

## RECOLLECTIONS OF BENALLA.

(BY AN OLD RESIDENT.)

A similar undertaking to that of the new Black Swan, mentioned in the preceding article, was the building of the large Seymour Hotel, the owner being Mr John Clark, whose name occurs in connection with the escape of one of the Faithful party from the massacre at Benalla, by the blacks. It may be mentioned, en passant, that this gentleman was the founder of Seymour. He built a punt for crossing the Goulburn river, sufficiently large for all requirements. Commencing in a very small way he, by his indomitable perseverance, affability and civility, rapidly became the favorite of all who travelled that way—the man whose opinion was solicited on all sides; and at the same time he assisted and befriended many a person who deserved it, and many a one who did not deserve it! During this time his wealth increased as rapidly as his popularity. He was the first to occupy the country known now as the Goulburn Valley, and by breeding, and grazing on such an unlimited area of fertile country made money fast. In 1850 he retired into private life with £150,000. Thus a good man leaves a good name, and such was Mr John Clark, the founder of Seymour. I have to some extent wandered; still, it will be interesting to know how many singular coincidences occur. Although the owner of the Black Swan cannot be said to have been founder of Benalla, it might be truly said he was the Father of Benalla. Everyone applied to him for assistance; everybody got what he or she wanted at the Swan—squatters and stockmen, splitters and shepherds. Although the population was not very numerous, there was not one who did not owe a debt of gratitude to the master and mistress of the Black Swan. The late Mr Richard Clark was a brother of the founder of Seymour. There was also another brother—the late William Clark—who was the first

there was also another brother—the late William Clark—who was the first publican at Wangaratta, and owner of the principal part of that place, besides two or three large cattle runs. He may be said to be the Father of that town. This trio of brothers, whose names are almost unknown to the present generation, are deserving of a monument to their memory in each of the respective towns in which they resided, and so liberally assisted to establish as centres, in the north-eastern part of Victoria.

About the year 1839, or the early part of 1840, the Lima run was taken up by Messrs Black and McKellar. The latter was not a partner at first, but, being a most reliable and assiduous manager, he was taken into the partnership. From that time pastoral tenants arrived and occupied the land in all parts—the Warrumbayne country by Binney and Anderson, the Goomalihee country by the brothers Cheyne, the Benalla country by the first Auditor-general of Victoria—Mr Ephraim Grimes—and the Kilfeera country by Charles Ryan.

Situated as Benalla was, on the direct line of communication between Sydney and Port Phillip, it naturally became a postal centre, from which all the correspondence from the surrounding scores of miles emanated. The overland mail passed through each way twice a week. The vehicle for carrying the mails and passengers was a dog-cart, drawn by one horse in shafts, and another as an outrigger. The Melbourne mail from Sydney was often two and three days behind time, which was not noted much. What is to be wondered at is how the mail-men got along at all. Primitive forests, nothing of the country known scarcely for 400 miles, large rivers to cross, and numberless smaller streams to ford, tracks in winter time becoming obliterated for miles together, bridges washed away, and horses grass fed—turned out on arrival and brought in when required. When all these formidable circumstances are taken into consideration, the wonder is how they managed to get through at all. Often and often have I known the mail due on one day to arrive on the next, the mailman having

arrive on the next, the mailman having lost his way in the bush the whole of the night, and had to be piloted into the township by some stockman or shepherd. These men were brave, and showed their pluck by fulfilling duties of such a hazardous character; and added to all this, the aboriginals were very numerous throughout the whole of the country, yet these hardy mailmen came through. On the days the mail was due people came from the various districts for their letters, and to post their correspondence. On these occasions — especially on Saturdays when the mail did not arrive—there was always some improvised sport.

(To be Continued.)