



## CONTRIBUTE TO CONNECTING COBDEN . . . OCCASIONALLY?

Are you interested in contributing occasionally to Connecting Cobden? You may like to interview one of our Cobden characters? You may like to write a short piece about an activity you are involved in? You may like to snap a photo or two? You may be keen on layout? If you've nearly answered "yes" to any of these questions, please come and discuss your interest with us. Students, any published work adds value to your resume. Satisfying and enjoyable too!

Contact Kelvin (5595 1700/0429 921 876), Barbara (5595 4243) or email kelvin@swllen.net.au

## 68 GREAT GRANDIES, 93 YEARS-OLD . . . AND PLENTY OF POWER TO ADD!

**Thelma Walsh is well-qualified to say what she thinks.**

She will be 94 on April 11th, she is the matriarch of a family numbering seven children, 28 grandchildren and 68 great grandchildren, she doesn't drink or smoke, she has won a "town garden of the year" award and she has always considered Cobden "her town".

So what does she think? For a start, she believes Cobden District Health Services deserve more staff. "All this money spent on new year fireworks is a waste. I tell all the visiting health officials the girls here do a wonderful job . . . but they're under-staffed!"

Thelma also believes football is more like basketball now. "They're taking the marking and kicking out of the game, there is less physical stuff, they all chase the ball . . . and they all get too much money."

"And why do so many people race overseas? There are any amount of nice places to see in Australia!"

Miss Thelma Flaherty grew up on a farm about two and a half miles out of Cobden at Bostocks Creek. The daughter of Campbell and Florrie Flaherty, she attended Bostocks Creek Primary School to grade 8 before taking up full-time milking on the farm. About forty cows had to be milked by hand.

She was the eldest of four daughters – sisters Dora (Beaton), Annie (Eyars) and Joan (Wallace) followed her over a ten year-period. Remarkably, the three Flaherty brothers had four girls each. "All Flaherty girls, no Flaherty boys" was the catch-cri when Joan arrived to complete the team of twelve females."

As the Flaherty name implies, Thelma's grandfather immigrated from Ireland in the 1850s.

The Walsh family farmed at Bonny Doon at Tandarook but son Dick took up acres on Shenfields Lane (where Jodie and Ben McKenzie are farming) and that's where Dick and Thelma settled after meeting at a Bostocks Creek dance.

The couple married at St Brendan's in 1941. Along came Emily (Russell), Joan (Hammond), Frank, Peter, Kelvin, Gerard and Maria (Courtney) who all kept their parents on their toes as they ventured into their various careers - farming, plumbing, railways, accounting and computing - while raising their own 28 children and 68 grandchildren.

As it stands, Thelma's oldest great grandchild is Jacob Roberts (25) and the youngest is Matthew and Lisa Walsh's Mia (five months) . . . with plenty of power to add!

Against her wishes, husband Dick entered the winning Walsh garden in the local club's competition in 1982. Thelma, who believes she got her love for gardening from her mother, especially appreciates roses and gladioli, no particular colours but preferably older roses because they have a better scent. "At one stage, I had 300 dahlias!" she said proudly.

Since moving into Tandarook Lodge and, now, Lovely Banks, the one thing Thelma misses about her former Cobden home on the corner of Scott and Walker streets is her vegetable garden. "Everyone should have a vegetable garden," she said. "Just being able to pop out and grab what you need for tea is a great thing."

**Sport has played a major role in Thelma's life:**

- Her immediate families played a lot of sport so she was often on milking duties.
- Husband Dick, who died 17 years ago, played in a Cobden reserves premiership in 1931.
- She was a great supporter of the Cobden Junior Football Club with presentation dinners even held at their Shenfields Lane home. Son Frank was coach of the first under 16 premiership team in 1969. He was also runner-up in the Hampden Football League Maskell Cup in 1968.
- Son Kelvin played in a South Purrumbete premiership team.
- Son Gerard came home from Melbourne for ten years to play cricket and football.
- While Thelma loves watching football, she



**Thelma Walsh is sure it's "better to laugh than cry".**

**does not barrack for an AFL team – just Cobden in the Hampden league.**

- Football wins every time over cricket (especially "stone-wall" cricket) but she will still watch it if there is nothing else on television.
- She laughs about tarpaulins being hung across trees out at Bostocks Creek so the Ibbs, the Marwoods, the Batemans and the Vaggs could get changed for football.
- Thelma played bowls for 42 years, winning a B grade championship by defeating Norma Coverdale.

Asked to choose one particular highlight from all the family members' considerable sporting achievements, Thelma politely and diplomatically refused. But she did reflect on son Peter's remarkable progress since being struck down by pneumococcal septicaemia in 2006. "I did not expect him to come home," she said.

Referring to Peter's hand transplant nearly two years ago, "It's marvellous what they can do."

Apart from supporting family members in their pursuits, Thelma has also found time to make slices and sponges for organisations like the hospital committee and bowling club, and she is a life member of the local Catholic Women's League which she joined when it was formed about seventy years ago. She also made vegetable soup for footy club Thursday night teas for fifteen years!

With such a large family, Thelma Walsh is never short of visitors at Lovely Banks but, if there is a spare moment, there are always sports results to catch up on! She is enormously proud of her family and considers rearing her children as being her greatest achievement.

Thelma puts her longevity down to good genes – her grandfather was 90 when he died – and, at nearly 94, she is already the longest-living Flaherty . . . with plenty of power to add!

## Window Winner



The prize for the Cobden's best decorated shop window, announced at the Christmas celebrations on December 21<sup>st</sup>, was won by Cobden Veterinary Clinic. Congratulations to vet assistants Chris Ovens (pictured) and Carol Bennett, who painted and decorated the windows with various Christmas icons.

## COBDEN 2013 - HAPPY NEW YEAR!

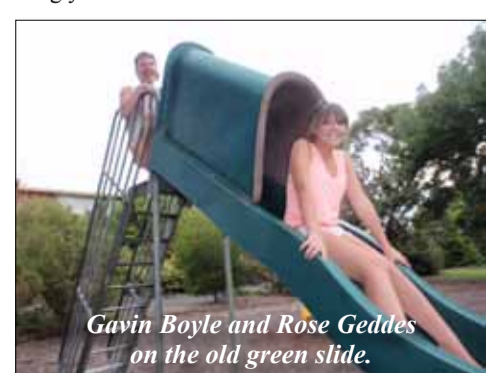
1. Even though the Thommo's Hotel was open just before Christmas, we'll pinch it as a 2013 coup because it's going to kick up its heels in coming months. We wish Paul and Bree well in their new venture.
2. The Roadhouse: Oh boy, has this caused some anguish and pain! Owner Richard Matthews told Connecting Cobden in November that it would be open in February 2013. Last week, he told us things were "progressing."
3. Some may smile but the three town entrance signs heralded in the Twenty20 community planning process will be completed in 2013.
4. Hopefully, some part of "Cobden's Story" will be produced for display on our streets and walking tracks. The excellent work done by students at our schools during 2012 needs to be transferred to plaques so it can be enjoyed by visitors and locals alike.
5. The widening of car parks in Curdie Street has begun. When completed, this project will make it easier for all of us to access the town's businesses without bruising ourselves or the vehicle next door.
6. Construction of the new Play Space at Apex Park will get underway soon. More than \$130,000 will be spent on a wonderful facility for people of all ages. Will the old green slide (see right) used by our parents and grandparents survive or will it meet its maker? Time will tell.
7. The Play Space will complement Lake Cobden beautifully. GreenCon will complete the all-weather trail around the lake and the dedicated project team will continue to coordinate work on Cobden's own aquatic pearl. Working bees take place on the first

Sunday of every month – individuals and community groups welcome.

8. Our visitor attractions – such as the miniature railway park, the dairy park, the historical society, the restoration group and the golf club – can continue to be developed. Most of these projects rely on volunteers to carry out improvements and maintenance so locals need to provide support by helping where they can.

9. Has your organisation booked a couple of Saturday morning sausage sizzles with Stirlo's Quality Meats during 2013? Costs you sauce and onions, that's all! Thanks Stirlo, supported by Cobden Bakery and McQuinn's Plumbing, for this great fundraising opportunity.

10. Can Cobden's senior footballers take it one step further in 2013? They came from nowhere last year to play in the grand final so expectations are high, especially when you look at the potential for improvement in the young players plus the landing of a couple of stand-out recruits! David Buckle has taken on the presidency, Wayne Robertson continues as senior coach . . . could be a big year for the club.



Gavin Boyle and Rose Geddes on the old green slide.

## KEEPING COBDEN IN BUSINESS

Cobden Business Network will be distributing more of its community message pamphlets over the next couple of weeks as residents return from holidays and look to the year ahead. Many people received copies in the lead-up to Christmas but the CBN is intent on keeping its message out there as families prepare for school and work. While businesses are imploring district consumers to give them an opportunity to get your custom, CBN members are committing to ramping up their own efforts to provide goods and services at competitive prices. In this instance, the old adage, "Use it or lose it!" must be a two-way process.

## COBDEN CALENDAR

### FEBRUARY

- |                       |   |                        |  |
|-----------------------|---|------------------------|--|
| Sat 2 <sup>nd</sup> : | Stirlo's Sausage Sizzle.  | Sun 10 <sup>th</sup> : | Farmers Market (Apex Park).  |
| Mon 4 <sup>th</sup> : | Progressing Cobden, Heytesbury Room, 7.30pm. Phone: 5595 1700.                      | Mon 11 <sup>th</sup> : | Lake Cobden Project Team meeting. Cobden Sports Club AGM, 7.30pm.                  |
| Fri 8 <sup>th</sup> : | Rotary Club Music Trivia Night for Relay for Life, Civic Hall. Phone: 0437 997 280. | Sat 16 <sup>th</sup> : | Stirlo's Sausage Sizzle.   |
| Sat 9 <sup>th</sup> : | Stirlo's Sausage Sizzle. Cobden Cricket Club 50s Night, Sports Club.                | Mon 18 <sup>th</sup> : | CopRice Spring Festival meeting. Heytesbury Room, 7.30pm. Phone: 5595 4243.        |
|                       |   | Wed 20 <sup>th</sup> : | Cobden Business Network, 5.40pm at Thommo's Hotel. Connecting Cobden - Edition 14. |