having Little Squirtz face painting at the Deans Marsh Festival. It was a very successful day for us and we will definitely be back again next year. I just wanted to thank you also for such a well-organised event. As I attend quite a few, you guys did an awesome job. I also had a lot of the public comment on how much they were enjoying themselves."

"Thanks to all of you at the Cottage and congratulations on running another great community event! Over the years I have found the main feedback from our festival goers has been the fantastic community atmosphere we generate and that didn't change this year. Well done."

"Weather was good and my site was a good spot. So happy I could leave the car there behind my stall, thanks, it makes things a lot easier too. It is an enjoyable community feel festival and I will hope to come back in Sept and Nov."

"Thanks for having us on Sunday, it was such a lovely wholesome day and great for families."

"Congratulations on a very well organised festival. We know that lots of work and volunteer hours go into an event such as this so please pass on our best wishes to everyone."

"We had a top day and much fun was had by all. Please feel free to clock us in for next year's markets and festival, along with the Winter Solstice that you mentioned at the festival."

"Just want to congratulate you all on what fantastic effort you all put in to make the festival a great one. Thank you so much for making our sites larger with plenty of room, even for our vehicles. A great day and financially rewarding."

"Thank you for a great market, it was amazingly organised and ran very smoothly."

WHAT'S ON: APRIL - MAY 2016

Sporting Schools DMPS: NETBALL

Deans Marsh Singers & Gosling Creek Winery

Greens Fundraiser *Forrest Neighbourhood House*

Blakes Estate Winery: Film Night

Martians Cafe Live Music - Brian Fraser

Upper Barwon Landcare Dinner & AGM

Martians Cafe Live Music - John Luke Shelley

Sporting Schools DMPS: FOOTBALL

Tuesdays from 19th April 3.15pm x 5 weeks

Sunday 24th April - 10am at the Winery
Workshop with acapella group "Co-cheòl"

Sunday 24th April - 5pm featuring:

Rod Quantock "The Last Tim Tam"

Friday 29th April - 7pm 'Mozart's Sister'

Friday 6th May - 7.30pm

Friday 13th May - Meeting 6.30pm/Dinner 7pm

Sunday 15th May - 3pm

Wednesdays from 25th May 3.15pm x 5 weeks