



A short history of Mossvale Park

- 1833 Francis Moss was born in County Durham, England.
- 1851 Francis Moss migrated to Victoria, aged 18 and settled at Buninyong, near Ballarat.
- 1853 Moss established a 17 acre nursery/garden to supply the goldfields. Made plans for fiancée Sarah Kingsford to emigrate. Mossmont Nursery (now at Monbulk) grew and sold red, white and yellow gooseberries, strawberries, red and black currants, plums, cherries and rhubarb. Moss grew many vegetables too, and learned some Cantonese so that he could converse with the Chinese he employed to work in his gardens. He imported seed from England, France and Italy, and supplied many of the Chinese market gardeners in Ballarat. He imported thousands of daffodil bulbs, and birds like thrushes and goldfinches. Five generations of the Moss family have continued in the nursery trade.
- 1856 Francis Moss married Sarah Kingsford.
- 1860-70s This was a tragic period for the family with three childhood deaths. Sarah died aged 46. However three daughters and a son, William survived. William continued the Moss family's nursery heritage. During the 1870's Francis Moss developed a great talent for budding and grafting fruit trees, after all imported stock suffered blight. He experimented with apple stocks, and with the help of Thomas Lang of Ballarat, developed a blight-free stock. This led to the development of the Stewart's Seedling apple, or Ballarat Seedling named by Francis Moss in the 1870s. A Mrs Stewart of Golden Point, Ballarat, grew the apple from a seed, and Francis distributed it. It was a snow white apple, very acidic, and there is an example planted in the park.
- 1871 Francis's cousin, Frederick, his wife and four children immigrated to Melbourne. They purchased 319 Acres (CA 53) in the Parish of Koorooman, on Wilkur Creek, also another property in the Parish of Nerrena. Frederick's son, Frederick Jnr. selected 166 Acres (CA 22a1 and 22b2) on the Tarwin River, in the Parish of Nerrena. There are many descendants of this family in Gippsland.
- 1881 Francis married (second marriage) Augusta Munroe, former teacher at the Buninyong school, and they had two daughters. The eldest died, aged 32, leaving a son. The youngest, died as an infant, aged five.

FRANCIS MOSS WITH HIS DAUGHTER MRS CAROLINE MARY WESTERN
AND GRAND DAUGHTER FRANCES CAROL WESTERN c 1906
MOSS MONT BUNINYONG VIC.
(From Gold Museum, Ballarat)





- 1878 Bernard Farrell becomes the pioneer owner of a significant part of the Great Gippsland Forest, including the Mossvale farm area - described in 'Land of the Lyrebird' (1920). [Link to Land of the Lyrebird online](#) Francis Moss begins to spend more time in South Gippsland.
- 1883 Henry Borrow or Burroughs selected 311 Acres (CA49) on Wilkur Creek in the Parish of Koorooman. Today it is known as Wooreen Park. He established the district's first fruit orchard and Nursery and assisted Francis Moss establish his nurseries. Many fine specimen trees remain today along Brookes Creek.
- 1888 Francis Moss and wife Augusta settled at Mossvale Park, on his 1,000 acres of virgin forest and begins nursery development. Part of the property was originally selected by Mr Bernard Farrell, via the 1878 Land Board. Mr Bruce is the first nursery manager.
- 1890 Francis Moss's son, William married Carlotta Pask. Francis Moss leases 9 acres closer to Leongatha, on Ruby Creek, now Strzelecki Highway, from Messrs Peter Johnson and Crighton because it was closer to rail services, more developed communities, sales opportunities and the Labour Colony.
- 1890s At this time it is likely that similar plantings to Mossvale Park were established in the district, at Aberdeen's at Berry's Creek, Wooreen Park, Dodd's at Dumbalk Nth, Westerns at Kardella and others. Also many fruit tree orchards were planted. Mr T. James with 20 years nursery experience managed this nursery and employed Alex and Archie Campbell.
- 1898 On the death of Mr Bruce manager of Mossvale Nursery, Mr William Gould managed both nurseries. Gould had been trained at Brunning's Nursery in the 1860s, and supervised for Moss until 1917, with his son George assisting him from 1910 to 1917. He was a qualified nurseryman, apprenticed in the 1860s. It was William George who planted the trees in the area that is now Mossvale Park. These may have been surplus nursery stock, which, for various reasons did not sell.
- 1903 Leongatha Sun newspaper reports of plans to produce 250,000 fruit trees, including 120,000 apples, also pears, cherries, peaches, apricots and berries
- 1916 Francis Moss died, aged 84, buried at Buninyong. The Buninyong nursery sold, but the Leongatha property (Mossvale) failed to sell.
- 1916 – 23 Thomas Weir, appointed by the estate administrators commenced dairy farming, however as the property deteriorated, it was leased for grazing.
- 1931 Farm leased to Les Edey.





- 1933 The front paddock became a venue for school sports and public picnics.
- 1930's Farm leased to Mr J Hayes. He first suggested Woorayl Shire Council, purchase the front paddock for public use.
- 1945 Delegates from the Leongatha Branch of the Australian Natives Association added support and presented a proposal for purchase, supported by Mirboo North Shire Council.
- 1946 Woorayl and Mirboo North Shires jointly purchase 10 Acres, which is declared a public reserve. A public meeting was convened in the Berrys Creek Hall and the first Committee of Management was elected. Mr G M Hayes, owner of Mossvale farm was appointed caretaker.
- 1948 Tarwin River snagged, cost 520 pounds.
- 1949 Proposed park open space developed, ploughed, graded and sown down.
- 1950 Mr Archie Mason purchased Mossvale farm. He assisted in park development.
- 1950s First public facilities established - a fireplace, water tank, and playground.
- 1956 Mrs A. M. Blundell, a supporter of Mossvale and Francis Moss, published her book, 'Francis Moss and Mossvale Park'.
- 1957 Moss family donate 8 trees, for a CWA commemorative planting. Berrys Creek Pony Club, granted use of a restricted area of the park. Mr Keith Forrester granted grazing rights.
- 1958 Leongatha Apex Club offer assistance with park maintenance and development.
- 1960s Woorayl Shire Council was the management authority. Grants from tourism authorities were sought. Mirboo Lands Dept controlled the weeds.
- 1960s Mr Bob Auchterlonie, a naturalist from Narracan, was requested to name the trees at Mossvale. Naming was completed in 1966, with assistance from the National Herbarium. The complaints from park users about the damage from sheep grazing increased. Possums were also causing serious damage to many of the specimen trees.
- 1969 First 'Music for the People' concert, with the Victorian State Orchestra.





1970 Miss Rosie Lincoln, local business owner and the Leongatha Horticultural Society raised concern about the increasing infestation of English ivy. The Mossvale committee of management showed no concern or support.

1973 Leongatha Lions Club member, Bruno Croatto, initiated Lions support to promote the annual 'Music for the People' concert. That support has continued to present.

1975 Neil McInnes MLA, applied for a Municipal Grant, to supply electricity. A music soundshell is proposed.

1979 Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research scientist Mr P.D. Jackson completed a field survey of the Tarwin River environs, with positive findings.

1979 – 1983 Ian Starkey – Head Gardener, Woorayl Shire.

1980 The music soundshell completed. Sheep grazing finalised and Woorayl Shire Council begins a regular mowing program. Toilets upgraded. Council planted a number of advanced specimen trees and graded and drained the area in front of soundshell and removed willows from the wetland, near the carpark.



1983 – 1987 Richard Lester – Head Gardener, Woorayl Shire.

1987 Plaque unveiling and planting to celebrate contribution of Moss family to Mossvale. Council successfully relocates Miss Gina Roughead's established *Cedrus atlantica* from Leongatha, to avoid severe damage to it during power line clearance of vegetation.

1988 Council treeplanting, with assistance from Moss family.

1988 Mark Dempster –Superintendent Parks and Gardens, Woorayl Shire. Cec Sainty – Korumburra naturalist/photographer, contributed photographs of Mossvale Park for South Gippsland Conservation Society publication, 'Significant Trees of Woorayl Shire'. Victorian Municipal Restructure and Amalgamations – Woorayl Shire and Mirboo North Shire, now South Gippsland Shire.



MUSIC FOR THE PEOPLE 2001



- 1992 – 1996 Andrew Nixon –Superintendent Parks and Gardens, South Gippsland Shire.
- 1992 Council tree planting in the park. Two Pinus species – donated by Gardeners Woodland Nursery, Mirboo Nth.
- 1993 Council completed survey and listing of surviving specimen trees planted between 1969 – 1975
- 1994 Ellen Lyndon, wrote, 'The Story of Mossvale.Park', published by Woorayl Shire Historical Society. Photographs by Cec Sainty and Gerard Bruning.
- 1996 – pres. Steve Missen –Superintendent Parks and Gardens, South Gippsland Shire.
- 1998 Botanist, Andrew Paget from AustBotany completed a vegetation survey of the Tarwin River, including Mossvale Park and submits his documented findings to Council. Richard Lester of Terraflora Nursery, Leongatha, donated eight specimen trees to Mossvale Park. Council planting of treeferns, between toilets and picnic shelter.
- 2007 South Gippsland Shire Council, in conjunction with the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and Mossvale Advisory Committee, drafted a Mossvale Weed Management Plan. [Click here to download PDF](#) This highlighted various issues, particularly the urgent need to remove poplar and elm trees and suckers, together with the many agricultural and horticultural weeds in Mossvale Park. The redevelopment will be staged over several years to minimise the effects on the parks amenity.
- 2010 – 11 West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) and Council complete first stage in South West location. Weed species were removed and indigenous endemic species were planted on Tarwin River easement. A selection of exotic specimen trees were also planted in the park. A Landcare tree planting to launch 'The Million Trees for South Gippsland' project on the hill, north boundary was attended by 200 people who planted 65 Melaleuca, Callistemon and Correa plants . Council fences the flat and concert area, to restrict vehicle access and there is a regular tree mulching program.
- 2011 New picnic tables installed. Soundshell refurbished. National Trust listed Algerian Oak, next to Soundshell, unexpectedly fell and removed. A replacement tree has been planted.
- 2012 – 13 WGCMA and Council complete second stage located north of Tarwin River bridge. This area was identified in 1998 by Andrew Paget as an important remnant stand of indigenous Eucalyptus strzeleckii. Weed species have been removed and replaced by indigenous endemic plants on Tarwin River easement and floodplain, but with the introduction of a selection of Australian native specimen shrubs and trees, north east of the road bridge.



References:

Lyndon, Ellen and Woorayl Shire Historical Society The story of Mossvale Park. Woorayl Shire Historical Society, [Leongatha, Vic.], 1994.

www.home.vicnet.net.au/~buninhis/newsletters/2013-jun.pdf

Black and white photos courtesy of Leongatha and District Historical Society unless otherwise noted.

Prepared by Richard Lester (with a little help from Jill Vella)

We welcome contributions of any information relating to the park for inclusion in our archive.

Please contact Jill with details [Email](#)



Above: Community planting in the park

Below: Summer of Soul concert

