

PLOD ESSAY: Before the State Coal Mine

Llewellyn Rhun Davies-Griffith was the first settler at Wonthaggi...

In December 1878 just months after his arrival in Australia, Welshman Llewellyn Rhun Davies-Griffith applied for allotment 20 in the Parish of Wonthaggi. It consisted of more than 318 acres and he received his Crown Grant for it in September 1889. He also applied for the 19 acres in nearby allotment 32a. He received his Crown Grant for this place in May 1898.

He and Georgina Hull were married at All Saints Church, St. Kilda in 1880 and made their home on allotment 32a half-a-mile from Clump Tree Hill in the Parish of Wonthaggi. Six of their seven sons were born while they lived there.



Davies-Griffiths Family

Llewellyn and Georgina's Wonthaggi home was a six-roomed weatherboard and plastered house with an iron roof and front verandah. They had four acres of cultivated orchard and gardens, stockyards,

sheds, hut and fencing and two waterholes.

From this home Llewellyn ran the first Wonthaggi Post Office, which opened on 1st November 1887. It was operated by the Davies-Griffith Family until 1896 when they moved to Tangambalanga in the Kiewa Valley. The name was changed from Wonthaggi Post Office to St. Clair Post Office on 17th October 1910 when the Government Township became known as Wonthaggi.

An application from Llewellyn Davies-Griffith for a license to conduct an abattoir on allotment 20 was granted in 1894 and recorded in the Phillip Island & Woolamai Shire Minute Books.

The old slaughterhouse still stands today.

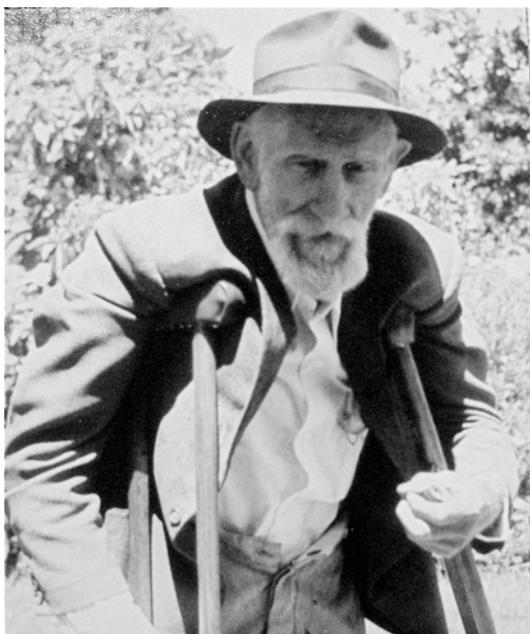
In the early part of the 20th century, Llewellyn returned to Wonthaggi from the Kiewa Valley with his son William, William's wife, Eve, and her brother, Charlie Street.

When William returned to Kiewa Valley, another son, George, came to live on the Wonthaggi property. He ran a bullock team and carted coal from the Wonthaggi mine to the Inverloch Seaport in late 1909 to early 1910.

Llewellyn Davies-Griffith died in 1918 and the Wonthaggi property was sold in 1920. It was purchased by early Wonthaggi butcher Alex Thompson of Outtrim and is Pat and Bob Edden's farm in 2010.

(Bronwen Davies-Griffith, Great Granddaughter of Llewellyn Davies-Griffith)

Charles Street tells his story:



I Arrived Here on 10th July 1909... I had come by train from Melbourne to Stony Point. From there I travelled by boat (*the Genista*) across Westernport to San Remo. From there on the journey was in a two-horse, six-passenger wagonette that carried the mails from San Remo to Inverloch. There was no gravel on the road then, just earth track and it was pretty boggy most of the way, especially at Kilcunda.

I left the wagonette at the farm of my brother-in-law, William Davies-Griffith. It was about a mile-and-a-half from the present town along the Korumburra Road. It was the Post Office for that part and was known as "Wonthaggi". Most of the farms there were for grazing – mostly cattle – and vegetable growing was going on. Not many dairy farms then, although there were butter factories at Archies Creek and Kongwak. There were very few milking machines then – nearly all hand milking. A herd of one hundred cows would need at

least four milkers and it would take two to three hours depending on the time of year and the type of cow. Some farms had small separators, but those who didn't had to take their milk every day to the butter factory, wait for it to be separated, then bring the skim milk back for pig and calf food.

There was no grass hay harvesting in those days. There was a lot more ploughing done. The main crops were for summer feed and oats for the annual harvest. The oat crop was cut with a horse-drawn reaper and binder and sheaves were stoked in the paddock for a few days then carted to the home paddock where stacks were made. I did a lot of stack building working on my knees pushing the sheaves tightly. Fencing was a regular job, too.

The Clump was a well-known landmark in those days. It was a clump of messmate and blackwood trees that stood just about where Government Road meets Korumburra road. The Clump plains stretched onto Inverloch and was mostly Crown land. By November 1909, areas had been cleared to make way for the State Coal Mine.

Dalyston was a much bigger township than it is now. There was a police station, a bakery, butchers, general store, a jeweller's, saddler's, a hay and corn store and a blacksmith shop. There was a big market day once a fortnight and a racecourse. Daly's Mine was working then and there were a few houses near the road at Hicksborough.

People who got sick went to Dr. Bean at San Remo or Dr. Joyce near Inverloch. You had to be pretty bad to go to a doctor in those days.

(Charlie Street)