

Farmers' Weekly

The chance discovery of a diary from 1875 has formed a major part of Janet MacDonald's and Garry Powell's book *Double Gold*, reports Ray Fawley.

“COLD yesterday, and some snow last night, some sleet, very cold, making staples out of old horse shoes in the am and installing them in the afternoon in the post of the gateway in the stone wall. Wm carting manure all day, in the evening cutting chaff for the horses, Duncan going home. H Potter and his cousin paying us a visit.”

This is an entry from the diary of Henry Prichard Parry from Monday August 23, 1875.

The diary forms a major part of the just-published book *Double Gold — 1870s Mining and Farming Diaries with a History of Mount Franklin*.

The book is divided into three parts.

The first part covers the development of the Mount Franklin district and its relationship with Daylesford.

Space is given to the geology and geography of the area, the history of the Djadjja Wurrung aboriginals, the arrival of Europeans, and the gold rush.

The second part of the book looks at life on one particular farm — “Bryn Ily Frydd” (Beautiful Hill), run by cousins William Roberts and Henry Parry.

This farm of 170ha (417 acres) of rich red volcanic ground was just to the north of Mt Franklin.

The cousins had bought the farm after “striking it rich” at the Glamorgan gold mine, Yandoit.

An insight is given into their Welsh origins, how they fared as miners and their farming achievements.

The third and major part of the book is the Parry diaries.

Interestingly, the Parry diaries were written at the same time as the famous *Diary of a Welsh Swagman* by Joseph Jenkins.

Both diaries cover a similar geographical area.

Cousins Janet MacDonald and Garry Powell have compiled *Double Gold* which was 11 years in the writing and many more years in research.

They are first cousins and great-greatchildren of William Roberts and they both grew up in the district, Powell at Hepburn Springs and MacDonald at Mount Franklin.

In a foreword, Daylesford historian Danny Spooner wrote: “Local history has become a valuable, acceptable and useful part of historical knowledge and



PART OF HISTORY: Garry Powell looks out over what was the Parry farm, at Mt Franklin. Picture: Ray Fawley

A chance discovery offers past glimpse

of our understanding of heritage. So I welcome these 1870s diaries and the supporting history which focuses on the Welsh community in the Mount Franklin district between Daylesford and Castlemaine.”

Double Gold contains an extensive collection of historic photographs, a listing of all the early families in the Mount Franklin and Daylesford district, a bibliography and an index.

Undoubtedly what will capture readers' attention the most will be the Parry diaries.

They span the years 1874 to 1876 with a brief entry for most days.

The entries convey a life of hard and unrelenting toil. For example, entries for Christmas Day in 1875 and 1876, tell of cutting and carting hay and picking peas.

The discovery of the diaries came about almost by chance.

“It all started out with me doing a family history,” said Garry Powell. “We lucked upon those diaries. I did not know they existed.”

“Then we had to get them translated (from Welsh).”

Mr Powell, a retired teacher who now lives in Ballarat, did a genealogy course in preparation for writing the family history.

One piece of advice given to course participants was to visit all remaining family members.

Mr Powell took this advice to heart and he's glad he did, because this was how he discovered the diaries of Henry Parry.

● *Double Gold* sells for \$34.95. Postage and handling is \$7.50 within Victoria and \$10 other states. Copies are available from HEPE, PO Box 150, Wendouree 3355.



HISTORIANS: Cousins Janet MacDonald and Garry Powell.