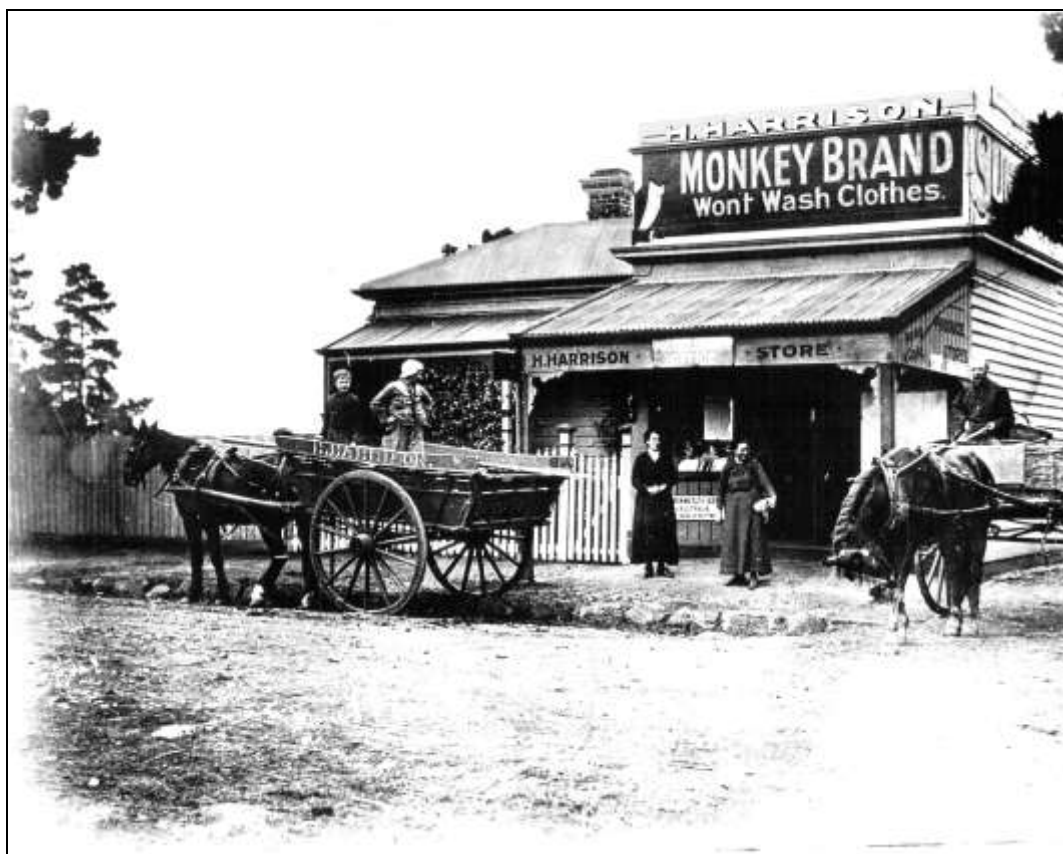


# PERSONALITIES OF ST ALBANS



Joseph Ribarow  
2020

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- Kerry Scoble re Scoble genealogy and family background.
- Phillip Cini re Henrik Bazec.

### **Front cover**

H. Harrison Store, Boundary Road (Main Road West) St Albans, 1920s. Photo provided for the St Albans Railway Centenary Committee by Emily Hall, 1986.

***Won't Wash Clothes***

*Cradled by the crescent moon*

*The monkey strums an idle tune*

*Lost in a world where anything goes*

*What a shame it Won't Wash Clothes.*

He's the hardest working brand character of the Victorian era. On his shoulders rested the responsibility for persuading the great British public that a block of Monkey Brand soap was an indispensable household commodity even though it Won't Wash Clothes.

Posted by Phil Beard at Thursday, September 25, 2008

<http://buttes-chaumont.blogspot.com/2008/09/wont-wash-clothes.html>

## PREFACE

These articles are about St Albans' families who settled in the district between 1900 and 1970. They start with two men who came to Victoria in the 1850s, revealing previously unknown local connections to Chinese immigration during the gold rush – they are Ah Kin How Qua and James Chin Chee whose descendants came to St Albans in the early 1900s. Who would have guessed that Rose O'Neil was of Chinese origin?

The stories expand on oral history discussions held with Mary Smith, Frank Farrugia, and Gavin Aitken, all of whom have since passed away. Mary's references to the McKechnie and Coleman families who initiated housing developments in the 1920s are now expanded upon.

Emily Hall nee Stenson had prepared some notes for the railway centenary in 1986; they are reproduced here for the record as her personal history has not been adequately acknowledged, nor has her father's local leadership for 70 years been adequately commemorated.

The Sassella brothers were of Italian background who established a family dynasty in the beef industry. They came to St Albans in the 1920s and their business model was the biggest in town. They gathered cattle from NSW and country Victoria and funnelled them through their holding paddocks on the way to Melbourne saleyards and abattoirs. A grand family saga forgotten long ago.

Other articles are about people who were mentioned in earlier oral history recollections but without detail. Their backgrounds are now identified more succinctly, including various shopkeepers from 1910 through to the 1950s. Who remembers that the Self Brothers and Goddard supermarket was started by Margery, Edna, and Bernice?

Two recently written biographies are by Norma McKay (Smith family from 1920) and Angela Loccisano (from 1953).

The character of St Albans changed in the 1950s when the NESB and CALD European migrants started arriving and the small village quickly grew into a thriving cosmopolitan suburb. Here's a hint of their stories.

This collection ends with a tribute to Thomas Rigg, who in 1986 initiated the centennial celebration of the railway station, and thus started the journey to document the history of St Albans.

Joseph Ribarow  
November 2020

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## 1854 – Ah Kin and Ellen How Qua

Ah Kin How Qua was born in 1829 in Guangzhou, Shunde, Guangdong, China. He was reputedly born into a wealthy merchant family who sent their sons to be educated in England before migrating to various parts of the world to seek their fortune. How Qua went to England in 1843 where he lived for eleven years and converted to the Christian faith. In 1854 he left England and came to Victoria on the "Invincible". He was aged 24 years.

He moved to Avoca and became a gold miner, so he had joined the thousands of other Chinese diggers in the Victorian goldfields. His decade in England had provided him with a good command of the English language, which was soon put to use. In 1855 he was appointed as the official Government Chinese Interpreter at Avoca, a position that he retained until his death. It was a position with considerable responsibility and required strict integrity in matters of litigation between Chinese and Europeans especially.

In 1857 he gave evidence before the Commission that was established to Inquire into the Condition of the Goldfields. His evidence might have been rather harsh because he had witnessed some of its evils:

*Another shocking murder has been committed by a Chinaman on a Chinaman. On the 20th ult, a Chinese digger named A Kin How Qua, on the Avoca, was awoken by the noise of a scuffle, in a neighboring tent. Upon proceeding to the tent, he saw a man named A Lup, striking his mate, Ga Poo, (who was then lying in bed) three blows on the head with a pick. He at once obtained assistance, and secured A Lup. Ga Poo was dead, his head being covered with wounds.*<sup>1</sup>

In 1858 How Qua married Eleanor "Ellen" Caroline Derrick. He was 29 and she was 17. Her parents were Joseph Derrick and Harriet Amelia Parsons, who were from Somerset, England. They came to Australia in 1856 as Assisted Immigrants with their five children and landed at Geelong before moving to the gold mining area of Golden Gully, Fryers Creek, Talbot. Ellen was their eldest child, born in 1843, so she was age 14 when she arrived.

In 1861 Ah Kin How Qua applied for Naturalisation as a British subject, which was granted. He was therefore able to acquire real estate and enjoy the advantages, privileges and rights of a natural born subject.

He started as a gold miner but before long ventured into more profitable commercial ambitions. The early, rich discoveries on the goldfields did not last long with the result that the small-venture fossickers had to work harder for lesser profit. In 1852 the amount of gold found per miner on the Victorian goldfields averaged

£479 but by 1856 it was an average of only £77 per head.<sup>2</sup>

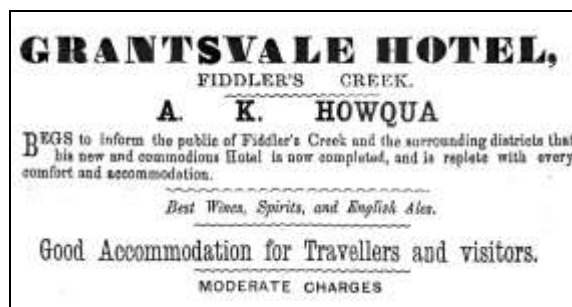
How Qua seems to have settled into the general community quite successfully and joined the regular business groups and service clubs; e.g. in 1868 he was raising money for the Maryborough Hospital from his network of compatriots and other "foreigners" in the neighbourhood.<sup>3</sup> He had bought an allotment of land in Avoca and in 1865 offered it for sale again, apparently looking for better opportunities.



Avoca Mail 19 August 1865

In March 1869 he called for tenders to build a store and hotel at Grantsvale (Fiddlers Creek). In May 1869 he applied for a publican's licence for a house in Grantsvale, Fiddlers Creek, that would become known as the Grantsvale Hotel. It opened in June 1869 so they must have had super-efficient builders:

*The house is built of wood and iron, contains one dining room, two sitting rooms and two bedrooms, exclusive of those required for the use of myself and family, and has not been previously licensed.*<sup>4</sup>



Advertisement in Avoca Mail 21 March 1871

The township of Grantsvale was growing rapidly because of the gold – there were eight stores, one bakery, one fruit shop, a public house, three blacksmiths' shops, three butchers' shops, a billiard saloon, and several other places being built, besides the Chinese gambling and opium houses. Some were not impressed:

*I have been lately roused from many of my quiet haunts under the Pyrenees. A heathen lot of gibbering Mongols have invaded the territory of*

<sup>1</sup> Age 8 October 1857 p4

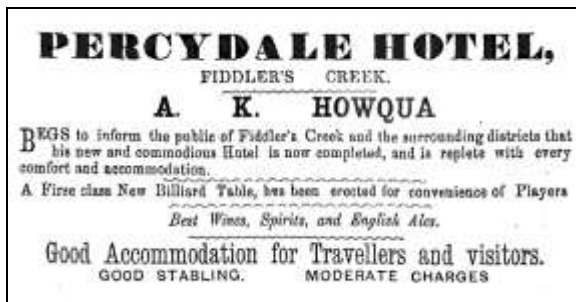
<sup>2</sup> F.L.W. Wood; A Concise History of Australia, Dymock's Book Arcade Ltd, Sydney, 1951; p145.

<sup>3</sup> Avoca Mail 31 October 1868 p2

<sup>4</sup> Avoca Mail 15 May 1869 p2

*your peripatetic Grantsvale or even Percyvale is a misnomer for what is styled the new rush; "Heathen vale" would be more appropriate. Here it was my custom, not so very long ago, following the example of the hermits of olden time, occasionally to leave behind the cares of an unthankful world; but, alas! there is no rest for the peripatetic. The Mongols are gradually invading every gully under the Pyrenees.*<sup>1</sup>

Grantsvale became known as Percyvale which morphed into Percydale. How Qua's hotel might have been rebuilt after some Chinamen applied to drive a mineshaft under his hotel. In 1871 How Qua advertised that his new and commodious hotel was completed and replete with every comfort and accommodation.<sup>2</sup> It was now known as the Percydale Hotel. How Qua may not have permitted gambling in his premises as he believed that losing gamblers might turn to theft. The hotel had a meeting room that was usually referred to as the Assembly Rooms. Many local business and community groups used the facilities for their events and functions.



Advertisement in Avoca Mail 21 March 1871

By this stage Ah Kin How Qua must have been financially comfortable because he could afford to buy 100 shares in the Perseverance Quartz Mining Company of Percydale. He did not enjoy the benefits of his new hotel for very long, because he died unexpectedly on 15 November 1873 at the young age of 44 years:

*A dread internal malady attacked him so virulently, that on the last occasion of his appearance in the Police Court, at Avoca, it was a matter of remark he looked as if death smitten. He became so ill that it was found advisable to try hospital treatment, and accordingly on Thursday last he was sent to the Amherst institution, where he died on Saturday last.*<sup>3</sup>

Ah Kin How Qua was remembered as a steady, quite man who had converted to Christianity and had more experience of the English world than many of his fellow Asiatics. He had been a consistent member of the Loyal Avoca Lodge of Oddfellows, Manchester Unity, one of the few original members who were made and were initiated at the opening of the Lodge.

<sup>1</sup> Avoca Mail 13 March 1869 p3

<sup>2</sup> Avoca Mail 11 March 1871 p1

<sup>3</sup> Avoca Mail 18 November 1873 p2

The service at the grave was impressively read by the Rev E. K. Yeatman, M.A., the Church of England Minister, and the Oddfellows' funeral oration in the Lodge Rood and closing remarks at the grave were read by the N.G. of the Lodge, Mr James Brown.<sup>4</sup>

Ah Kin How Qua's remains were buried in the Church of England section at the Avoca Cemetery with the remains of two of his sons who had died before him.



Ah Kin How Qua and Ellen Caroline Derrick had raised seven children:

- William 1859–1862
- Henry 1862–1942
- James 1864–1870
- Clara 1867–1936
- Louisa 1871–1952
- Eleanor "Ellen" 1872–1950
- Albert 1874–1949

Clara and Louisa are the daughters who ended up with connections to St Albans, either directly or through their children. Louisa married Harry Harrison and they ran the St Albans general store for 10 years. Clara's daughter Effie married John Perrett and they ran the St Albans general store for 30 years.

After her husband passed away, Ellen How Qua was granted a victualler's licence and took over the management of the Percydale Hotel. Business continued as usual, including concerts, musical performances, and fundraising events such as for the Amherst Hospital, which drew a large audience. On some occasions the police were not entirely happy. At one time they summonsed her for permitting a building that was adjoining her licensed house to be used for a dancing saloon on the occasion of a birthday party which was quite a private affair. The Bench dismissed the case.

In 1876 Ellen How Qua married James

<sup>4</sup> Avoca Mail 18 November 1873 p2

Rogers George, who was a miner from Cornwall:

*Some stir was occasioned in the town on Wednesday morning by the appearance of a long procession of buggies, the dresses of the ladies in which, and the white flowers decorating the horses, plainly indicating that the cause of the unusual display was a wedding. The bride was Mrs Howqua, the well known hostess of an hotel at Percydale, and the happy man, Mr James George, a miner living in this district. As Mrs Howqua was for many years a resident of Avoca, a large number of persons attended the church to witness the ceremony and to wish her happiness in her new matrimonial venture.*<sup>1</sup>

Ellen and James George had three children: Rosanna (1877), William (1880), and John (1886). They were all born in Percydale and none of them appears to have had any connection with St Albans. Business at the hotel went on as usual as James became the licensee. However, the end of the decade brought further change because Ellen and James decided to sell the hotel and leave the district. The liquor licence was transferred to Ellen's daughter, Clara.

Clara Howqua had married William Sener Hughes in 1887 and they raised 5 children: William (1890), Grace (1892), Albert (1896), Caradoc (1898), and Effie (1909). They were all born in Percydale except for Effie who was born in Collingwood. Caradoc Hughes had an indirect connection with St Albans through his aunt Louisa Howqua when she married Harry Harrison (q.v.) who had the grocery store in St Albans before establishing one at Torquay. Caradoc later bought this store from his aunt. Effie Hughes had a more direct connection, because she married Eric Perrett<sup>2</sup> whose parents bought the St Albans store from Harrison and ran it for thirty years.

Clara and William Sener Hughes took over the Percydale Hotel until 1896, when they also decided to leave the district and the hotel was advertised for sale once again:

*This Hotel is situated at Percydale, the centre of a district that promises very soon to become prosperous in mining. Within the past few months extensive Chlorination works, costing £3000, have been erected close to the township, and a good crushing plant is at work at Mt. Hall. Shafts are being sunk and tunnels driven in all directions, and several good reefs have been discovered. The township is prettily situated at the foot of the Pyrenees and is in a most healthy locality. This is a chance to secure a really good bargain.*<sup>3</sup>

The real estate agent who was selling the Percydale Hotel ended up buying it and took over the liquor licence. Business could not have been good because within two years he closed the hotel, not considering it worthwhile to renew the

liquor licence.<sup>4</sup>

Ellen and James Rogers George moved to Rutherglen, but fate was not kind to them, because in 1908 James became insolvent and his estate was sequestered.<sup>5</sup>

Ellen George, formerly Ellen Howqua nee Derrick, died in 1913 at Seymour, at age 72 years. James Rogers George died in 1925 in Melbourne, at age 78 years.

Perhaps one of the greatest tributes to the family patriarch, Ah Kin How Qua, is the possibility that a river might have been named after him:

*At Darlingford, close to the junction of the Goulburn and Howqua rivers, old residents are uncertain as to how the Howqua River got its name. One suggestion is that when the gold worked out on the Goulburn a lot of Chinese from the Goulburn went up the Howqua and started what was known as the Howqua Tea and Tobacco Plantation. They had a kiln, drying tobacco, which went on fire, and everything was burnt. The Chinese thought it was an evil spirit, and they left the district. In earlier days there was a diggings seven miles out from Avoca called Fiddlers' Creek, now Percydale. A large number of Chinese were there 60 years ago. One named Howqua kept a hotel there, and he had a wife and family. I think that this man Howqua had something to do with the name Howqua being given to the river.*<sup>6</sup>

Postscript: Ellen Howqua's third daughter was Eleanor also known as Ellen. She married Daniel Brotherwood Davies in 1890. Their son Harold William Davies was a schoolteacher who enlisted in 1915 and achieved the position of Corporal with the 58th Australian Infantry Battalion. He died on 5 April 1918 of wounds received in action in the field in France. His body was buried in the La Neuville British Communal Cemetery, Picardie, France. He was awarded the Military Medal (for bravery in the field), British War Medal, Victory Medal, and 194/15 Star. His parents were sent a Memorial Plaque. For a while the family was living in Seddon.

Daniel Davies died in 1939 and Ellen Davies nee Howqua died in 1950.



Ellen Howqua



Harold William Davies

<sup>1</sup> Avoca Mail 28 July 1876 p2

<sup>2</sup> Refer to chapter by John Perrett in J Ribarow (ed) *Stories About St Albans Celebrating 125 Years*, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Avoca Mail 12 March 1897 p3

<sup>4</sup> Avoca Mail 29 Jan 1900 p9

<sup>5</sup> Herald 14 August 1908 p7

<sup>6</sup> Letters to the Editor, Age 17 March 1934 p19.



## 1855 – James and Grace Chin Chee



James Chin Chee was a member of the “Celestial Empire” being a young Chinese national who migrated to Victoria during the gold rush era of the 1850s. Though James did not settle in St Albans, one of his daughters did, and that was in the early 1900s. James Chin Chee’s

father was Ah Yen Chin Chee who was born before 1815 in Guangzhou, Shunde, Guangdong, China.<sup>1</sup> He became a merchant and married Fong Ah Chin Shee about 1830. Their son James Chin Chee was born in 1832.

The family migrated to Australia and arrived in Port Phillip Bay in 1855 – the gold rush era – and settled in the Geelong region. James was a young adult aged 23 who became a merchant and lodging housekeeper in Latrobe Terrace, Ashby, which was a suburb in the area of Geelong West. A number of Chinese migrants must have settled in the district as it was later known for some of its Chinese market gardens.

James experienced a few problems in managing the lodging house. In 1860 he was charged with keeping open a board and lodging house for the entertainment of the public without having taken out a license. Chin Chee had been summoned under the wrong name, so the Mayor dismissed the charge.<sup>2</sup>

A bigger problem was when he became embroiled in complications regarding the theft of opium from his premises:

*Whereas a Chinaman named Hung Wing, five feet three inches high, wearing his hair in the English style and dressed in English clothes, speaks English badly — has absconded from my home with three boxes opium, containing sixty small boxes. Whoever will give such information as will lead to the apprehension of the above named person will receive a reward of Five Pounds, on application to me at 72 Mercer-street. Chin Chee.*<sup>3</sup>

Opium was a recreational drug popular with the Chinese men. Chin Chee alleged that a Chinaman had stolen the opium. The owners of the opium who had delivered it to his premises sued Chin Chee for their loss and the matter was heard in the Geelong court. Chin Chee said that at the time of the robbery he was in Ballarat, leaving his wife in charge of his house. Mary Ann Chin Chee was described as “a bouncing English girl about 20 years of age” but she did not speak

Chinese which must have made it hard for her to converse with some of the lodgers. (On the other hand, it implies that she and her husband conversed in English.) After hearing all the evidence the court dismissed the case against Chin Chee and it appears that they never discovered who was responsible for the theft.<sup>4</sup> Possession of opium was not illegal and in 1871 about 41,000 pounds were imported into Victoria and earned £20,000 import duty for the state government.<sup>5</sup>

James Chin Chee had married Mary Ann Elizabeth Brooks in Geelong in December 1860. He was 28 and she was 18. She traces her father’s heritage back to 1675 in Devon, England. Her parents George and Sarah Brooks came to Geelong in 1853, so both families arrived in the gold rush era.

In 1861 James and Mary were living in La Trobe Terrace and again became victims of theft – though less dramatic than opium it was reported in the New South Wales Police Gazette:

*Stolen ... from the dwelling of Chin Chee, La Trobe terrace, Geelong, a lady’s dark green silk dress, a moiré antique, a lady’s crinoline hat trimmed with lavender colored ribbon, a black satin vest with crimson flowers, a black cloth vest, 2 brown silk parasols, one of them lined with white satin; and 2 common gilt brooches.*<sup>6</sup>

James and Mary moved to Castlemaine by 1862 and his occupation was recorded as a “headman” (possibly manager). It appears that he managed a lodging house and a greengrocery store; later he was registered as a consignee of goods by railway, so he might have been transporting provisions to the town.

Living amongst the Chinese miners on the goldfields had its problems and both James and Mary experienced some. The difficulties for the Chinese miners included language and cultural barriers and a strong prejudice against interracial marriage, making it hard for them to marry European women and leading a normal family life.

In 1863 at Bendigo, Mary sued “a gigantic Chinaman” for brutal assault and won her case.<sup>7</sup> In 1865 Chin Chee was charged with keeping a house frequented with females having no lawful visible means of support, the implication being that he was harboring prostitutes:

*Mrs Ah Pin ... professed to know nothing about the house of Chin Chee, or to being able to speak of girls being kept there. She afterwards averred there were none, to her knowledge, except one as a servant, and she stated the*

<sup>1</sup> Most of the Chinese men who came to Australia during the gold rush were from Guangdong province.

<sup>2</sup> Geelong Advertiser 28 February 1860 p2

<sup>3</sup> Geelong Advertiser 30 October 1860 p1

<sup>4</sup> Geelong Advertiser 9 August 1861 p3

<sup>5</sup> C.F. Young, *The New Gold Mountain, The Chinese in Australia 1901-1921*; Raphael Arts P/L Richmond South Australia, 1977; p274

<sup>6</sup> New South Wales Police Gazette and Weekly Record of Crime 30 May 1861 Issue No.22 p 204

<sup>7</sup> Bendigo Advertiser 25 April 1863 p2

owner of the house was a "respectable man." Mrs Jane Tin Long deposed that the house of the prisoner was an opium shop, but she was not in the habit of visiting it. The bench passed sentence of a month's imprisonment.<sup>1</sup>

James and Mary had two children who survived their infancy: Sarah Ann (1860-1938) and Letitia Louisa (1865-1920).

James's father, Ah Yen Chin Chee, died in New Zealand in May 1867. James and his family sailed to New Zealand in October 1867 and must have stayed there at least one year. Unfortunately, Mary Ann Chin Chee nee Brooks died there in August 1868 at the young age of 26 years during childbirth.



James returned to Victoria, but his two daughters remained in New Zealand; Sarah was aged eight and Letitia aged three, so he must have left them with relatives; a family descendent writes that he had deserted them. Sarah, being the elder of the two girls, later

became Letitia's legal guardian. The sisters married New Zealanders and raised large families.

James Chin Chee married his second wife, Grace Vincent, in the Primitive Methodist church in Smythedale, Victoria, in 1872. She was 18 and he was 40, so there was an age difference. Grace was born in Gawler, South Australia, in 1853. Her parents were William James Vincent and Jane Richards who had migrated from Cornwall, England, in 1853 before settling in Ballarat by 1857. They also were migrants who arrived during the gold rush era. Grace established some friendships through the Chinese mining camp at the Black Lead village<sup>2</sup> and possibly it was through these networks that she met James. He was in the area in the 1870s and established a dam on the Black Lead.

Grace and James Chin Chee settled around Bridgewater then Inglewood where most of their children were born. Bridgewater is near Inglewood and was settled by miners when the water supply in Inglewood became unsuitable for drinking. Inglewood was a centre of Chinese gold miners since the 1860s:

*The Chinese Camp ... is assuming quite important proportions. On Saturday the original party was supplemented by some forty or fifty others. These first comers have ranged their tents, some twenty in number, in the form of a quadrangle, three sides of which are filled with*

*tents whilst the fourth, looking towards the town, remains open. The whole is surrounded by a dense fence of gum boughs. On Sunday another party arrived and commenced forming a camp on the opposite side of the road, and about one hundred yards from the one first described. During the whole of Sunday both Camps were alive with the preparations for settlement. ... Several among the Chinamen can talk tolerable English ... Nearly the whole of them are strong, healthy, stalwart looking men as need be seen, and present a striking contrast to the stunted, unhealthy look of many of their fellow-countrymen on the lower diggings.<sup>3</sup>*

James Chin Chee must have spoken "tolerable English" as he sometimes acted as the Chinese interpreter in the district.<sup>4</sup>

It's not surprising that both of James Chin Chee's marriages were with Anglo women, as there were few Chinese women in Victoria at the time. At the time of James' first marriage in 1860, there were about 25,000 Chinese men and only 8 Chinese women in Victoria. At the time of his second marriage in 1872, there were about 18,000 Chinese men and 36 Chinese women.<sup>5</sup>

James and Grace raised seven children who survived their infancy: Albert [Alfred] Ernest (1872-1955), Thomas Henry (1875-1966), Rosina Violet (1880-1935), Isabella (1882-1959), Flora Jane (1885-1935), and Harold Edward (1894-1960). Rosina Violet Chin Chee is the daughter who ended up in St Albans.



Grace's second daughter, Isabella Chin Chee, is mentioned in one version of the family tree as being born in St Albans in 1882. This seems unlikely to be St Albans at Keilor as it was not named as such until 1886. The Victorian Birth Index notes that Isabella was born in Inglewood. She

married Henry Gard in 1902 and they moved to Korumburra and then Tasmania by 1913, so there are no obvious connections with early St Albans.

Isabella's brothers received publicity for exploits in the 1880s, but which brother is not always clear as they both might have been referred to as Chin Chee.

In 1882 a Chinese man was charged for an offence against 7-year-old Tommy Chin Chee but was discharged because the Bench declined to receive the lad's evidence on account of his ignorance of the obligations of an oath, and want

<sup>1</sup> Mt Alexander Mail 8 July 1865 p2

<sup>2</sup> The Black Lead mining village was founded in 1856 and named after the dark colour of the soil and rock in which the lead was worked.

<sup>3</sup> Bendigo Advertiser 2 July 1863 p3

<sup>4</sup> Bendigo Advertiser 15 November 1895 p4

<sup>5</sup> C.F. Young, *The New Gold Mountain, The Chinese in Australia 1901-1921*; Raphael Arts P/L Richmond South Australia, 1977; pp171, 275

of religious training.<sup>1</sup> One brother had the good fortune to find a gold nugget in the street amongst the road metal.<sup>2</sup> On another occasion young Chin Chee was lucky to survive a snake bite while swimming in a dam – the lad tied a shoe lace around his leg and walked to the hospital for treatment.<sup>3</sup>

Thomas Chin Chee showed promise as an athlete and started playing football at Bridgewater and Inglewood in the 1890s. His name was included in local football news and one modern-day Australia Rules Football historian includes Thomas Chin Chee as one of the few “Chinese small-town football pioneers”.<sup>4</sup>

Grace Chin Chee also had her moments at court. One time she was charged with using obscene language at the Chinese Camp. Another time she took ‘German Bob’ to court for speaking wrongfully of her and stigmatising the character of her husband and family.<sup>5</sup> Grace must have been a compassionate woman as she had previously supported ‘Mrs Bob’ with some domestic violence concerns.<sup>6</sup>

By 1902 the Chin Chee family had moved to Korumburra in Gippsland where a couple of sons, Alfred and Thomas, were working as miners. There may have been other family in the region as the Chin Chee name was mentioned in the local media of the 1880s.

James Chin Chee died in 1906 at age 74 and was buried in Springvale, Victoria.

Grace Chin Chee nee Vincent died in May 1932 at age 79 years and was buried at the Springvale Botanical Cemetery, Victoria.

James and Grace Chin Chee’s first daughter was Rosina Violet who was born in Inglewood in 1880, and she’s the daughter who settled in St Albans in the early 1900s. She married Alfred Norman O’Neil in 1921 in Mount Clear, near Ballarat in Victoria. She was 41 and he was 35. Alfred Norman O’Neil (known as Norman) of St Albans was the grandson of William and Bridget O’Neil of Keilor, who were early pioneers in the district.<sup>7</sup>

Postscript: the peak of the Chinese presence in Victoria was between 1857 and 1861, with a total of 25,000 persons and they were mostly men. By 1901 the number had declined to 7,000 and in 1933 it was 3,000.

<sup>1</sup> Bendigo Advertiser 7 June 1882 p2

<sup>2</sup> Bendigo Advertiser 20 January 1887 p3

<sup>3</sup> Bendigo Advertiser 27 November 1888 p3

<sup>4</sup> <https://amateursport.wordpress.com/2015/03/25/the-forgotten-story-of-the-chinese-goldfields-aussie-rules-leagues/>

<sup>5</sup> Bendigo Advertiser 25 October 1893 p4

<sup>6</sup> Bendigo Independent 11 February 1893 p2

<sup>7</sup> Refer to Angela Evans et al *Keilor Pioneers: Dead Men Do Tell Tales* (1994) and Joseph Ribarow *St Albans Pioneers, Settlers and Speculators from the 1860s* (2018).

## 1886 – Thomas and Elizabeth Marston

Thomas and Elizabeth Marston were early pioneers of St Albans, having acquired their property about 1886 from the Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company. It was part of block #21 of the old Keilor-Braybrook Farmers Common that had been selected by John O’Shannessy in 1868; he lost possession of the land when he did not make the improvements required by the Closer Settlement Board and the block was sold to Dr Louis Laurence Smith in 1870, the flamboyant Melbourne doctor, politician, and real estate investor. The Marstons were probably not living in St Albans when they bought the land, as records show they were in Sunbury, so perhaps it was bought as an investment property.

Thomas Marston was born in September 1832 in Normanton, Lincolnshire, England. His parents were William Marston (from Leicestershire) and Elizabeth Winter (from Lincolnshire). Thomas Marston married Elizabeth Beeson in 1855. Her parents were Elizabeth Northern and John Beeson from Lincolnshire.

Thomas and Elizabeth Marston migrated to Melbourne in 1859 and settled in Sunbury. Thomas worked for the railways, as did two of his sons. Elizabeth’s children included:

- Harriet was born in 1857 and died in 1858 in Grantham, Lincolnshire, England.
- Louisa was born in 1858 in Grantham, Lincolnshire. She married James Robert Cathie and raised 11 children. In 1871 she applied for a publican’s licence for the Sunbury Railway Station Refreshment Rooms. They later moved to Albert Park and by 1919 were at the Masonic Homes, Prahran, where Louisa died at age 70 years in November 1928. James had died in May 1926. They are buried at the New Melbourne Cemetery in Fawkner
- Mark was born 1861 in Sunbury, died in 1880 at age 19. He was rabbit hunting with a friend in some of William J. Clarke’s paddocks in Sunbury when he put his hand down a burrow and was bitten by a snake. He was given medical treatment but died next day. He was well liked and respected and the district raised a subscription for his tombstone.
- Frederick was born 1862 in Sunbury. He married Ellen Jane Wilson and they settled at Lancefield Junction where they had two children. Frederick worked with the railways and met a terrible death at Castlemaine in 1893 when he was run over by a train while shunting. He was aged 30 years.
- Harriett was born in 1864 in Sunbury. She married Maurice Patrick Cleary at Gisborne in 1886 and they had five children. They later settled in Geelong. Maurice died in 1935

aged 77 years, and Harriet died in 1942 aged 77 years. Both are buried in the Geelong Eastern Cemetery.

- Walter "Wallie" born in 1866 and married Mary Martha Hernan and raised three daughters. He worked with the railways as an engine driver and died in January 1933 in Essendon.
- Emily Ada born in 1873 in Sunbury. She married William James Osborne and raised 6 children. Emily died in May 1951 at Macleod at age 77 years.

By 1902 Thomas and Elizabeth were living in Adelaide, St Albans. Elizabeth died in St Albans in July 1904 at age 69 and was buried at Sunbury. Thomas left St Albans before 1909 and apparently went to live with some of his children, as he was listed in the electoral rolls as being at Lower Templestowe, Geelong, and Ballarat.

Thomas Marston died in February 1916 and was buried at Sunbury with his late wife:

*The death of a former resident of this district in the person of Mr Thos. Marston took place at Ballarat on Wednesday, February 23, at the age of 84 years. The deceased gentleman was formerly a railway employe, and resided at Lancefield Junction nearly 40 years ago. ... Mr Thos. Marston's remains were interred in the Sunbury cemetery on Friday, 25th February, alongside those of his wife, who predeceased him on July 18, 1904, at the age of 68 years. Deceased retired from the railway service some years ago, and has resided with members of his family at Geelong and Ballarat ever since.<sup>1</sup>*

None of the Marston children have had a direct connection with St Albans as far as can be seen. A more recent link occurred in the 1950s, when family descendants Sam and Elma Pearson and their children Lorraine and Graeme, settled in the district. Lorraine and her husband Keith Williams have been involved in local groups, such as the Anglican church, the kindergarten, the toy library, Rotary, and the BMX club. Lorraine and Keith are still living in St Albans in 2020, local residents for over sixty years.



Elizabeth Marston at the grave of her son Mark

## 1888 – Frederick and Eva Stenson



Frederick Charles Stenson was born at Yankton Somerset, England, on April 16, 1870. He had six sisters and a brother. He went to school until he was about twelve years old, then stayed home to help his father on the farm. His mother died young and his father remarried. His father's brother came out to Australia in 1854 and selected land on the Maribyrnong River where he planted vines, veggies and kept fowls and cows.

In 1888 he sent for one of his nephews to come out and help him. Frederick Charles came out in July 1888 for two years but during that time his Dad died so he stayed on with his Uncle and Aunt. He went in for dealing and droving besides helping his Uncle.

In 1899 he married Eva Shiner (whose father had a foundry in Elizabeth Street in Melbourne). They lived in a house number 202 Biggs Street. They had four daughters: Alice, April 17, 1900; Ruby, February 9, 1902; Emily, June 6, 1904; Winifred, March 17, 1914.



His uncle died in November 1905. The family moved down to the farm to live with Aunt.

In 1907 he stood for election in the Keilor council and won the seat in the Maribyrnong Riding. He was a councilor for forty years and only had to fight two elections. He retired from the council in 1947.

Stenson became a Justice of Peace about 1912. He was Honorary Secretary of the Church of England for 50 years, and with the Mechanics Institute and State School for several years.

<sup>1</sup> Romsey Examiner 10 March 1916 p2

He also was a Diocese Lay Reader for the Church of England. He was Keilor Shire Representative of the Municipal Association, and President of the Water Trust. He drove a number of residents over to Konagaderra site, which was the scheme where St Albans was to get their water, but the first world war broke out and the money was needed for other things. He also joined in all sports and was President of the Cricket Club in 1913.



Alice married Fred Anderson, eldest son of Mr and Mrs P. Anderson, Taylors Road. They married at the Church of England on April 18, 1923. Alice and Fred had a son and daughter.

Ruby married Tom Crawford in September 16, 1934 at Omeo. Ruby and Tom raised a son and a daughter.

Emily married Frank Hall on December 14, 1942 at St Albans Church of England.

Winifred married Jack Honey on April 24, 1943 in St Albans Church of England. Jack was the eldest son of Mr and Mrs Honey of Gladstone Street. Winifred and Jack had two sons and a daughter. Jack Honey was a councilor for Maribyrnong Riding Keilor from 1958 to 1963 until he retired.



Mr and Mrs Stenson moved from the farm up to "Keighlo", 4 Winifred Street, in July 1908. Mr Stenson sold "Keighlo" to the Roman Catholic Trust in 1956 with three years' grace before taking over.

Auntie Stenson died April 1914.  
 Mrs. Stenson died May 1945 aged 76.  
 Mr. Stenson died June 1958 aged 88.  
 (Written by Emily Hall nee Stenson, 1986.)





## 1904 – Emily and Jack Hall



Emily Leah Stenson was born on June 16, 1904. Her parents were Fred and Eva Stenson (q.v.) of “Keighlo” in Winifred Street. It was the grandest house in St Albans at the time and remained so for many years. Fred Stenson was the longest serving councilor in the district

and the whole family<sup>1</sup> was involved with the Anglican Church of St Alban the Martyr, which was only a short distance from home. Her most dedicated contribution to the parish was being in charge of the Guild of the Sanctuary for many years and as a regular church organist, for which she provided a continuous service until 1965.

Emily started at the St Albans Primary School in 1910 and finished in 1913. There were few employment opportunities for young women in the district, but her parents had an orchard and no sons, so it was only natural that Emily and her sisters would work on the family farm. As has been noted by a niece, the Stenson girls worked as hard as any man.

Emily’s great contribution to local history was her involvement with the St Albans Railway Centenary Committee, which was formed in 1986 and published “St Albans The First Hundred Years 1887-1987”. Much of the oral history information for this book came from Emily and her good friend Mary Smith. Emily also shared a number of family photos from the early 1900s, and some of these are now appreciated as “iconic” historical images or early St Albans.



Emily Leah Stenson wed Frank Hall in 1942. In 1968 they were living at 182 Williams Street St Albans, near the water tower on the corner of Arthur Street. Frank Hall was from Sydenham. He worked as a labourer and helped out in the family orchard. He has

been described as being a “character” who liked to socialise and have a drink or two, but at times these interests clashed, and he was occasionally charged with offensive behavior for his imbibing. You could get fined £2 in default 14 days’ imprisonment for that, so it was not a light punishment. On one such occasion he said he would take the pledge and he was allowed time to pay the fine.

<sup>1</sup> The story of the Stenson family is included in *St Albans Pioneer, Settlers and Speculators from the 1860s*.

Frank Farrugia remembered him with as a colleague with some fondness:

*Ben Hall from Sydenham was a local character. He was actually Frank Hall, but we called him Ben Hall for obvious reasons. He married Emily Stenson who was one of Fred Stenson’s daughters, and they were all Church of England parishioners and non-drinkers, whereas Ben was a boozier. He would come past our house when we were in George Street to borrow Mrs Stenson’s horse and dray to go to the pub. It was a flat dray with a bench seat and sides. Ben used to go the Keilor hotel and have his drinks. When it was time to head for home the horse knew the way so you would hear this thing coming past and Ben yelling out “Get going!” but when you looked over you couldn’t see anyone in the driving seat – he was lying down in the back.<sup>2</sup>*

Frank Hall died in April 1974 and was buried at the Keilor Cemetery.



In her later years Emily Hall moved to the Grantham Green Hostel in Kealba. She kept in contact with her church community with the help of carers such as Lorraine Williams who would drive her to the church. Emily Hall nee Stenson died in October 2000 at the age of 96 years and was buried at Keilor. She was said to be the oldest surviving original resident of the suburb. Over 80

friends and relatives farewelled her at the St Alban the Martyr church.

The former vicar of the church, the Rev. Stuart Young, shared memories of Emily’s life with the congregation.

*When she was 79, people would find Em still in the shed, arms in a chook pellet bin or in the jungle that lay between the shed and her back fence, chasing the chooks, some of which would fly into neighbours’ yards – and she would give them ‘what-for’. Her trademark saying would be: ‘Silly sausage’, first to her dog Ruff and then, through the dogs, to you. Mrs Hall was a woman he had got to know, love and respect as a friend, who held a special place in the church and the district. She married at the age of 38 years and six months in 1942, at the height of World War Two. In her kitchen was a rare photograph of the original timber St Alban the Martyr Anglican church, in the building of which her father, Fred Stenson was deeply involved. She was the third of four daughters — and almost the son Fred never had.*

Emily Hall’s niece, Gwen Kratsis nee Honey,

<sup>2</sup> Recollections of Frank Farrugia 2012.

also had fond memories of her aunt:

*Aunt Em lived alone for many years with her dog and a back yard with chickens. When she worked on the farm in Stenson Road she worked as hard as any man. She loved going to the Senior Citizens Club as a social outing. I would take the children to her house on Saturdays and she would really spoil them. Aunt Em was the last of the Stenson daughters to pass away. She died about 2000 not long after mum. The reverend gave a fantastic ceremony at her funeral as he visited her every week for years and years and knew her like family.<sup>1</sup>*



Emily Hall with niece and nephew © G Kratsis



St Alban The Martyr Church, St Albans, c.1960



Funeral service for Emily Hall, 2000

<sup>1</sup> Gwen Kratsis in *St Albans Pioneer, Settlers and Speculators from the 1860s*, 2013, p141.

## 1906 – Rose and Norman O’Neil

Rose and Norman O’Neil were St Albans residents during the 1920s and 1930s and have been remembered because of their connection to “The St Albans Tragedy”. The family origins go back to convict transportation to Tasmania in the 1830s and the Chinese migration to the gold fields of Victoria in the 1850s, so they have the desirable cache of the unconventional in otherwise routine family history. Rose came to work at Overnewton in Keilor about 1906.

The O’Neil family history in Keilor goes back to the 1840s, the pioneering days of the district, when family patriarch William O’Neil sailed from Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania) to Port Phillip (Victoria).<sup>2</sup> Alfred Norman O’Neil, who was known as Norman, was his grandson.

William O’Neil was a former convict and a former policeman who became a farmer at Keilor; the family name is still associated with the Horseshoe Bend Farm on the Maribyrnong River. O’Neil had several blocks in the Keilor township and had more than 220 acres to the east of Keilor village. He also had 240 acres in St Albans. Two blocks were on the corner of Station and Boundary roads. The other block was to the eastern end of Boundary Road next to some of Mary Delahey’s land, so the family had early connections with St Albans on the Keilor Plains.

William O’Neil married Bridget Gorman<sup>3</sup> of Keilor and they had nine children. Their son William Alfred, born in 1855, married Elizabeth Goudie<sup>4</sup> of another Keilor pioneer family, in 1882, and they had twelve children. Their son Alfred Norman O’Neil was born in 1886 and he’s the one who established his home in St Albans about 1910.

Rosina “Rose” Violet Chin Chee was born in Inglewood, Victoria, in 1880. Her parents were James Chin Chee (q.v.) from China, and Grace Vincent, whose family came from Cornwall, England. James and Grace’s families had come to Victoria in the 1850s. James and Grace settled in Ballarat where she gave birth to nine children – six boys and three girls. Rosina was their eldest daughter. Nothing is known about her personal life in growing up.

It is not known why Rosina moved to Keilor, but it was most probably for employment purposes and because her parents had left

<sup>2</sup> Refer to articles in *Keilor Pioneers. Dead Men Do Tell Tales* (1994). and *St Albans Pioneers, Settlers and Speculators from the 1860s*.

<sup>3</sup> Bridget Gorman (1818-1870) was from Tipperary, Ireland. She migrated in 1841 and married William Henry O’Neil in April 1842.

<sup>4</sup> Refer to article in Angela Evans and the Keilor Pioneer Research Collective’s *Keilor Pioneers. Dead Men Do Tell Tales* (1994), pp254-255. Elizabeth Goudie was born in Keilor in 1860 and died in Ascot Vale in 1926.

Ballarat and settled in Gippsland about 1903. Rosina was 23 at the time. One can surmise that the now adult Chin Chee children were establishing their lives independently; for example, Rose's sister Isabella Chin Chee had married and was also living in Melbourne.<sup>1</sup>

Rose Chin Chee started working at William Taylor's "Overnewton" property in Keilor, possibly about 1906. William and Helen Taylor had established their Overnewton estate in 1849.<sup>2</sup> It was the biggest property in the district with a "baronial castle" as its residential centre to accommodate their family of 12. They employed 15 servants as domestic and outdoor staff to maintain the large estate. Rose worked there as one of the cooks.

Rose Chin Chee must have met Norman O'Neil shortly after arriving in Keilor – after all, they were residents in a small village, and Norman, being from one of the longer established families, must have had occasion to call into Overnewton. The municipality of Keilor comprised of about 200 dwellings and 900 people, of which almost one-third were in St Albans. The village neighbourhoods included Keilor, Tullamarine, Sydenham, and St Albans.

Rose and Norman must have established a rapport leading to a courtship of almost fifteen years, before marrying in 1921.

In 1921 Norman O'Neil married Rosina 'Rose' Violet Chin Chee at Mount Clear, Ballarat, which was a small mining area in the gold diggings from the 1850s. This location was probably chosen because of Rosina's family connections to the area. Rose was aged 41 and Norman was 35, and it was the first marriage for each of the betrothed. After their marriage the couple went to live at St Albans and O'Neill purchased a dairy farm about half a mile from the house.

St Albans in the early 1900s was a farming district and it is not surprising that Norman continued his work as a farmer. The Overnewton land sales in 1905 had attracted new farming families to the district. Most of these grazed sheep, cattle, and horses; others were crop or grain farmers and several were dairy farmers. There were also some poultry farmers, but their operations were smaller scale. St Albans had about 50 households and less than 300 people. It was a small rural village.

At first Norman had a small dairy that he probably managed with his brother Stanley John O'Neil. Rose would have helped with the milking. Norman later sold the dairy and moved to a house on a large block of land in Theodore Street about 100 yards from the reservoir. The home was described as "a small weatherboard house on one of the highest parts of the Keilor Plains". A photograph suggests it was not that small.

<sup>1</sup> An ancestry reference to Isabella Chin Chee being born in St Albans in 1882 cannot be correct.

<sup>2</sup> Refer to chapter in *St Albans Pioneers, Settlers and Speculators from the 1860s* (2018).



St Albans Reservoir and proximity to housing.

Norman worked from here mostly as a drover and had a dozen sheep- and cattle-dogs. He obtained contracts as a drover from various sources and did a considerable amount of horse dealing. Driving stock usually meant herding them along the highways to the sale yards or abattoirs, and it was not without risk:

*While in charge of a flock of sheep travelling through the district on Thursday afternoon last, Mr. Norman O'Neil, of St Albans, had the misfortune to have one of his valuable sheep dogs killed outright and another badly injured by a reckless motorist who was speeding along the Ballarat road at a furious pace. Unfortunately, Mr. O'Neil was not able to obtain the number of the car.<sup>3</sup>*

The value of O'Neil's possessions was increasing. On the death of his father<sup>4</sup> in 1926 he received a considerable interest in valuable land on the Maribyrnong River. O'Neil made good profit through dealing in horses, cows, and vehicles. He would sell fat cows through the Melbourne livestock markets.

He was able to buy several blocks of land at St Albans and a house at Sunshine. He also had a large interest in a hotel at Keilor. He purchased two or three blocks of land at St Albans for his wife.<sup>5</sup>

One could surmise at this stage that life had been kind to the O'Neils. They were both well known in the district and each was liked in their respective spheres. The happiness of their domestic and social life was often remarked upon by neighbours:

*There were few women in the St Albans district who were more popular than Mrs. O'Neill. During the worst years of the depression she assisted several unemployed families with food. O'Neill was liked by his neighbours for his generosity and his readiness to assist them in various jobs on their properties.<sup>6</sup>*

They enjoyed socialising and the most

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 6 March 1931 p6

<sup>4</sup> Alfred William O'Neil was born in October 1855 at Keilor and died in March 1926 at Essendon. Refer to chapter in Angela Evans' *Keilor Pioneers: Dead Men Do Tell Tales*.

<sup>5</sup> Argus 11 March 1935 p9

<sup>6</sup> Argus 11 March 1935 p9



popular occasions for them were the weekly gatherings at the St Albans Mechanics Institute Hall. The couple regularly participated in the dances and parties at which Rose played cards and Norman danced. Rose often donated a prize for card tournaments, and it appears that she was often amongst the winners:

*The social evening held at St. Albans last Saturday night proved a great success, the hall being taxed to its full capacity. Those who found the dancing floor a little crowded took refuge in an exciting game of euchre. Mrs. O'Neil, of St. Albans, secured the ladies' prize, two handsome cake stands.*<sup>1</sup>

Rose O'Neill was devoted to her husband for many years, but started becoming jealous when she began to suspect that he may have been associating with another woman. She would challenge him about "the woman at the pub" and he would dismiss it as ordinary negotiations about stock dealing. The couple's disagreements became noticed at the public functions in the St Albans hall.

It was the 1930s and the O'Neils had been married for over a decade. They had not had any children and it is not known if this contributed to the marital discord. Neighbours became aware of more frequent quarrels between them during later years. At one stage, after another quarrel, Rose said before a number of people at a dance that she would soon be found in the waterhole near her home. Later, a number of Rose's notebooks and papers were found that confirmed a long history of domestic unhappiness.

The verbal disputation escalated at the Mechanics Institute Hall on 10 March 1935 when the couple attended a dance. During a stormy public confrontation, Rose struck Norman in the face with her handbag, and he told her angrily that she was not to return to his house. She was tremendously overwrought. Friends intervened to calm them both, but they were not reconciled. Norman went home alone and when Rose later turned up he ordered her out and she ran out into the darkness and was not seen again.

Norman had arranged to drive a large flock of sheep from Rockbank to Newmarket that morning, so he lay down on his bed to get a few hours' sleep before leaving to collect the sheep at 4 a.m. While he was asleep, Rose crept back into the house and at close range shot Norman three times in the head. He died instantly. She then tied a heavy weight around her neck and drowned herself in the nearby reservoir.

Details of the coronial investigation into the St Albans tragedy were reported in many articles by local and major newspapers.

The remains of Alfred Norman O'Neil and Rose Violet O'Neil nee Chin Chee were interred in the Keilor Cemetery.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 7 March 1935 p5

## 1907 – Catherine and Albert Gibson

Catherine Gibson was born at Woodend in 1868, the daughter of Duncan McRae (1835-1910) and Flora Ann Patterson (1838-1891).

Duncan McRae's ancestors were originally from Scotland. He was born in 1832 and arrived in New South Wales in 1852 at age 20 years with his parents and their seven children under the Assisted Immigrant Passengers scheme.

Flora Ann Patterson was born about 1839 in Scotland, so she must have been in her teens when she migrated to Australia.

Duncan McRae and Flora Patterson married in 1856 and settled at Woodend. Their children were Christopher (1858), Farquhar (1860), James (1862), John (1864), Donald (1866), Catherine (1868), Duncan (1872), Alexander (1874), and Robert (1876). Farquhar became a farmer at St Albans-Keilor in 1905 and retired to the Pinnacle Estate, St Albans East, in the 1930s.<sup>2</sup>

Catherine McRae married William John Mansfield of Tullamarine in 1899. They had a son William John (1899-1906), and daughters Flora Ann (1901-1978), Eliza Mona (1903-1994), and Williamina (1906-1906).

- William Mansfield jnr was born in 1899 in Footscray. William and his father William Mansfield snr drowned tragically while trying to cross the river at Bertram's Ford at Arundel, on 15 October 1906: *On Monday morning last, Mr. William Mansfield, a well-known farmer, and his son, William, about seven years of age, together with a lad named Philip Hill, were driving in a buggy across Deep Creek. Hill was sitting in the back of the buggy, leading a horse with a halter, and Mr. Mansfield and his son were in the front. Mr. Mansfield attempted to drive across the creek, but as soon as the buggy was fairly in the water it overturned. Neither Mr. Mansfield nor his son reached the bank. In endeavouring to save the boy Mr. Mansfield was swept down the stream with him, and both were drowned.*<sup>3</sup>
- Flora Ann Mansfield was born in June 1901 at Footscray and attended the St Albans Primary School from 1907 to 1913. During the 1970s she was living in Victoria Crescent, St Albans. She was a member of the Anglican church and a supporter of the local Red Cross branch and donated prizes for their fund-raising euchre parties. Flora died in March 1978,

<sup>2</sup> Farquhar McRae married Annie Ritchie in 1899. Their children were Florence Annie (1900), Malcolm "Sonny" (1901), and Jean (1904). Refer to chapter in *St Albans Settlers from 1905*, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Sunbury News 20 October 1906 p3

aged 77 years, and was buried at Keilor.

- Eliza Mona Mansfield was born in August 1903 at Footscray and attended St Albans Primary from 1910 to 1913. In the 1920s she was living in Alfrieda Street and working as a machinist. She also was a supporter of the local Red Cross branch and joined in the fund-raising events and wartime knitting projects. Eliza and her sister Flora moved to Victoria Crescent in the late 1960s after their mother died. Eliza died in June 1994, aged 91 years, and was buried with her late sister Flora at Keilor.



1906 was a traumatic year for Catherine Mansfield, because three of her immediate family died: youngest daughter, husband, and son. Catherine moved to St Albans in 1907. The reason for moving is not known, but her brother, Farquhar McRae, had settled in the district after the sale of the Overnewton Estate in 1905. Catherine, as a recent widow, was possibly moving closer to relatives for support. St Albans was a village of about 40 households mostly living on small farms. The village centre was clustered around the railway station with two shops, a primary school, and the recently built Mechanics Institute Hall and Library that was being used for community meetings and church services.

Catherine Mansfield nee McRae married Albert Edward Gibson in 1910 and they were living at 10 East Esplanade, St Albans, next to the Mechanics Institute Hall opposite the railway station.<sup>1</sup> Albert Edward Gibson was probably born in 1872 in Kansas, USA. It is not known when he came to Australia or why he came to St Albans. At the time he was listed as carpenter, but the family was also referred to as being farmers. The district was composed of small farms and the Gibsons had some cows and sheep on their small acreage on the corner of Alfrieda Street, East Esplanade and Main Road East, which was later known as Hampton's corner.

<sup>1</sup> Easton's Hardware was built at 8 East Esplanade in 1946 and in 1961 it became Ermstrang's Olympic Cake Shop. By 1970 the old Gibson property was being used by several small businesses selling frocks, menswear, a delicatessen, and a boot repairer.

Catherine was a parishioner with St Alban the Martyr Church, which had been built in 1910, and supported the Sunday School that her daughters attended. She joined community groups such as the local branch of the Red Cross Society, the St Albans Mothers' Club, and the Scouts committee. Committee meetings were held at her home and she organized jumble sales from her premises as fund raisers. During the 1940s Catherine and her daughters helped establish the St Albans First Aid Post for the A.R.P.

Catherine and Albert Gibson had a son, Albert "Bert" Edward Gibson jnr, who was born in 1911, attended St Albans Primary School and then Sunshine Technical School. He became a teacher and married Thora Wallis Riley in 1932; they had at least two children who attended St Albans primary in 1943. Albert was probably teaching in Swan Hill circa 1943 and was living back in St Albans at Alfrieda Street in 1955 and his family was still there in the mid 1960s.

Thora Gibson was the musical director and accompanist at various pantomimes held at the Mechanics Institute Hall in the 1940s and 1950s. The family was in Diamond Valley in the early 1970s and moved to Geelong in later years. Albert Gibson jnr died in 1991 and Thora Gibson nee Riley died in 2004. Their burial place is the Geelong Memorial Park Crematorium.

Catherine and Albert Gibson sponsored a number of children during the 1920s, including Herbert "Chic" Burrows, Albert Newman, Philip Edward Townsend and Walter Trevor Baulch. It is not known why she sponsored these boys: two of them may have had some American heritage, so there may have been an altruistic connection with her husband's background. Perhaps it was her role with the church, as Catherine was a parishioner with St Alban The Martyr Church and the Anglican churches in Melbourne had established several orphanages.

At the time there was a great social stigma attached to single (unmarried) mothers and most would have been strongly encouraged – many would argue they were forced – to put their babies up for adoption through the hospitals. This might have been exacerbated because of the war, as men left for war leaving women and young babies behind, sometimes not knowing that they had fathered a child. Occasionally, dire poverty forced young parents to surrender a child for adoption. Church groups became involved in responding to some of the consequent crises and occasionally children were even advertised for adoption by Vicars in major newspapers:

*Application has often been made to me from persons desirous of adopting a child ... By your kindness I would like to make known that I now know of a dear little boy 6½ years old, bright, intelligent and well grown, in perfect health, and of healthy parentage. He comes from another State, and from the particulars furnished to me everything seems straightforward. I feel sure he*

*would help to brighten somebody's home, and it will give me great pleasure to introduce the parties.<sup>1</sup>*

Adoption was not an easy process during the 1920s, as the rights of the adopting people were not enshrined in legislation. In England, adoption still had no legal status in 1925, while in Victoria an Infant Adoption bill was introduced for debate in 1928, and if it had passed would have allowed a child to be properly adopted:

*... as at present a child might be handed over to a foster parent, who would nurture it for say, 15 years, only to find it taken away at the end of that period by the actual parents. This caused heart-burnings. Victoria was the only State in the Commonwealth that had not an Act such as this; and if it had been in existence in the part in this State, fewer young mothers would have abandoned their children. They would know that some noble person was prepared to adopt the child and give it a chance in life.<sup>2</sup>*

Unfortunately, the bill was abandoned when the Government was defeated.<sup>3</sup>

Despite these uncertainties, Catherine and Albert Gibson sponsored several boys and at least three served their country in WW2.

#### **Albert Newman**

Albert Newman was born in December 1914 and was admitted to St Albans Primary School in July 1923 from Healesville. He left in September 1923, destination unknown, so his was quite a short stay with the Gibson family. Perhaps it might have been short-term foster care to assist Albert's parents during a time of crisis. Nothing more is known about Albert Newman in recorded local history.

#### **Herbert Chenoweth Burrows**



Herbert Chenoweth 'Chic' Burrows was born in March 1918 at Carlton, his mother being Madge Burrows of Trinity College in Carlton. Chic started at St Albans Primary School in January 1924 and left at the end of 1932 for the Sunshine Technical School. He

served with the Royal Australian Navy in WW2. He married Muriel Elizabeth Spencer in 1945 and they established their home in Thompson Street, Williamstown.

There is a family connection between Chic Burrows and the Griffiths family who came to St Albans in 1906. The link is that Maria Esther Burrows of Tasmania married Thomas Frederick Augustus Griffiths. She was a descendant of Richard Cornelius Burrows who was transported

<sup>1</sup> Argus 8 January 1910 p16

<sup>2</sup> Geelong Advertiser 25 September 1928 p1

<sup>3</sup> Herald 15 November 1928 p8

to Australia with the Second Fleet. Thus, Martha "Madge" Palmer Burrows is a descendant of Richard Cornelius Burrows (Second Fleet) and Elizabeth Cole (First Fleet). Burrows may have had connections with the Calder and Anderson families of St Albans.<sup>4</sup>

Henry Edward Griffiths was born in 1868 in Avenel near Seymour. His parents were Thomas Frederick Augustus Griffiths and Maria Esther Burrows from Tasmania. Thomas was born at sea in 1834. Maria was born in 1834 with convict "royalty" in her bloodline because she was a descendent of Richard Cornelius Burrows who had been sentenced to death for stealing a sheep but was instead transported to Australia in 1790. Thomas Griffiths and Maria Burrows married in Victoria in 1866.

Herbert Chenoweth Burrows passed away in February 1984, at age 65 years.

#### **Philip Edward Townsend**



Philip Edward Townsend was born in September 1922. His mother was Rose Myrtle Townsend who was from Baimsdale and whose parents came to Australia about 1882. Philip's father was Joseph Hyrum Anderson (1900-1978) who was from Salt Lake, Utah, USA. Philip started at the St Albans

primary school in August 1927 and left in 1935 for Sunshine Technical School. He was at first living with the Gibson family in East Esplanade and later moved to West Esplanade. He worked as a polisher. Philip enlisted in October 1940 and served with the RAN as 1st Class Stoker; he was demobbed in March 1946. He married Lois Shipton and they raised several children. Philip Edward Townsend died at Woodend in January 2009, at the age of 86 years.

#### **Walter Trevor Baulch**



Walter was born in September 1918 and his mother was Hannah Myrtle Baulch from Warrnambool. Wally came to St Albans in 1918. He started at St Albans Primary in 1924 and then attended Sunshine Technical School where he trained as a carpenter. He was a good sprinter and was active

with the football and cricket club where he was known as "one of the stalwarts of St Albans". He enlisted in 1940 and was assigned as a clerk to the 1st Australian Logistics Corps in Melbourne

<sup>4</sup> Refer to chapters in *St Albans Settlers from 1905, 2018*.

before serving in the Middle East with the 6th and 7th Divisions. He was promoted to sergeant before transferring to the pay corps and helping with the repatriation of Australian POWs from Europe. His awarded medals include the Defence Medal, War Medal, and Australian Services Medal.

In 1945 while stationed in England, Walter married Muriel Dorothy "Dot" Willmer. After coming back to Australia, he worked at the ammunitions factory in Maribyrnong for a year and then at Keilor Council as Assistant Shire Secretary and Assistant Rate Collector. He worked for the council for many years and eventually had the title of City Valuer. His recreational pursuits had continued with football and cricket, and he was also appointed as the secretary of the Auxiliary Fire Brigade.

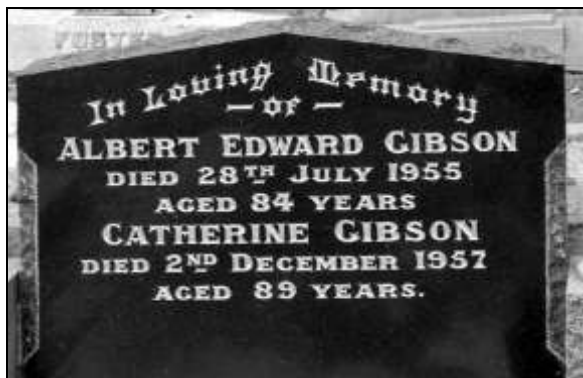
Dot Baulch helped establish the St Albans Little Theatre in the 1950s with Doug Stevens, Neville Thurgood and Mary Hewitt. Dot also assisted in fundraising for the kindergarten committee and became a delegate to the Shire of Braybrook Child Care Committee.

Walter Baulch is the best-documented of the Gibson adoptees in local history, as his daughter-in-law, Cheryl Baulch nee Straughen, has written about his life and war service. He died in October 2009 and was buried at Geelong.

1948 was a special birthday year for Catherine Gibson, often referred to as Mrs Albert Gibson, as was the custom of the time:

*To celebrate the 80th birthday of Mrs. A. Gibson, of East Esplanade, St. Albans, about 30 residents held an enjoyable afternoon on Wednesday last at the home of Mrs. G. Stevens. A birthday cake, kindly made by Mrs. G. Scullie, and an excellent afternoon tea was provided. A toast to Mrs. Gibson was well received and a presentation on behalf of those present was made to her.<sup>1</sup>*

Albert Edward Gibson died in July 1955 at St Albans, aged 84 years. His life in St Albans has not been recorded in the media even though he had been a resident for about 45 years. Catherine Mansfield-Gibson nee McRae died in December 1957 at St Albans, aged 89 years, a local resident for 50 years. Her remains were buried with those of her late husband at the Melbourne cemetery.



<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 8 October 1948 p1

## 1910 – John and Annie McKechnie

John Neil McKechnie was born about 1868 in Ballarat East. His father was Daniel McKechnie (1825-1887) from Greenock, Renfrewshire, Scotland, and his mother was Anne Campbell McFarlane (1845-1889) from Muthul, Scotland. They married in Victoria in 1862 – she was 17 and he was 37.

Their families probably came to Victoria during the gold rush era and settled around Ballarat, as in 1864 Daniel McKechnie was a shareholder of the Alston and Weardale Gold Mining Company, Prospect Lead, Cambrian Hill.<sup>2</sup> John McKechnie was said to be a very prominent and popular mining man at Maindample.<sup>3</sup>

In 1902 at Christ Church, South Yarra, John Neil McKechnie married Annie Rose McCoy.<sup>4</sup> She was born in May 1871 at Bendigo, and her parents were Annie and Alfred McCoy. John and Annie McKechnie raised 7 children:

- Gladys Mary was born in April 1903 at South Yarra, started at the St Albans Primary School in 1910 and left in 1916 for University High School. In 1931 she married William Burge Barnett, who was the only child of Mr and Mrs Robert Barnett of Tyler Street, Sunshine.
- Jessie Campbell was born in December 1904 at Maindample and started at St Albans primary in 1910. She left in 1918 for the Presbyterian Ladies College. She trained in nursing and enlisted while on holiday in England; she served in France behind the British lines during WW2.
- John Keith was born in June 1906 at Maindample and started at St Albans primary in 1913 and left in 1918 for the Sunshine Technical School.
- Alfred Neil was born in September 1907 at Maindample, started at St Albans primary in 1913 and left 1918 for Sunshine Tech. He married Gwyn Isobel Lang of Harcourt in 1938. Alfred Neil served with the Australian forces in WW2 and died in Burma in 1943.
- Emily Gwendoline "Gwen" was born in July 1909, started at St Albans in 1915 and left in 1922 for PLC. She became a teacher at the St Albans primary school in the late 1920s. She married Frank McCreery of St Albans.
- Jean Sheppard was born in September 1911 in St Albans, started at the primary school in 1918 and left in 1924 for PLC. She became a milliner and in 1945 married Charles Edmund Martin, who was a teacher. They were living in East

<sup>2</sup> Ballarat Star 6 August 1864 p3

<sup>3</sup> Broadford Courier 20 October 1899 p3

<sup>4</sup> Surname listed as McGowan in some ancestry records.

Esplanade before moving to Croydon and Mornington. She died in 1995.

- Annie Margaret "Margaret" was born in March 1914 at St Albans, started at the primary school in 1920 and left in 1926 for PLC. She became a CMS missionary in Africa during the 1950s with Bishop Stanway and died in Melbourne in 2008.

The McKechnies came to St Albans in 1910 and soon joined several community movements. In 1920 John was honorary vice-president of the Mechanics' Institute and Free Library, and of the St Albans Tennis Club. In 1921 McKechnie was elected president of the Mechanics Institute and Library<sup>1</sup> and the Boys' Gymnasium club. The new development with the latter was installing a shower for the coming term.<sup>2</sup> There must have been a Girls' Gym club as well, because in 1921 McKechnie was chairman for a "challenge gymnastic and physical culture display" by the boys' and girls' clubs:

*Mr. J. McKechnie asked the audience to act as judges in connection with the display, and the vote went to the girls. The great difference between the work of the two clubs was very difficult to judge. The work of the boys on the rings and the bar was very effective, but in dumbbell and club exercises the girls were much superior. ... Mr. Tomlins and Miss McKenzie, are to be congratulated on the improvement shown by both classes.<sup>3</sup>*

In 1922 John McKechnie was appointed treasurer of the school committee.<sup>4</sup> That year some of his daughters were getting a bit of media attention, because Jean had a letter published in the "Queen Bee" column of the Farmers Advocate while Gwen was noted as playing with the St Albans Tennis Club. Gladys later became the secretary of the Tennis Club.<sup>5</sup>

In 1926 the McKechnies sponsored a move to broaden support opportunities for wayward youth:

*A very successful meeting of St Albans people was held at the residence of Mr. McKechnie ... in connection with the home to be established on Phillip Island for delinquent boys. An executive committee was formed ... and a meeting will be held at an early date to devise means of raising funds. Cr. Stenson, J.P., was elected president, with Mr. Sheridan secretary, and Mr. McKechnie treasurer.<sup>6</sup>*

In 1928 John McKechnie was part of a deputation from St Albans' Progress Association asking Braybrook Council to establish a direct road connection along the rail line from Albion. McKechnie's personal contribution to roadways

was smaller but more strategic in creating an access lane at the back of the Mechanics Hall:

*Mr McKechnie who so kindly found the necessary cash to purchase a strip of land at the rear of the Mechanics Institute which gave the hall a right of way on to the road. This money has now been refunded and the deeds handed over. What with the widening of the ante rooms, improved supper rooms, a new tank and several minor improvements to the hall, the present committee will have something to show for their term of office.<sup>7</sup>*

The McKechnies must have been quiet achievers in the district, because though they have not been mentioned much through oral history discussions, they apparently bought large amounts of property in the district. The late Mary Smith had the best recollections about them and in one story said they owned much of the land along Main Road East from Walmer Avenue to McIntyre Road:

*The McKechnie's estate was bounded by Errington Road, Main Road East, Walmer Avenue, and Biggs Street, and they used it for grazing rather than crop farming. ... The McKechnies did three or four subdivisions and a couple of their subdivisions were selling under the name of Nickson Estate ... on Furlong Road and St Albans West, which were both part of the McKechnie farmland.<sup>8</sup>*

The St Albans history book of 1986 notes that the Pinnacle Estate (St Albans East), Nicksons Estate (Furlong Estate), and Nicksons Estate (St Albans West) were all McKechnie's farms, but apart from this their presence in the area is not well recorded.<sup>9</sup> In the 1930s they were living in Millawa Avenue, which was then part of the Pinnacle Estate, and later they moved to Victoria Crescent.

John Neil McKechnie died in November 1941 at St Albans. The memorial Service at the St Albans Church of England was conducted by the Rev. Geoffrey Sambel (q.v.).

Annie Rose McKechnie nee McCoy died in May 1953 at St Albans:

*St. Albans lost a well known and loved identity when Mrs. Annie McKechnie passed peacefully away at her home in Victoria Crescent, St. Albans at the age of 81 years. The late Mrs. McKechnie resided in St Albans for the past 43 years, and in conjunction with her husband, the late Mr. J. N. McKechnie, always took a deep interest in the early activities of the district, particularly the affairs of the Church of England. ... Mrs McKechnie leaves 5 daughters, Gladys (Mrs W. Barnett), Jess, Gwen (Mrs. F. McCreery), Jean (Mrs. C. Martin), and Margaret and one son Keith, the elder son Neil, having died whilst a prisoner of war in Japanese hands.<sup>10</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Footscray Independent 12 March 1921 p3

<sup>2</sup> Footscray Independent 26 March 1921 p4

<sup>3</sup> Footscray Independent 25 June 1921 p2

<sup>4</sup> Footscray Independent 25 March 1922 p2

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 13 September 1924 p4

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 7 August 1926

<sup>7</sup> Sunshine Advocate 2 September 1932

<sup>8</sup> St Albans Oral History from The Tim Shed Archives p15

<sup>9</sup> St Albans The First Hundred Years p23

<sup>10</sup> Sunshine Advocate 22 May 1953

## 1910 – Jessie Campbell McKechnie

Jessie Campbell McKechnie was born in December 1904 at Maindample, which was a small place near Mansfield in north-east Victoria.

Her parents were John Neil McKechnie (q.v.) and Annie Rose McCoy who had married in 1902 and came to St Albans in 1910. John and Annie McKechnie had five daughters and two sons, and Jessie was their second child.

Jessie started at the St Albans Primary School in 1910 and left in 1918 to attend the Presbyterian Ladies College. She must have developed some craft skills as in 1927 she won a prize for her trousseau set at the Independent Hall in Collins Street, Melbourne.<sup>1</sup>

Jessie trained in nursing at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne and finished her course in 1930. In 1934 she was working at the Corryong hospital near the Murray River. In 1936 she was back in Melbourne at Fawkner. She was overseas when war was declared and enlisted for service abroad from London. She worked in France in conjunction with the British forces.

Agnes McCoy Hartrick was a cousin of Jessie McKechnie and she also trained at the Alfred Hospital.<sup>2</sup> Jessie finished her course in 1930 and Agnes finished hers in 1932. In 1939 they were holidaying together in England when the war started, so they both volunteered and ended up serving as nurses behind the British lines in France.

In May 1938 they sailed to England. In London they took a flat with other Australians at Earl's Court and nursed privately in England all the winter. In the spring they took a car and toured all through Scotland and England. When war broke out both girls signed on for national service and had to buy their equipment. In their final shopping in Yorkshire they bought a large canvas valise in which was a folding canvas bed, a canvas bath, a chair, and all waterproof things, as well as a tin mug and billy. In London they were told to go to Harrods and buy their nurse's outfit, which was an all-grey suit, cape, overcoat, and working togs.<sup>3</sup>

In 1939 Jessie McKechnie's story was featured in the Australian Women's Weekly regarding the most advanced clearing station established behind the British lines.<sup>4</sup> She was with Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service.

In 1940 Jessie was working in a Red Cross building when it was bombed:

*This station was located by German bombers in an asylum in France, and was attacked, despite the fact that it was marked distinctly with a red cross. Immediately the wounded and the mental*

*patients, as well as the entire hospital equipment, were transferred to the cellars under the institution. Numerous bombs fell, and while they were bursting, the English doctors persisted in carrying out operations day and night.<sup>5</sup>*

Sister Jessie McKechnie and other nurses had to get to the ground floor to get food for the inmates. Finally, they were forced to evacuate the building on account of the severity of the bombing and they travelled with the German wounded in ambulances.

Sister Jessie McKechnie reached England from the Western Front in late June 1940.<sup>6</sup>

In 1940 the Shire President of Keilor (Cr H. Hilbert) held a dinner to honour locals who were serving overseas, and Jessie McKechnie was one of the service personnel who were named:

*Captain E. T. Sheehan, Corporal E. G. Davis, Privates E. Winters, J. Hughes, L. Harrison and G. Rosier. In addition Stoker R. G. Jenson, of the R.A.N., and Sister J. C. McKechnie, who are on active service, were honoured. Gunner Webb is on H.M.A.S. Australia, and Sister McKechnie (a St Albans resident) is with the British troops in France.<sup>7</sup>*

Jessie McKechnie returned to Australia and continued her nursing career. She would join other former members of the Queen Alexandra Royal Army Nursing Corps for their annual Anzac reunion dinner; these were held at the Nurses' Memorial Centre in St Kilda Road. McKechnie was known to have attended the reunion dinner in 1945.<sup>8</sup> In the 1950s she was staying with her family in Victoria Crescent, St Albans. In the 1970s she was still working as a nurse but was now living in Tooronga Road, Glen Iris.

Jessie Campbell McKechnie died in May 1996 at Malvern at the age of 92 years. She had served her country in the second great war and it's a shame her war service is not recognised in any local memorial.

Agnes McCoy Hartick also returned to Australia, and in 1945 she married Captain Andrew Aitken of Palmerston North, New Zealand.



Cnr McKechnie Street & Main Road West 1955

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 1 October 1927 p5

<sup>2</sup> Herald 20 November 1932 p5

<sup>3</sup> Australian Women's Weekly 11 November 1939

<sup>4</sup> Australian Women's Weekly 11 November 1939

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 7 June 1940

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 7 June 1940

<sup>7</sup> Sunshine Advocate 29 March 1940

<sup>8</sup> Argus 24 April 1954 p15

## 1913 – Neil and Gwyn McKechnie

Alfred Neil McKechnie was born in September 1907 at Maindample and came with his parents to St Albans in 1910. His parents were John and Annie McKechnie (q.v.) and they were living in "Millawa" on Boundary Road.

Alfred, or Neil as he was known later, started at the St Albans primary school in 1913 and left 1918 for Sunshine Technical School. He might have ended up at the Swinburne Technical College in Hawthorn as a "Neil A McKechnie" passed his building construction examinations there in 1924.<sup>1</sup>

Neil's early life in St Albans is not known apart from a couple of minor references to primary school activities and that he later worked as a carpenter. He probably went to Mount Margaret, Kalgoorlie, in 1936, where he was working as a carpenter. In 1938 he was back on the east coast and married Miss Gwyn Isobel Lang of Harcourt; however, they were planning to settle in Western Australia.<sup>2</sup> Their forthcoming wedding was even reported in the Herald:

*A sheaf of cream gladioli will be carried against the Nile green satin gown to be worn by Miss Gwyn Isabel Lang, only daughter of Colonel and Mrs J. H. Lang, when she is married today to Mr Alfred Neil McKechnie, second son of Mr and Mrs J. N. McKechnie at Christ Church, Castlemaine.*<sup>3</sup>

Was Gwyn Lang a well-known socialite? It seems there was a golfing connection between her and Western Australia that was featured in the popular Table Talk magazine not long after her marriage:

*That well-known Castlemaine girl, Miss Gwen Lang, who is now Mrs Neil McKechnie, is at present enjoying golf in Western Australia in very strange surroundings. With her husband she joined the Laverton links, 500 miles from Perth, and while out on the course, which is punctuated by boulders, she espied a bunch of dusky onlookers complete with spears, but they were taking only an intelligent interest in her putting. She already holds the course record.*<sup>4</sup>

Gwyn had a long pedigree, because she traced her father's family back to 1620 in Lanarkshire, Scotland. Her grandfather was James Lang who arrived in Port Phillip in 1853, so they are another family of the gold rush era. Her parents were James Henry Lang and Barbara Jane Gilchrist, who were orchardists. In 1897 her father was appointed a lieutenant on probation in the 4th Battalion on duty at Castlemaine,<sup>5</sup> and by 1900 was promoted to Captain at 25 years of age

with the distinction of being the youngest Captain attached to the battalion.<sup>6</sup> One could say they were a well-appointed family of the time. When the Governor of Victoria (Lord Somers) visited Castlemaine in 1928, Gwyn Lang and her father were among the welcoming officials.<sup>7</sup>

Alfred Neil McKechnie of St Albans enlisted for service with the Australian forces via Royal Park, Melbourne. Unfortunately, his enlistment papers are not on the NAA website. He was a Sapper with the Australian Army 2/10th Field Company Royal Australian Engineers 2/19th Battalion (Infantry).

During WW2, Alfred Neil McKechnie served overseas in the Far East (Malaya) with the Australian Imperial Forces. In July 1942 he was reported as missing<sup>8</sup> and in September 1943 it was confirmed that he was alive but had been captured as a prisoner of war in Thailand:

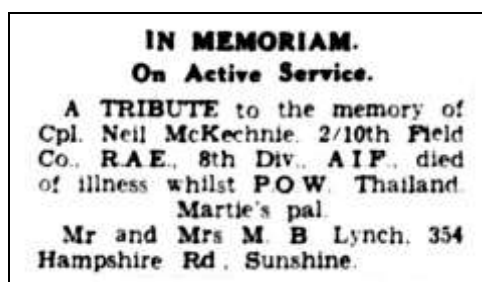
*Great satisfaction was expressed this week, when the news was received of the safety of Mr. Neil McKechnie, who is a prisoner of war. Neil, who will be well known to all old residents of St Albans, has not been heard of for 20 months, and all friends will join with Mrs. McKechnie and family in their great joy in hearing from him once again.*<sup>9</sup>

Sapper McKechnie died due to illness on 14 October 1943 in Burma, Thailand, at age 36 years. His relatives and friends in St Albans and Sunshine received confirmation of his death in 1945. His remains had been buried at the Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery in Burma, Thailand (now known as Myanmar).

Alfred Neil McKechnie's name is included in the Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery's Roll of Honour, and on panel 23 in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Gwyn Isobel McKechnie nee Lang had gone back to live in Harcourt with the rest of her family of origin. She probably had two children with Neil, but their details are not known. Gwyn later married Thomas Seymour, who was a widower, and they were living in Lismore.

Gwyn Isobel McKechnie-Seymour nee Lang died in December 1961 at age 51 years and was buried at the Lismore cemetery.



<sup>1</sup> Argus 5 February 1924 p2

<sup>2</sup> Argus 5 February 1938 p10

<sup>3</sup> Herald 26 March 1938 p18

<sup>4</sup> Table Talk 16 June 1938 p30. She had been a previous winner at the Castlemaine golf course.

<sup>5</sup> Bendigo Advertiser 18 December 1807 p3

<sup>6</sup> Mount Alexander Mail 3 April 1900 p2

<sup>7</sup> Weekly Times 21 April 1928 p 41

<sup>8</sup> Sunshine Advocate 24 July 1942 p1

<sup>9</sup> Sunshine Advocate 17 September 1943 p4



## 1914 – Margaret McKechnie



Annie Margaret McKechnie (known as Margaret) was born in 1914 in St Albans. She started at the old St Albans primary school in 1920 and left in 1926 for the Presbyterian Ladies College. She was a parishioner of St Alban the Martyr Church

who became inspired by Rev. Alf Stanway to take up missionary work in Africa through the Church Missionary Society.

The McKechnie family came to St Albans in 1910 and are remembered as residents through to the 1950s. John and Annie McKechnie (q.v.) had two sons and five daughters – Annie Margaret was their last child.

Rev. Alf Stanway came to St Albans as a curate in 1935. He would preach at St Albans and Deer Park and was involved with the St Albans Young People's Christian Endeavour Society. He encouraged them to become involved with the Church Missionary Society League of Youth. Margaret attended their bible classes and conferences and joined in the youth camps. She made life-long friends through these activities.

Stanway left the district in 1936 to take up missionary service in Kenya, East Africa:

*A very pleasant evening was held on Wednesday, at the residence of Mr and Mrs McKechnie, the occasion being to say farewell to the Rev. A. Stanway of the Church of England, who is leaving this parish for new fields.<sup>1</sup>*

The St Albans parishioners, including the McKechnie family, kept in contact with Reverend Stanway. and would send him annual Christmas box gifts to assist with educational and medical work in Kenya.<sup>2</sup>

Margaret McKechnie led the church's Sunday school for many years and started raising funds to build their own hall, which was eventually completed after she had left the district.

In 1953 Margaret became a Diocesan worker with the church in Tanganyika, and a farewell service was held at St Alban the Martyr Church in her honor.<sup>3</sup> In 1954 Alf Stanway asked her to become his secretary. In 1969 she was accepted by the CMS as a Missionary under Special Agreement and continued to work with Bishop Stanway.<sup>4</sup>

Annie Margaret McKechnie returned to Melbourne in 1975 and continued to work with Bishop Stanway. She died at the William Angliss Hospital in Melbourne in January 2008, just a few weeks short of her 94th birthday.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 29 May 1936

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 20 September 1940 p7

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 26 March 1954

<sup>4</sup> CMS Branch Matters February 2008 Vol.2 No.1 p13

## 1914 – Louise Howqua

Louisa Howqua was a home-grown Australian born at Percydale, Victoria, in 1871. Her parents were Ah Kin How Qua who was from China, and Ellen Caroline Derrick, who was from England.

Ah Kin How Qua (q.v.) was born about 1833 and migrated to Australia in 1854. He went to Avoca and initially worked as a gold miner but later became a hotel keeper and a government court interpreter.

Ellen Caroline Derrick was born in 1841 in Bath, Somerset, England. Her parents were Joseph Derrick and Harriet Amelia Parsons. The family arrived in Geelong in June 1856 aboard the vessel "Arthur the Great". Ellen Caroline was the first-born child, the other surviving children being Harriet Ann (1849), and Albert Joseph (1850). Henry (1857) and George William (1860) were born in Australia.

Ellen Caroline Derrick married Ah Kin How Qua in 1858 in Avoca and raised seven children, all born around Percydale, Avoca:

- William 1859-1862
- Henry 1862-1942
- James 1864-1870
- Clara 1867-1936
- Louisa 1871-1952
- Eleanor 1872-1950
- Albert 1874-1949

Louisa Howqua was born in 1871 and grew up in Percydale but little is known of her early life. Her parents ran the popular Percydale Hotel so she might have met lots of people through her place of abode but her only known public appearances were in the late 1880s. In 1888 she was one of the singers at a fundraiser for the Amherst Hospital, which was a project supported by her father. In 1888 she passed the public service examinations and her name was included in the Argus with all the other results. In 1889 Louisa and her sister Ellen helped decorate the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church for the first marriage conducted there. She also found time to train as a pianist. Little else is known about her early whereabouts or activities.

Ah Kin How Qua died in 1873 so Louisa grew up in the care of her mother and her step-father, James George. They sold the Percydale Hotel about 1890 and the family might have dispersed. Louisa was 18 at this stage, so she was not yet approaching adulthood as it was at the time. It seems that Louisa and her brother Albert went to live in Williamstown and were there in 1902. Their brother Henry moved to Newport, became an accountant, and followed the pursuits of cycling, cricket and football. So, it seems that some of the family settled in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

In 1907 Louisa might have been working as a waitress in the Albion Cafe in Bourke Street, Melbourne.



Louisa Howqua married Harry Harrison in 1908 in Melbourne. He was born about 1879 and his parents were William Harrison and Mary Ann Chamberlain. Unfortunately, there is very little published about the Harrisons' family backgrounds, not even when they arrived and where they were living. One known relative and his family were in Ballarat.

Where did Louisa and Harry meet? That is not known. Could they have met in Avoca? There was a "Harrison's Store" in Avoca in the mid 1850s, so there is a possible but unproven link to some unknown family connection. Furthermore, Harry did have his "Harrison Store" in St Albans, but it is a common family name. Harry's uncle was in Ballarat in the 1860s but neither Harry nor Louisa have been traced there. The other possibility is that Louisa and Harry met in Melbourne's western suburbs in the early 1900s.

Louisa and Harry married in 1908 and in 1912 they were living in Ballarat Road, Braybrook. He was a furnaceman and she was home duties. In 1914 Harry and Louisa's names appear for the first time in the Electoral Roll as being at the "Post Office store" at St Albans. The post office store was the eponymic "H. Harrison Store" in Boundary Road (Main Road) west of the railway station. Harrison bought the store from the Mottram brothers and ran it for the next decade.

Harrison's store was the general all-purpose store often depicted in small villages. As well as selling groceries and other produce they were agents for the Post Office and the Commonwealth Bank. Their home was next door. Louisa would have worked at the store during the day and just before closing time gone home to cook the dinner.

After nearly a decade of work at the store the Harrisons went in new directions. In 1922 they sold the grocery business to John and Elizabeth Perrett<sup>1</sup> and moved to Victoria Crescent on the other side of the railway line. Harrison's new business venture was selling real estate.

In 1920 Harrison had established a house and estate agency in conjunction with the St Albans Progress Association.<sup>2</sup> He continued advertising property sales in his name until late 1924. It is said that Harry owned 11 properties in Victoria Crescent and East Esplanade and held mortgages and contracts of sale over a further 17 properties in that area.<sup>3</sup>

The Harrisons were members of the St Alban the Martyr Anglican church, Harry being elected as "People's Warden" and Louisa playing the organ. She also assisted with the committee

<sup>1</sup> Refer to chapter by John Perrett in *Stories About St Albans, Celebrating 125 Years*, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Footscray Independent 11 September 1920 p3

<sup>3</sup> Lorraine Marshall, Torquay Historical Society, 22 March 2017 "The Story of Doc Hughes and His Store" [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=10154665724993088&id=494641800718615](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=10154665724993088&id=494641800718615)

work; e.g. helping to organise the children's ball with music and dancing performances: "*The phenomenal success of the evening was due to the committee of five ladies upon whom fell the burden of organising and executing all the arrangements.*"<sup>4</sup>

The Harrisons' work with the Church was also acknowledged by parishioners when they were leaving the district:

*A vote of regret and good wishes was passed, and the secretary instructed to convey the same to Mr. and Mrs. Harrison, who have recently left the neighborhood after many years of valuable work for the church.*<sup>5</sup>

Louisa and Harry Harrison moved to Torquay in 1925. They had bought the Torquay Cash Grocery store from Thomas McFarlane. It was situated at 24 The Esplanade, Torquay. As well as running the grocery store, Louisa and Harry had kiosks along the beach and hired out accommodation (tents, rooms and houses) for holiday makers. Harry also ran a car hire service and would drive people to places such as Jan Juc and Geelong.



Image with Torquay Historical Society

The Harrisons were settling into the community and business was proceeding well when disaster occurred in August 1926. At the time there had been two major fires in the district and the police had questioned a number of people, including Harry whose store was in close proximity to one of the fires. After the police interview, Harry came home quite worried. Next morning, he drove to Geelong for normal business but that night he committed suicide in the back of his car. The police found a note on the body stating:

*Having been accused of causing the recent fire at Torquay (of which I am entirely innocent), the thought of perhaps being unable to clear myself of this monstrous charge has so worried me that I cannot stand the strain any longer.*<sup>6</sup>

At the ensuing Coroner's Court hearing, Louisa Harrison deposed that on Monday morning of August 30, her late husband left home in his

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 14 November 1925 p5

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 20 February 1926 p4

<sup>6</sup> Argus 9 September 1926 p11

car, saying he was going to Geelong to get a few things and pay some accounts, and would be back at lunch time. She did not see him alive again. When he left home, he appeared in usual health, and did not appear worried in any way. He was not in any business financial difficulties of which she knew.<sup>1</sup>

After hearing all the witnesses, the Deputy Coroner's verdict was that death was due to a wound in the throat, self inflicted.<sup>2</sup>

The remains of the late Harry Harrison were buried in the Geelong Eastern Cemetery.

It is not known if Louisa continued the business on her own or if it went into abeyance for a while. She ended up transferring the store to her nephew, Doc Hughes.

Carrodac "Doc" Llewellyn Hughes was a grandson of Ah Kin How Qua (q.v.). Doc's parents were William Hughes and Clara Howqua who were from Percydale, Victoria. Doc's sister was Effie Clara Boadicea Hughes, who married William Eric Perrett of St Albans in 1933. He was the son of John and Elizabeth Perrett who had bought the St Albans grocery store from Harry Harrison in 1922.

Carrodac Hughes married Ruby Pearl Gogoll. They expanded the store and ran the business with great success until the late 1960s.



Image with Torquay Historical Society

The connection between Louisa's family and the Torquay store continued for many years. John Perrett, who was Effie's son and Louisa's grandnephew, would later recall that:

*We loved to go for holidays to Torquay because there was an uncle there running several kiosks catering for the camping fraternity. Torquay was always a very popular holiday destination and there were a number of camping sites. My uncle had these kiosks and of course we would be helping him selling drinks and ices. There was no refrigeration as such so it was whatever you could keep cool on ice. We enjoyed our holidays.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Geelong Advertiser 9 September 1926 p2

<sup>2</sup> Argus 9 September 1926 p11

<sup>3</sup> John Perrett in *Stories about St Albans, Celebrating 125 Years* (2012).

Louisa Harrison nee Howqua returned to Melbourne, and in 1929 she married William James Hounslow. He was from a well-known St Albans family with links to other early settlers, including the Errington and Lewis families.<sup>4</sup>

William Hounslow came to St Albans about 1918 and worked as a carpenter-builder. He had six children born to his second wife, Amy Alice Day, who died in 1917. Local residents knew William's family as the building and timber people who were known as "Hounslows of The Circus" because they were living in Circus West near the railway line. When Amy died in 1917, William's sister Alice Errington took over the care of the children until he married Louisa Harrison. Louisa had never had children of her own and she became a proud mother of her stepchildren. The family moved to Essendon by 1930 where Louisa passed away in 1952:

*On the death of Mrs Louisa Hounslow on Sunday at her home, Ballater St., Essendon, another link with early St Albans days was broken. The deceased was aged 81 years. Her first husband, the late Mr. H. Harrison, kept the St Albans Post Office Store for a number of years and disposed of it in 1922 to Mr John Perrett (now deceased) father of the present proprietor, Mr Eric Perrett. During her residence in St. Albans, the deceased lady was organist at the Church of England. The funeral took place on Tuesday morning at the Fawkner Crematorium.<sup>5</sup>*

William James Hounslow died in December 1956 at age 88 and was buried at the Fawkner Memorial Park.

**— AUCTION SALE —**

**SATURDAY, 13th JUNE, 1953**

**AT 11 a.m. ON THE PROPERTY**

**EAST ESPLANADE, ST. ALBANS**

**On behalf of Executors of Estate of Louisa Hounslow dec'd.**

**Central Shop Site 66' x 165' together with**

**W/B Dwelling, 4 rooms therein**

**This property offers an opportunity to secure a first class business situation in the centre of vastly improving and thriving suburb. Dwelling subject to tenancy, 21/- per wk.**

**Terms, one tenth deposit, balance cash 30 days.**

**Solicitors: Messrs MADDEN & CANDY,**  
443 Little Collins Street, Melbourne.

**Particulars From**

**W. J. BELL, Auctioneer**

**15 SUN CRESCENT, SUNSHINE — MM1131.**

Note: the story of Doc Hughes and his Torquay store has been written by Lorraine Marshall with the Torquay Historical Society. It is available at [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=10154665724993088&id=494641800718615](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=10154665724993088&id=494641800718615)

<sup>4</sup> Refer to chapters in *St Albans Pioneers* (2013) and *St Albans Settlers from 1905* (2018), and article by Wendy Taylor nee Hounslow in *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 years* (2016).

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 5 September 1952 p2

## 1914 – Harry Harrison

Harry Harrison was the St Albans village green grocer from 1914 to 1922. He was born about 1879. It is not known where this occurred, but it was most probably in England. His parents were William Harrison and Mary Anne Chamberlain. William's father was James Harrison, born in Derbyshire England in 1833 and died in 1869 in Cardigan, Victoria, at the young age of 42 years. William's mother was Elizabeth Vallance, who was born in Derbyshire in 1827 and died in Nottinghamshire, England, after 1901. She never came to Australia.

James Harrison came to Australia about 1865. When he migrated to Victoria, the rest of his family stayed behind. His wife was Elizabeth Vallance and they had 7 children, the youngest being a son who was born in 1864, the oldest a son, John Robert Harrison, born in 1851. It is not known why James migrated alone. Possibly it was the lure of gold, because he acquired a small house on Crown land in Spring Gully in the Bendigo gold mining district before settling in the gold mining town of Ballarat where he became a publican. By mid 1865 he was running the Half-way House Hotel at Cardigan on Ballarat and Smythesdale roads. He offered his customers the challenge of pigeon shooting competitions, offering sweepstake prizes such as a Silver Tea Service and a Prime Fat Pig. Sometimes to draw attention he advertised a two-man competition where he would compete against a challenger for £10 aside, with other sweepstakes to be shot for, open to all, birds supplied.<sup>1</sup>

He advertised these events regularly in the papers. Some people must have objected to the pigeon shooting and Harrison responded to such criticism through Bell's Sporting Chronicle:

*Dear Bell — I object on principle to answer the anonymous production in your issue of today. If the author (who is well known to be no pigeon shot) will only favour me with his initials, if afraid to give his name, I will know how to reply to him, as my challenge is meant for business, not "blow," as your correspondent seems to think.— I am Sir, your, obedient servant, James Harrison, Half-way House, Smythes road.*<sup>2</sup>

**PIGEON SHOOTING**

**W**ILL take place at Mr HARRISON'S HALP-WAY HOUSE, Smythesdale road, 20th April, 12 o'clock sharp.

Open to the Colony.

First Prize—A beautifully chased silver tea service.  
Second Prize—A first-class copper tea-kettle; and for the third to save his stake.

Single or double guns, with 1½ ozs of shot, 21 yards rise; double guns with 1½ ozs of shot, 19 yards rise.

Red House rules.  
Referee chosen on the ground.

<sup>1</sup> Ballarat Star 17 May 1865 p3

<sup>2</sup> Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle, 23 February 1867 p4

Harrison must have also liked horse racing as he was soon elected as a member of the Smythesdale, Browns, and Carngham Turf Club; they would meet at Power's Royal Hotel at Smythesdale.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately his exploits in this field are not recorded.

In October 1867 Harrison moved to new premises. He leased a farm in Cardigan and built the Two Bridges Hotel, where he continued his publican's life and pigeon shooting competitions.

Life in the colony must have settled down quite well for James, as his oldest son, John Robert Harrison, arrived in Melbourne in September 1868 and joined his father in Cardigan. John was a teenager of 17 years and probably looking forward to a new life with a father he had not seen for several years. They had less than a year together as James Harrison died on 17 March 1869, at the young age of only 42 years.

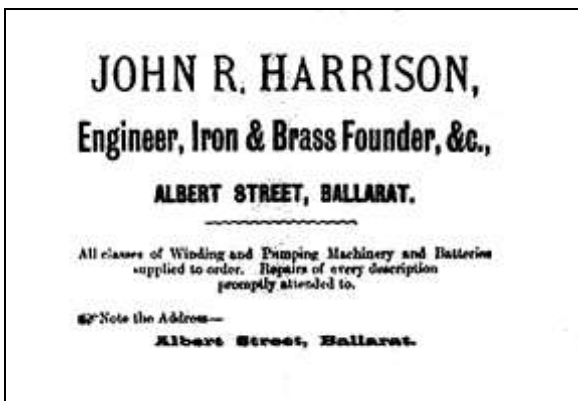


Gravestone for James Harrison

John Robert Harrison was only 18 and apparently on his own in Australia after his father died, but he stayed and prospered. He married Ellen Rigby in 1874 and they raised five children. John became an engineer and a business entrepreneur and ended up as a pioneer foundry man of Ballarat by establishing Harrison's Foundry in Albert-street, a notable engineering enterprise in Ballarat's mining days.<sup>4</sup> In his retirement he moved to Torquay, Geelong, where he maintained a connection with his nephew Harry Harrison.

<sup>3</sup> Ballarat Star 20 September 1866 p2

<sup>4</sup> They manufactured some large machinery for the H. V. McKay Sunshine Harvester Company. Harrison invented the Harrison Concentrator and Amalgamator for ores and tailings in the mining industry. The firm J. R. Harrison and Sons Proprietary established a branch for building and general repair work of cars.



Federation University Historical Collection (Cat. No. 1065)

William Harrison, who was James Harrison's brother and Harry Harrison's father, is a bit of a mystery. William Harrison was born in 1856 in Nottinghamshire England. He was aged 8 when his father left for Australia and 13 when his father died. He married Mary Anne Chamberlain but there is no trace of the marriage or of their son Harry Harrison's birth in the Victorian BMD records, nor has any trace been found of them arriving in Australia. It's possible they stayed in England and that their son Harry Harrison migrated to Australia on his own and connected with his uncle, because they obviously socialised together in later life.

Harry Harrison's arrival in Melbourne is hard to pin down. His Uncle John was in Ballarat but with no known relatives in Melbourne. There are several Harrisons listed in the Braybrook ratepayers' roll around Deer Park, Derrimut, and Albion in the 1900 era, but there are no known connections with the Harry of St Albans.

Harry Harrison married Louisa Howqua (q.v.) in 1908. Louisa was born in 1871 to Ah Kin How Qua and Ellen Caroline Derrick. She grew up in Percydale before moving to Williamstown in the early 1900s. After marrying, Harry and Louisa were living in Sunshine and Harry worked as a furnace man. In 1914 he purchased the St Albans grocery and post office store that was being run by the Mottram brothers.

The Harrisons were new-wave St Albans settlers who came a decade after the Overnewton Land Sales of 1905, and that was in connection with the general store in Boundary Road (Main Road West). The first general store in St Albans was possibly established prior to 1900 by Robert and Elizabeth Aylmer.<sup>1</sup>

The first indication of shops being built in St Albans goes back to 1888 when the Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company's sales map shows a butcher shop and a baker shop located in Main Road, west of the railway station. Local history indicates that the butcher shop became the general grocery and produce store that has been owned over time by the Aylmers, Harrisons

<sup>1</sup> Some background about Robert and Elizabeth Aylmer is included in *St Albans Settlers from 1905*.

and Perretts. Esmond Healey remembers there being only one store operating in St Albans prior to 1900 and that was probably Aylmer's General Store. The neighbouring bakery shop was later occupied as a small pastry store that sold block cake, biscuits, haberdashery, tobacco, cigarettes etc. During the 1920s it was known as Mrs Magee's lolly shop.

Harry Harrison took over the general store in 1914 and his history in the district is somewhat better known, especially as an iconic photograph from that era has survived. Harrison's Store incorporated an unofficial post office, there was a produce yard next door, and Harrison acted as an agent for the Commonwealth bank.



St Albans in 1914 was a village with about 30 small farms mostly grazing sheep and cattle and growing some crops. The poultry farms were even smaller. The population was about 280. The village centre was clustered around the railway station with the nearby Mechanics Institute Hall and a couple of shops. Two churches had been recently built: the Anglican in 1910 and the Presbyterian in 1912. A quarry started operating near the railway station and that was the biggest business in the neighbourhood. In 1912 the railway station expanded with a small goods shed and a loading platform. The St Albans Progress Association, which met at the Mechanics Institute Hall, was the main coordinating group regarding local municipal concerns, and Harry Harrison became part of that.

Mary King described the general store as:

*They stocked all kinds of groceries and smallgoods and dairy produce. There was saw dust on the floor to prevent the mud from sticking. It had a cellar to keep the dairy produce cool as there was no ice or refrigeration in those days. The entrance to the cellar was just behind the right-angled counter, and steps led to the lower floor with its many shelves.<sup>2</sup>*

The produce yard was next door and stocked straw, chaff, coal, firewood and stock feed. Harrison had two horse-driven wagons for his deliveries.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Smith nee Stein in *St Albans Oral History*, p43



H. Harrison Store in Main Road West 1920s

Harrison became a member of the St Albans Anglican church and in 1916 was elected as the "people's warden". Harry and Louisa were active members of the parish

In 1922, after nearly a decade in the grocery business, the Harrisons sold to the Perrett family, who were newcomers to the town. They were John and Elizabeth Perrett, who had previously had a food store in Richmond.

Harry and Louisa moved to their new home in Victoria Crescent. Harry's new business was selling real estate. He had started working with the St Albans Progress Association in 1920 when they had established a house and estate agency. The purpose of this was to further the interests of the Progress Association and the district generally. Harry Harrison soon started advertising properties for sale:

*St Albans – 6 roomed House, acre land opposite station, £630; another mile station, 4 rooms, £260; also 28 acre paddock close station, suitable for sub-division, £1400. Financial assistance can be arranged. Get in early – this suburb is going ahead. Water and electric trains soon. Particulars from Sec Progress Association, c/o H. Harrison store.*<sup>1</sup>

The advertising continued well into 1924. Some building blocks were available for only £25 each, close to the station.

In 1924 Harry Harrison was appointed a Justice of the Peace for the central bailiwick.<sup>2</sup> This might have set a trend, as in later years Eric Perrett, who took over the grocery store, was also appointed as JP and provided that service to the community for several decades.

In 1925 Harrison was involved in a couple of disasters, one as a hero, and one as a fellow victim. In September he rushed to rescue a child from a burning house:

*The child who was reported to be slightly burned in last week's issue was, upon closer inspection, found to be more seriously burned, and, although treated by a doctor and admitted to a hospital, died shortly afterwards. ... Great*

<sup>1</sup> Footscray Independent 16 October 1920 p2

<sup>2</sup> Argus 13 September 1924 p30

*credit must be given to Mr. Harrison, who ventured into the heart of the fire, and recovered the child, although nearly overcome by smoke, and, more's the pity, if he had known sooner that somebody was in the house, the infant's life would have been saved.*<sup>3</sup>

In December he was lucky to have avoided injury in a traffic accident:

*Mr Harry Harrison, of Victoria Crescent, St Albans, Melbourne, crashed into a motor cycle which was in the vicinity of the Corio Shire Hotel. The motor bicycle, owned by Mr Carter ... was considerably damaged. Mr Harrison in swerving in an attempt to save his car from damage, and himself from injury, turned too suddenly, and the rear wheels collapsed. He was, however, not travelling at a fast pace, and was enabled, with the back of his car trailing on the ground, to stop the car within a short distance.*<sup>4</sup>

It is interesting that Harrison had his own car, as very few people in St Albans owned cars at that time, an observation often made in local oral history. It implies that they were relatively well off, comparatively speaking, in a developing working class neighbourhood.

By December 1925 Louisa and Harry had left St Albans and moved to Torquay where they were running the Torquay Cash Grocery and holiday accommodation business that they bought from Mr Thomas McFarlane:

*Tents and Rooms to let, all conveniences. Cars garaged. Beach frontage. Apply H. Harrison, Esplanade Store, Torquay.*<sup>5</sup>

This business venture was in an idyllic coastal setting attracting lots of holiday makers. Early photographs of The Esplanade show wide, unpaved roads with lots of cars parked on the grass verges. Harry enjoyed the benefits of the locale for less than a year, because he died in August 1926 at age 47 years.

In August 1926 the police questioned Harry regarding a fire that had occurred within 100 yards of their store on the Esplanade. Harry apparently interpreted his being questioned as a potential witness as an accusation of arson. On the morning of 30th August, he left home for some business in Geelong, saying he would be back in time for lunch. He did not return. Next morning a Geelong worker found his dead body in the parked car. He left a note saying:

*Having been accused of causing the recent fire at Torquay (of which I am entirely innocent), the thought of perhaps being unable to clear myself of this monstrous charge has so worried me that I cannot stand the strain any longer.*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 12 September 1925 p4. It is not verified that this was Harry Harrison but he was the only Mr Harrison in the 1925 St Albans electoral roll.

<sup>4</sup> Geelong Advertiser 1 December 1924 p5

<sup>5</sup> Geelong Advertiser 17 December 1925 p5

<sup>6</sup> Geelong Advertiser 9 September 1926 p2

The corpse was formally identified as being the late Harry Harrison by his uncle, John Roberts Harrison, who was living in retirement at Torquay and had had recent contact with his nephew – they had had discussions a couple of days earlier when Harry visited.

Mr. W. R. Anderson, J.P., deputy coroner, on Wednesday conducted an inquiry into the death of Harry Harrison, who was found dead in a motor car in Shorts place, Geelong, on August 31. The police reported that they had not accused Harrison of having caused the fire but had only questioned him about his movements: *“We interviewed him, amongst others, while inquiring into the fire.”*<sup>1</sup>

Louisa Harrison said: *“After the police interviewed my husband he came home very worried. He was in a good financial position.”*

The Deputy Coroner’s verdict was that death was due to a wound in the throat, which was self inflicted.

The remains of the late Harry Harrison were buried in the Geelong Eastern Cemetery.

*The interment, of the remains of the late Mr. Harry Harrison, a well known and highly respected resident of Torquay took place on Wednesday afternoon (privately) in the Church of England portion of the Eastern Cemetery in the presence of the immediate relatives and a number of personal friends. The cortege ... comprised the glass casket hearse and two mourning coaches followed by a number of motor cars coming from Ballarat, Melbourne and Torquay. The heavy silver mounted and polished casket was borne from the hearse to the grave by Messrs. H J and W Hawk and Basil J Drayton. The following supported the purple pall: Messrs. J Harrison, J Gilchrist, R Mockridge, F Mockridge, A Nichol and G Davis. Rev J J Booth, vicar of St Paul’s Church of England, conducted a very impressive service at the graveside.*<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Geelong Advertiser 9 September 1926 p2

<sup>2</sup> Geelong Advertiser 2 September 1926 p5

## 1918 – Andrew and Violetta Lorensini

Andrew Lorensini was born in June 1871 in Buninyong near Ballarat, Victoria. His connection with St Albans occurred in 1918, and though the family’s stay in the neighbourhood was brief, it’s worth some attention because they may have been the earliest-identified Italo-Australian family in the neighbourhood.

Andrew’s parents were Domenic Lorensini (1845-1931) from Italy and Sarah Ann Bathsheba Buckle (1855-1932) from Australia.

Domenico Lorensini (sic) was born in 1845 and was from Teglio, Lombardia, Italy, near the border of Switzerland. In order to escape the compulsory Italian National Service, he walked to England. He came to Victoria in 1861 at age 17, and that’s when his surname was spelt as Lorensini. Domenico went to Ballarat and worked as a wood cutter and charcoal burner, a fuel that was used by blacksmiths and in the extraction of gold at the diggings. Lorensini and his fellow émigré Domenico Fanchi were based at Lucky Woman’s Gully and Italian Gully, the latter being named after a group of Italian fossickers from 1855. Later Lorensini bought a selection on Mt Buninyong where he established his home and farm. He planted an orchard and grew crops of potatoes, peas, barley and oats.

Sarah Buckle was born in April 1855 at Duneed, Victoria. Her parentage goes back to pre 1683 in Rutland, England, and her family came to Geelong in 1850. Domenico and Sarah married in 1870 in Ballarat and settled in Buninyong. They raised five sons and four daughters. Andrew was their first child, born in Buninyong in June 1871.



Andrew Lorensini wed Violetta Platt in January 1896 at Buninyong and they raised 4 girls and 8 boys between 1897 and 1920. Little is known about Violetta Platt. She was born in 1876 in Clarendon, Victoria, to Robert Platt and Matilda Sawyer Clark. Robert’s family background isn’t stated.

Matilda was born in 1839 in Middlesex, England, and her parentage is also not stated.

In 1917 Andrew and Violetta with their children were living at Mt Buninyong, Ballarat, where Andrew was working as a labourer. Their children were Violet Alice (1897), Annie Matilda (1899), Robert Andrew (1900), Ivey Agnes (1903), John Herbert (1905), Donnie (1907), Frederick William (1910), Ernest (1912), Lillian May (1914), Cecil Charles (1918), Cyril James (1918), and Mervyn “Dick” (1920). In 1918 the family was in St Albans where three of the

children attended the primary school:

- John Herbert was born in March 1905 in Buninyong, enrolled in the primary school in May 1918 and left in June 1918 for Yarram (Gippsland). He married Hannah Stephens in 1931 and they had two children. John died in 1972 at Lismore aged 67 years. Hannah died in Lismore in 1986 aged 77 years.
- Donnie was born in December 1906 in Buninyong, enrolled in May 1918 and left in June 1918 for Yarram. He married Lesley Doris Horan in 1936 and had six children. Donnie died in Bacchus Marsh in 1973 aged 65 years. Lesley died in Bacchus Marsh in 1996 aged 78 years.
- Frederick William was born in May 1910, enrolled at St Albans primary in May 1918 and left in June 1918 for Yarram. He served with the Army Citizen Military Forces during WW2. Frederick married Doreen Elizabeth Kinston in 1946 and they raised one child. Frederick died in Bacchus Marsh in 1953 aged 43 years.



When staying in St Albans, the family was living 3.5 miles from the school, so possibly they were towards Deer Park, Sydenham, or Keilor. Was Andrew working temporarily as a market gardener at Green Gully? Mr Dodds of Horseshoe Bend Farm was known to have hired Italian men in later years, e.g. Giuseppe Siciliano in the 1940s, and the Loccisano brothers were there via Mr Fox in the later 1940s.

The Lorensini family moved to Yarram in June 1918. Why move so soon after arriving? Perhaps Andrew was looking for a permanent job and failed to find one locally. They appear to have moved to Gippsland to join other family and friends.

Andrew Lorensini died in Bacchus Marsh in December 1925 at age 54 years, which was quite a young age.

Several of Andrew and Violetta's sons enlisted in the WW2 era, including Cyril, Ernest, Frederick, and Mervyn.

Violetta Lorensini nee Platt died in October 1962 at Whittlesea at age 86 years.

## 1919 – Alfred and Gertrude Clarke

Alfred Clarke and Gertrude Annie nee Wager came to St Albans in 1919. Alf is remembered more particularly in local history because, for a while, his name was perpetuated through the decade-long developmental work of the "Alfred Clarke Memorial Free Kindergarten" committee.

The Clarkes came from Geelong, given that their first two children were born there. Their third child, a daughter, was born in Keilor, most probably in St Albans. The family's earlier history has not been traced. Alfred and Gertrude had three children, who were:

- Arthur James was born in November 1913 in Geelong, was admitted to St Albans primary school in April 1919, and left in 1925 for Kingsville Central School. He became a clerk and accountant. He married Nance Elizabeth "Betty" Lochore in 1939<sup>1</sup> and they were living in West Footscray with at least one child. He enlisted in 1942 and was assigned to the Third Ordinance Stores Depot. He was discharged in 1946.
- Ronald Alfred was born in November 1914 in Geelong, was admitted to St Albans primary in April 1919, and left in 1925 for Kingsville Central School. In 1939 he married Josephine Humphreys Wittscheibe who was from Bendigo.<sup>2</sup> He enlisted in 1942 with the Australian Army as a bombardier and was discharged in 1944. They settled in Maryborough where he worked as a bank officer.
- Dorothy "Dory" Joyce was born in June 1917 in Keilor (St Albans), was admitted to St Albans primary school in March 1922, and left in 1927 for Footscray Central School. She became the correspondent for the Sunshine Advocate and had a regular column "St Albans News" that reported on happenings in the district. She married William Self<sup>3</sup> of St Albans in 1941 at St John's Church in Footscray. They had at least two sons. They moved to Western Australia in the 1950s because of William's work, and that's where Dory died about 1980.

Alfred Clarke was born about 1892 and worked as a ledger clerk and later as accountant with D & W Murray, of Flinders Lane, Melbourne, a soft goods and drapery company.

<sup>1</sup> Argus 21 January 1939 p17

<sup>2</sup> Argus 14 September 1938 p5. Her parents were Alice Emily Walter and Wilhelm Francis Wittscheibe whose family was from Silesia, Prussia, and came to Melbourne in 1854. Wittscheibe & Co was a gold mining company in Bendigo.

<sup>3</sup> Son of Agnes and Norman Goodwin Self who was a brother of Lewis Self of Self & Goddard supermarket.



The Clarke family arrived in 1919 and settled into "The Elms" in Biggs Street, St Albans; it was one of the bigger houses in the district and had five bedrooms, so it might have been one of the main display houses built by the Cosmopolitan company in the 1880s. The family also owned twelve building blocks in Biggs Street fronting onto Theodore Street.

Alfred Clarke soon became involved in local community activities and in 1920 was the secretary of the Progress Association. He must have done a good job because he was re-elected in 1921 and quite some time after. He worked on issues such as extending the train service. In 1922 there were regional discussions about forming a combined council of progress associations, and Clarke was elected the pro tem secretary. In 1925 he was elected president of the Mechanics Hall and Library Committee.

In 1925 he had a lucky escape:

*A house in Biggs Street, St. Albans, owned and occupied by Mr A. Clarke, had a very narrow escape from being destroyed by fire. In a room rented by her Mrs Lenton was cooking on a kerosene stove set on a small table, which was accidentally knocked over causing the stove to explode. Instantly the room was on fire, but Mr Clark's neighbors came to his assistance, and after a fight succeeded in putting the fire out, although the water had to be carted in buckets. Considerable damage was done to the room and furniture where the fire started.<sup>1</sup>*

In January 1930 Clarke proposed the formation of the St Albans Severance Movement, Clarke was the secretary of the group and Tomas Lewis was president.<sup>2</sup> Clarke argued that there was a complete lack of identity between St Albans and other parts of the Keilor Shire, and it would be beneficial for the area to amalgamate with Braybrook. The area proposed for severance was bounded by Taylor's road on the north, Station road on the west, Maribyrrong River on the east, and Boundary road on the south<sup>3</sup> which was nearly all of St Albans at the time. Severance was not a new idea as the same thing had been proposed in 1915.

The severance committee decided to gather signatures for a petition, and Clarke encouraged all ratepayers to pay their rates so that they would be eligible to vote, as the success of the petition would depend on getting the support of the majority of current voters on the roll. They submitted a petition with 80 signatures but, as in 1915, the severance did not occur.

The Clarkes were supporters of the St Albans Tennis Club and would hold parties at their home featuring cards and dancing. Both Arthur and Joyce Clarke and their uncle Norman

Self joined the club in the 1930s and became executive committee members. Joyce's fiancée William Self was also a member of the club.<sup>4</sup>

The Clarkes held social occasions at their home in aid of the Royal Women's Hospital; as an auxiliary they were raising funds to maintain a St Albans bed. In 1933 Alfred Clarke was honored by being made a Life Governor of the Women's Hospital.

In 1939 Alfred Clarke decided to challenge incumbent St Albans councilor James Henry Stevens at the Keilor Council elections. Stevens was a well-known, hard working farmer with over 30 years' local experience, but was contemplating retirement for health reasons. They presented their municipal policies to the St Albans Progress Association and, as the local headline later highlighted, the "Progressives" selected Mr Clarke.<sup>5</sup> Stevens retired, and Clarke stood against Francis Jolly for election to the Maribyrrong Riding. The local newspaper gave Clarke a glowing reference:

*Mr Clarke is one of the keenest public men in St Albans, and has been energetic in forwarding the district's welfare. He is the secretary of the Progress Association ... and is actively connected with the Errington Reserve Committee, Tennis Club and other organisations. He is also a past president of the Sunshine-St Albans Tennis Association. Mr Clarke ... has been a resident of St Albans for 25 years, and he has found time to also interest himself in Friendly Society work in the district. He is a past president of the Sunshine United Friendly Societies' Association, and at present is chairman of Trustees.<sup>6</sup>*

In the ensuing election Clarke polled 193 votes and Jolly 275, so it was a comfortable victory for Francis Jolly who was the manager of the Sydenham quarry.<sup>7</sup>

1939 might have been a transition point in terms of generational change, as Arthur James Clarke, the son of Alfred Clarke, was now the secretary of the St Albans Progress Association.

In 1941 the Clarkes put up their properties for auction, including their home and a dozen building sites in Biggs Street.<sup>8</sup> The family was moving into town centre.

In 1942 Clarke was the Area Warden for the St Albans ARP. He became concerned with the lack of fire extinguishers, the inadequate sanitation at the Mechanics Institute, and the condition of the air raid trenches at St Albans State School. In 1943 he wrote to Keilor Council, who received notice from the Education Department that the Air Raid Shelters Committee had

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 23 May 1925 p5

<sup>2</sup> Refer to chapter about the Lewis family in *St Albans Settlers from 1905*, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 17 January 1930 p7

<sup>4</sup> Jim Knowles has written about the history of the St Albans Tennis Club. Refer to chapter in this book.

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 14 July 1939 p1

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 30 June 1939

<sup>7</sup> Jolly was connected with the Sydenham Progress Association, the cricket club, the school committee, and some St Albans networks.

<sup>8</sup> Sunshine Advocate 1 August 1941



been asked to take the necessary action in connection with the matter.<sup>1</sup>



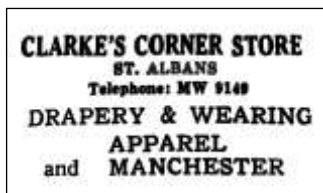
Clarke's Corner Store started in 1942 and at first was managed by his daughter Joyce with the assistance of his wife Gertrude. The shop must have be-

come a de facto meeting room for some of Alfred's committee colleagues such as from the cricket club who would meet there, and the tennis club's tournament roster could be consulted at the counter. It was also used as a drop off point, e.g. for making donations to the Footscray Hospital appeals. When there was discussion about forming a co-operative housing society, the information booklets could be obtained at Clarke's Corner Store, and people submitting news items to the Sunshine Advocate could leave notices at the store. When Clarke became the treasurer of the Progress Association, the members could likewise renew their subscriptions there.

In 1946 Clarke experienced some health problems, and on medical advice he resigned from his position with Murray's, after 31 years of service with the company. He decided to devote his time to his St Albans business, supported by his wife and daughter.<sup>2</sup>

In 1948 Alf Clarke became interested in the idea of a kindergarten for St Albans. In conjunction with Dick Yeomans he convened a public meeting that was addressed by a speaker from the Free Kindergarten Union who were sowing ideas.<sup>3</sup> They distributed a questionnaire to parents with eligible children to gauge demand, and 30 children were identified as being eligible to join. They started fund raising. Clarke sold tickets for sleeping doll raffles through his store. Ladies started selling raffle tickets door to door at 3d each, pushing their prams along muddy streets to reach their more distant neighbours.

Why was Clarke interested in a kindergarten? That is hard to tell, but it's likely the family now included grandchildren and he was becoming involved in a broader childcare debate through the church and related mothers' clubs.



St Albans in 1948 was a bigger place than in 1919 when the Clarke family had first arrived. The local population had grown from less

than 200 to nearly 900, the one primary school was crowded, and there was a renewed interest

in establishing a variety of youth activities for boys and girls. Furthermore, the new-Australian migrants were starting to arrive so there an influx of young children. The Anglican Church was active through its CEBS program (Church of England Boys Society) and a number of mothers were inquiring about a new idea floating round about kindergartens for pre-school children. It was an innovation from overseas that was being promoted in Melbourne.



Clarke was again afflicted with serious health problems in 1948 and required surgery. In 1950 he was appointed as a Justice of the Peace

for St Albans, which would have been a good adjunct for his public role, and it was noted enthusiastically in the local paper:

*The thoroughly deserved honor of Justice of the Peace has been conferred upon Mr. Alfred Clarke ... He will carry the mantle with grace, dignity and with a real sense of public duty. Every movement for the good of St. Albans has had Mr. Clarke's unqualified support for many years, and his appointment as a Justice of the Peace will be received with a great deal of pleasure by citizens generally.*<sup>4</sup>

In January 1951 he was elected president of the St Albans Fire Auxiliary, another of the several groups that he fronted.

On 26 August 1951, Alfred and Gertrude Clarke were walking along Main Road when they were struck by a motor car. The driver did not stop. Alfred and Gertrude were both severely injured and taken to the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Gertrude had suffered a fractured skull and was on the danger list but survived. Alfred died in the hospital soon after arrival.<sup>5</sup>

The local community rallied to the cause of the family and to honour Alf Clarke's memory by continuing his work to establish a kindergarten. The Williamstown Little Theatre was quick with a performance in aid of the "Alfred Clarke Memorial Free Kindergarten".<sup>6</sup> The kindergarten committee continued their operations under this new title. They arranged for speakers and film nights from the Victorian Playgroups Association at the St Albans Mechanics Institute Hall.

In the meantime, the life of the family had to go on and Clarke's Corner Store continued, presumably under Gertrude's management. The advertising for "Clarke's Corner Store" continued in the Sunshine Advocate to 1952 and the store was still listed in the directory in 1955. Thomas Hampton (q.v.) came after the Clarkes and the business eventually became known as "Hampton's St Albans

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate May 1943

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 26 July 1946 p6

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 9 July 1948

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 6 April 1950

<sup>5</sup> Argus 27 August 1951

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 14 December 1951

Drapery and Men's Wear".<sup>1</sup>

In 1952 the Kindergarten Committee received a seeding grant from the Keilor Council:

*A sum of £200 was voted by the council to provide equipment for a kindergarten at St. Albans. A teacher's services have been secured, and an open-air kinder will be conducted pending the erection of a building. It is hoped parents will exert themselves towards this end. The establishment is to be known as the Alfred Clarke Memorial Free Kindergarten.*<sup>2</sup>

In 1952 they met with representatives of Sunshine council, asking that a kindergarten building might be built on Errington Reserve.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately they were not successful.

The kindergarten committee tried out a variety of novel fundraising endeavours. There were several Amateur Nights at the Mechanics Hall with a compere from radio station 3AW.<sup>4</sup> In 1954 there was the Cinderella Christmas Pantomime produced by local theatrical talents Mary Hewitt and Neville Thurgood.<sup>5</sup> There was also a theatre restaurant night.

Unfortunately, the Kindergarten Committee was not able to get funding to buy land or construct a building. After a decade of independent efforts, the committee combined action with the Church of England and the first kindergarten in St Albans started in 1960 when a hall was built on the site of the St Albans Anglican Church in Alexina Street.

When St Alban the Martyr Church was burnt down in December 1961, the church services were thereafter held at the kindergarten hall until the new church was built.

Unfortunately, the life of Gertrude Clarke nee Wager in St Albans has not been well reported, not even when she died. Her health may have been imperfect as she was unwell when she first arrived. She was known to attend functions arranged by the St Albans sub-branch of the Red Cross and held card tournaments at her home in aid of the St Albans Girls' Gymnasium Club. She followed a traditional role in baking cakes and holding cake stalls as her contribution to charitable causes. She catered for and attended a lot of functions and donated a lot of prizes. She must have bought lots of raffle tickets as well, as she was often noted as being a prize winner.

In 1939 she took some time out and sailed to Western Australia and South Australia for a holiday trip. After her husband died, she ran the business and stayed involved with the kindergarten committee by attending their functions.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas and Olive Hampton were from Footscray where he worked as a fruiter. Later moved to Maidstone. They were related to Harold Easton of St Albans.

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 12 September 1952 p5

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 19 September 1952

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 29 May 1953

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 15 January 1954

## 1919 – James and Emma Blount

James Edwin Blount and Emma Read came to St Albans in 1919. They are remembered in local history for their real estate advertising for "Blount's Electric Estate" in the early 1920s.

James Edwin Blount was born in October 1874 in Sedgley, Staffordshire, England. His parents were Edwin Blount and Esther Guest. The Blounts originate from 1614 in Droitwich, Worcestershire, England. The Guest family originates from 1853 in Sedgley, Staffordshire, England. Edwin Blount and Esther Guest married in Staffordshire in 1874 and raised nine children.



Edwin Blount and Esther Guest

Their son James Edwin Blount married Emma Read in 1897. The family came to Australia before 1916 and probably settled in Sunshine, where James was working as an iron moulder. They came to St Albans in 1919. Their sons were born overseas: James Howard (1901), Vincent John (1903), and Eric (1906). Eric went to St Albans Primary in 1919 and left in 1920 to take up carpentry at McKay's in Sunshine.

Houses and Land For Sale.

**St. Albans**

**Blount's Electric Estate**

High, Dry, Good and Cheap  
16 BEAUTIFUL BUILDING BLOCKS  
3 Minutes from Station  
50 to 54 feet frontage, from £55 per block.  
**£5 Deposit; £1 Per Month**

Sole Agent:  
**Andrew Fox**  
HAMPSHIRE ROAD, SUNSHINE  
Phone Sunshine 123

Blount was advertising his Blount's Electric Estate in 1924: High, Dry, Good and Cheap. 16 Beautiful Building Blocks 3 Minutes from Station 50 to 54 feet frontage, from £55 per block. £5 Deposit; £1 Per Month.<sup>6</sup> The reference to an "electric" estate was probably meant to infer that electricity was already connected or soon to be.<sup>7</sup> The estate

sale was advertised in the local paper as well as the Age, the Argus and the Herald, so he must have been keen to sell.

The public was less keen to buy, because in 1926 he was still advertising the property and now including:

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 23 August 1924

<sup>7</sup> The electric train lines were extended to St Albans in 1921. Power came to parts of St Albans in 1927.

*Substantial D.F. W.B. Villa Residence Containing 6 good rooms, 20 ft. x 14, 11 x 14 ft 6 in., etc.; bedroom, pantry, cupboards, etc. Extensive outbuildings Fowl Pens, Cow shed, Buggy shed, Garage, etc.; 8 large Tanks, with land about 1¼ acre.<sup>1</sup>*

This was most probably the house at 16 Arthur Street that had been built in the 1880s for Mrs Clara Clarke but was later known as the Freeland House. Blount must have sold a few blocks in the previous year as he had started with 16 "beautiful building blocks" but was now offering 12 "choice building allotments" for sale.

James and Emma Blount had three sons: James Howard, Vincent John, and Eric.

Vincent John Blount was born in 1903 and died in 1908 in Warwickshire, United Kingdom.

James Howard Blount, known as Howard, became involved in several local groups, some of which entailed getting his hands dirty – in the 1920s he was spreading and rolling gravel on the newly established tennis court with local stalwarts like Luxford, Clarke, McKechnie and Perrett.<sup>2</sup> In 1927 he became President of the newly formed Gymnastics Club for the young men of the district. He was helping with fund-raising bazaars for the Presbyterian Church. He joined the committee of the Mechanics Institute and Public Library. He was with the 1st St Albans troop of Boy Scouts during the 1930s as a physical culture instructor. He was connected with the Linton Tennis Club and the St Albans Rechabites.

Howard Blount married Margaret Morton of St Albans in 1932 and the ceremony was held at the Presbyterian Church, of which they were members. After marrying, they went to live in Derrimut Street, Sunshine.

Eric Blount became a carpenter. He attended some socials of the St Albans Branch of the Church of England Men's Society and joined in their singing entertainment. He moved to Ingham, Queensland, and was adventurous enough to win the bullock riding event in 1934. He married Myee Josepha Reid in December 1935 in Ingham. He enlisted in the Civil Construction Corps<sup>3</sup> between 1942 and 1944 but the details have not been found. He must have enjoyed Queensland's sporting atmosphere as in 1953 he was at a Mount Isa boxing contest entertaining the audience with conjuring tricks and a spot of hypnotism. By 1980 Eric and Myee were in Charters Towers. Eric died in January 2002 and was buried in Charters Towers.

James Edwin Blount, late of St Albans, died in Brisbane in 1964 at age 90 years.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 13 March 1926 p5

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 19 September 1925

<sup>3</sup> The Civil Constructional Corps was established in April 1942 to supply labour for the creation of infrastructure like airfields, gun emplacements, barracks, roads and other projects by the Allied Works Council.

## 1920 – William and Annie Smith

I was born in 1937 and was christened Norma Lilian Smith. My parents were Thomas Smith and Gladys Bell, but in discussing my family history I want to begin with my grandparents William and Annie Smith, who came to St Albans in 1920, because that's the way the family started in Australia.



William and Annie's wedding in Bolton 1910

### William and Annie Smith

William Harold Smith was born in 1888 in Bolton, Lancashire, England. I've been able to trace his paternal lineage to John Smith born in 1803, Ireland, settled in Outwood, Lancashire England, and married Betsey Brooks at Outwood, in December 1826 in Prestwich, Lancashire, England.

William Smith married Eliza Ann (Annie) Barnes in 1910 in Bolton. She was born in 1889 in Preston, Lancashire, England, and I've been able to trace her maternal lineage to Betsey Brooks, third great-grandmother, born in 1810, Bolton Le Moors, Lancashire, England.

William worked as a carter, delivering kegs, etc, by horse and cart from one village to another over the hills. Annie worked as a ring doubler, which was connected with operating weaving machines in the textile industry.

William and Annie's two sons were born in Bolton: William born in July 1911, and Thomas born in March 1914.



William Harold Smith with 23 Cheshire Regiment

William Harold Smith attested for General Service (Army Reserve) in the British Army in

December 1915 and in November 1917 was transferred to the 23 Cheshire Regiment. He was discharged in April 1918 as no longer fit for national service. I was told he was gassed during the war and it seems he experienced significant injuries. He was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal.

William and Annie Smith applied to migrate to Australia in January 1919 but were rejected because of William's health problems. He appealed this decision and in August 1919 received a letter from the King's Fund for the Disabled, directing an amount of 140 pounds to be awarded to him to emigrate to Australia. On 26 March 1920, William Harold, age 31, Annie Barnes, age 30, Harold, age 8, and Thomas Smith, age 6, embarked on the SS Berrima at the port of London for Melbourne, Australia, on 24 March 1920, arriving in Melbourne in May 1920 via Capetown. (There were 986 people on board.) Their passports were stamped in Port Adelaide.

I don't know why my grandparents decided to emigrate. I think people were offered the opportunity of a better life in Australia after the hard life they were going through with the war. At one stage the government was offering the subsidised £10 migration scheme to suitable applicants, and that's why many British migrants were known as "Ten Pound Poms". Because my grandfather was injured in the war, they said he was eligible for a £140 subsidy to migrate, which I've never heard of before, but I'm sure lots of others would have been eligible.



William and Annie Smith with Harold and Thomas, 1920

The family came to St Albans in 1920. I don't know as yet where they lived when they came here in 1920, but according to the Electoral Roll for 1921, William and Annie were living in Cleveland Street in the area then known as the

Opie Estate.<sup>1</sup> At that stage William Smith was working as a labourer.

St Albans in 1920 was a rural neighbourhood with a population of about 200 people. The village centre was near the railway station with adjacent streets having four shops, a public hall, two churches, and a primary school. Probably the most attractive real estate highlight of the district was that relatively cheap land was available on the village outskirts.<sup>2</sup> I think that several English families had settled around Cleveland Street. I believe the lady who lived opposite them came out on the same ship as my grandparents and other English families also established their homes there, so it became known as Pommie paddock.

The Crosbies used to live on the corner of Cleveland Street; they were well-known people in St Albans and Ron Crosbie was an executor of Dad's will when he died. There were some houses closer to Main Road and the Turner family from England might have been there, but I don't remember who else lived there.<sup>3</sup> On the northern side of that intersection was the Stevens' farm. Mr and Mrs Stevens were hard working, community-minded people.<sup>4</sup> Mrs Stevens was a talented pianist and played the organ at my parents' wedding.

I remember my grandparents' place in the Opie Estate when I was a young child. There were empty paddocks all around and we had a very happy time, running wild.

There was a rusty old water tank in the common near Arthur Street, turned on its side; one of us would get in there and run and the tank would roll over the paddocks.

We used to mushroom in the paddocks all around those streets and other parts of St Albans. It was lovely going out mushrooming at 6 o'clock in the morning. Our box of mushrooms was then taken by one of our neighbours, the Gibson family, to a market and sold. My uncle Tom Barnes would also take the mushrooms – in a suitcase – into Melbourne to the London Hotel in Elizabeth Street because they valued the 'button' mushrooms.

My grandparents had a poultry farm and my grandmother used to sell eggs in Sunshine via

<sup>1</sup> The Opie family was one of the original selectors in the 1868 sale of land on the Keilor and Braybrook Farmers Common. Refer to chapters in *St Albans Pioneers Settlers and Speculators from the 1860s*. Some people have referred to the Opie Estate as the "American Presidents' Estate" as many of the streets were named after North American presidents.

<sup>2</sup> The Opie Estate had some blocks priced at \$70 with no deposit and repayments of \$2 per month.

<sup>3</sup> Includes Bedford, Moseley, Toby, Turner, and Carr.

<sup>4</sup> James Henry Stevens bought farmland through the 1905 Overnewton land sales. He married Agnes Cockerell and they started a family dynasty active in farming, real estate, hardware, and appliance stores. Refer to chapter in *St Albans Settlers from 1905*.

her brother Thomas Barnes, as advertised in *The Advocate*.<sup>1</sup> A cousin told me grandmother won some prizes at agricultural shows from their "Prize Strain" and sold at 22 shillings and 6 pence for 100, as well as selling Australorps (a good table bird for eating), Black Orpingtons, and White Leghorn Cockerels. They won prizes for their entries in the tramway's poultry show.<sup>2</sup> Grandmother also took in washing.

In the 1930s all lighting was provided by kerosene table lamps throughout the house. They had one or two house cows which were milked, and the cream was used for making butter. My Dad's cousin Jack Barnes remembers turning a butter churn by hand during Sunday visits to his grandmother.



Norma, Lorraine, Hilary with Grandma Annie

In the late 1940s a large storm event caused severe damage to their property – the chimneys collapsed above the roofline of the house, fences were blown over, trees were uprooted and demolished the chook sheds.<sup>3</sup>

My grandfather went to hospital with TB a few years after they moved to St Albans but remained active in running the poultry farm. He was readmitted to hospital in the mid 1930s and mid 1940s. His friends in the Sunshine RSL would visit him and raise funds for cigarettes for him and the other patients.

Annie remained at Cleveland Street until she passed away in August 1949 at Williamstown Hospital. I would sleep over occasionally, then Mum and Dad would pick me up on their bikes. I vaguely recall a piano being at Cleveland Street, but it was covered with a very large cloth.

A cousin remembers "Uncle Tom" playing the piano at Cleveland Street, but who taught him is a mystery.

William "Bill" Smith died at the Repatriation Hospital in April 1945 at the relatively young age of 56 years:

*After a very long illness, Mr. William Harold Smith, of St. Albans, passed away at the Caulfield Repatriation Hospital on Friday last. The late Mr. Smith, who had resided in St. Albans for the past 25 years, served with the British Imperial Forces. He was actively associated with all local activities. ... The late Mr. Smith was 56 years of age. The funeral, a military one, took place at the Fawkner Crematorium, where Padre Vines conducted the religious service.<sup>4</sup>*



William & Annie Smith at Repat hospital 1942

### Grandmothers



My grandmothers Bell and Smith were quite good friends but would argue at euchre. They both went frequently to Melbourne to do window shopping, but I don't know how often they went together. I remember enjoying the outings when Grandmother Smith would take me to town. We would go by train and I would have a fizzy

orange juice at Flinders Street station. Then we would go shopping in Myer and there were lots of floors to explore. You could start in the bargain basement and work your way up. We would have our lunch at the Myer cafeteria where I would have a pie. I have a nice photo of both grandmothers on one of their city expeditions, possibly in Swanston Street.

Our great-grandmother, Lilly Alice Sherlock, came out to Australia with her son and his wife, Thomas and Florence (Schofield) Barnes, in 1926, on the *Orvietto*, to live with Annie Smith in Cleveland Street, St Albans. Thomas started working as a welder and Florence as a screw worker. By 1931 they had moved to Benjamin Street in Sunshine, and in 1937 they were living in Dorothy Avenue, with Thomas working as an oxy welder and Florence as home duties.

Lilly Alice moved between the two families – Cleveland Street, St Albans, and Dorothy Avenue,

<sup>1</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 9 September 1932 p4

<sup>2</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 18 August 1933 p4

<sup>3</sup> The 'cyclonic' storm occurred in February 1946 with high winds and flooding. Several electricity poles were damaged, some powerlines came down and electricity disconnected. The roof on Mr Tong's house was blown away. *Sunshine Advocate* 1 March 1946 p1

<sup>4</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 27 April 1945

Sunshine. In her later years she broke her hip and became an invalid; that's when she came to stay with her daughter in Cleveland Street.



Great-grandma Barnes and Grandma Smith 1938

### Harold Smith

My Dad and his brother Harold went to St Albans Primary School in the 1920s. Unfortunately, Dad never talked much about his early childhood, so we don't have any stories about the school from that time.

We know they started at the primary school in June 1920: Harold was aged nine, and Thomas was six. It was a reasonable intake for that year as 30 new pupils were enrolled.



Tom Smith (white shirt on right) in junior grade 1921



Harold Smith (bottom left) in senior grade 1921

Dad and his brother Harold both went to the Sunshine Technical School – Harold started in 1924 and Thomas in 1925. They both ended up working in metal manufacturing industries.



Uncle Harold also was a sportsman, playing cricket with St Albans in the mid 1920s and ICI and Yarraville in the mid 1930s. One of his best performances was with the Yarraville team when he scored 116 not out.<sup>1</sup> During the great depression my Uncle Harold was literally working on the roads. That's all I was ever told. They were building roads but I don't know how they were doing that.<sup>2</sup>

I think Uncle Harold was doing that for only a short time and later on he was working as a fitter and turner.

At one stage he was working at ICI in Deer Park, so maybe that's where he did his apprenticeship. His final years were in the Leathercloth section at ICI, Deer Park, retiring from there in 1977 and not long after passed away.

He gave us offcuts to cover our school books; it kept them in very good condition. Mum sewed them at the corners to keep them intact.

Harold Smith married Estelle Batten<sup>3</sup> of St Albans in 1939:

*On Saturday last, in the St. Albans Presbyterian Church, the marriage of Mr Harold Smith and Miss Estelle Frances Batten was happily celebrated. In consequence of the respect in which, both households are held, and of the youthful friendships of both bride and bridegroom, a very large company attended at the church. For the beautiful and impressive service, the interior of the church was prettily decorated by a band of young friends, under the direction of Mrs William Trudgen, the immediate predecessor of Miss Batten, as a bride, in the same church.<sup>4</sup>*

Harold and Estelle settled into a home in Alfreda Street, St Albans. They had moved to Essex Street, West Footscray by the 1950s and Harold worked as a fitter. They raised one son; their daughter passed away not long after birth.

### Thomas Smith

Like his brother, my father Thomas Smith was a good sportsman, enjoying football and cricket. His football career commenced early in the

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 17 March 1933

<sup>2</sup> Some sustenance programs were introduced during the depression, like a work for the dole scheme, where unemployed men could get food vouchers for repairing roads or digging channels for water mains. It was mostly manual work with picks and shovels.

<sup>3</sup> Family was originally from Cornwall in England. Edward Henry Batten migrated to Victoria in 1871.

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 22 Sep 1939 p2



1930s through to the late 1940s. He played in the western division, including the Yarraville Club, Sunshine District Club (possibly at Deer Park) and St Albans. He also played some golf and I can remember him practicing his driving technique in the back yard.



Yarraville senior football team 1934

Dad commenced playing with Yarraville in 1933 and at one period was Vice Captain of the team. I have paper clippings and a photo that Dad played with the Essendon seconds during 1934 and 1935.



The Argus has a reference to him as showing some ability as a full forward with Essendon Dons, having played with the seconds in 1935 as a full back and with the seniors in 1936.<sup>1</sup> I don't know how he got from St Albans to Essendon to train or to play matches as public transport was very limited at the time. In 1937 he was transferred to the Footscray Bulldogs (see photo) which would have been easier to attend because it was on a direct railway link from St Albans.



Essendon football club in 1936

<sup>1</sup> Argus 2 April 1936 p18



Tom Smith (tall man in back) StA football team 1943

His cricket achievements cover a similar time span, from the 1930s to the 1940s. At one stage he was leading the St Albans team for the most catches of the season, another time he received a trophy for the best bowling average, and a few times he was star of the week or star of the round for being the highest scorer.

I was told that my father met my mother when my mother's horse got away and he had to rescue her. This might have happened when Mum's parents moved from the dairy in Alphington to live on a sheep farm between Keilor and St Albans. I can't imagine my father ever being on a horse, though my grandparents did have a horse and buggy when they farmed the sheep property between Keilor and St Albans in the late 1930s.

My mother, Gladys Bell, was an equestrian and prior to her marriage rode horses quite a lot. One of her cousins, Mary Watson, entered in the Garryowen Equestrian events at the Royal Melbourne Show. Mum was very close to her cousins who all came from the Kyneton, Malmsbury, and Greenhill area. They were the Watsons and my grandfather on my mother's side, was a Bell, who lived in the same area. The Watsons and the Bells had intermarried.<sup>2</sup>

Mum and Dad became engaged in 1935:

*Many residents will be pleased to hear of the engagement of Thomas, younger son of Mr and Mrs W Smith, of Opie Estate, to Gladys, only daughter of Mr and Mrs Bell, of Theodore Street. Both families are well known and esteemed throughout the district.<sup>3</sup>*

Before they married, a cheque as a gift was presented to Dad at a function organised by Mrs Stevens and Mrs Turner on behalf of the local community, and a letter of best wishes from the Essendon Football Club. The marriage was held in February 1937.

The wedding reception was held in the Mechanics' Institute Hall and the event was reported in the local paper:

<sup>2</sup> John Bell came to Victoria by 1873, married Janet Stewart and they settled in Kyneton. William Thomas James Bell was their second son, born in 1875. He married Ethel Eliza Watson and Gladys Ethel Bell was their first child, born in 1912.

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 17 May 1935

*Popular Young Sportsman Weds - People who know that simplicity is the brightest and best of charms in a wedding ceremony would have found their conviction strengthened by the scene at the St. Albans Presbyterian Church on Saturday last, when Mr Thomas Smith and Miss Gladys Ethel Bell were married in the presence of a large congregation of friends and guests. For the prevalence of reverent order and comfort amid which the arrival of the bride was awaited, the credit belongs to Mr Les Bell, the bride's brother, and also to Mrs J. H. Stevens, who played appropriate melodies on the church organ.<sup>1</sup>*

After honeymooning in Belgrave, my parents moved into their home in Arthur Street, St Albans not far from the pioneer Stenson family who were in Winifred Street.



Marriage of Thomas Smith and Gladys Bell 1937

I understand that our house was bought in conjunction with the Essendon Football Club, though I'm not sure why. Dad was playing with Essendon at that stage and the club might have assisted with a home loan.

My parents soon established a vegetable garden that my father maintained. He had a huge amount of vegetables growing, and we also had chooks. People grew their own produce a lot in those days.

When Grandfather William Bell came to live with us, about 1955, it was his job to chop the heads off the chooks if they didn't lay. He would say, "Run inside girls, you don't want to see a chook running around the yard headless." He did the deed on the wood chopping block with an axe behind the shed. Of course, he also plucked the chooks. He also resoled our shoes and I can still smell the glue mixture that he used.

### **Gladys Bell**

My mother was Gladys Ethel Bell who was born in Kyneton Hospital in 1912. Her parents were Thomas James Bell and Ethel Eliza Watson. I've traced the Bell side of the family back to 1629 to George Bell born in James City, Virginia, USA, who moved to Cumberland in England by 1648. George's mother Sarah Young traces her heritage

back to Relecta Cliff in 1525 in Suffolk, England. John Bell had come to Victoria by 1873, married Janet Stewart and they settled in Kyneton. William Thomas James Bell was their second son, born in 1875. He married Ethel Eliza Watson, and Gladys Ethel Bell, their first child, my mother, was born in Kyneton in 1912. Lesley William Bell, their son, was born in 1914.

The Watson side of the family is traced back to John Watson born in 1386 in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Scotland. Moses Watson was born in 1815, married Sarah Dixon in 1833 and came to Port Phillip Bay in 1853 on the SS Fanny. You can see we have a long and exotic heritage.

In 1926 my grandparents had a farm at Kyneton, so Mum would have gone to Kyneton High School at that time. They moved to Alphington where my grandfather rented a dairy, and then Mum went to Northcote High. After that Mum had two years of finishing school at the MacRobertson Girls High School, where she did very well.

Mum went to work for the company Sands and McDougall, who were putting together a directory of all the people in Victoria. They were based in the city and recorded the names and addresses of the people in Melbourne and published their well-known directory. Before she was married, she was working in Nettlefolds in Albion as a machinist.



Gladys Bell and the Nettlefold girls

Mum would have stopped working when she married. I was born in their first year of marriage and at that time mums with little children definitely did not work outside the home. Dad was the breadwinner and was working at the Newport Workshops.

Like all wives then, Mum worked hard at home. Mondays was laundry day and they had only one of those single-strand rope clothes lines that flapped around in the wind. Later on, Dad invented a water-driven rotary clothesline.

Mum would get up at 6 o'clock to get the copper going in the washhouse to heat the water to wash the clothes. It took her all morning to do that. I was fascinated how she could wrap a

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 5 March 1937 p3



sheet around her arm and wring it out; that was hard work. Then of course she would be ironing on Tuesday. Everything got starched and ironed.

Every morning at 11 o'clock she would go down the street to buy fresh food, because at that stage we only had the ice-chest, so they had to get fresh food on a daily basis. She was particular about what she bought. Mr Self sold bags of broken biscuits and lots of kids enjoyed eating their broken biscuits.



Mum was always there for us. She would brush us down as we were going out the gate on our way to school in the morning and she would be looking over the gate to greet us when we were coming home in the afternoon. During the

afternoon, especially in the winter, she would sit in front of the fire knitting or sewing. She made all our clothes and knitted beautiful clothes for our dolls.

Mum also did a lot gardening and weeding at home. She always told me to pick a weed: "If you're going to the front gate, pick a weed along the way, because weeds are growing all the time."

Mum and Dad built a room at the back of the house that was going to be my room. I never got to move in because my grandfather William Bell came to live with us after Grandma Bell died, and that became his room.

Mum associated with some of the ladies in St Albans. We used to go to Sorrento by train and bus for Christmas holidays along with another St Albans' couple, Mr and Mrs Les Dickson, and their sons Leslie and Ron. Les Dickson and Dad played football in the same team in St Albans. There was another couple that they met in Sorrento, Mr and Mrs Crawford and their daughter Pamela, who was my friend; they were from Camberwell.

Mum talked to our neighbour Mrs Gibson over the front gate but never visited. I think she felt there was enough for Mrs Gibson to do without having visitors: there were 15 children in the Gibson family, the house was run down, and the sheds dreadful. We were not allowed over there but of course we went.

On Guy Fawkes Night we always had a bonfire in the paddock near our house, and one boy, I think it was Les Gibson, was rescued by Mum from getting burnt. Another time he was attacked by bull ants. Mum heard him screaming out in the paddock, so she ran out and helped get the ants off him.

One of the older girls, Betty, came with us to Sorrento one year to help Mum, and it was just as well she came because Mum got shingles down there and needed help. I don't think Betty had been away on holidays before.

Mum belonged to the Presbyterian Church and attended church regularly and made sure we went to Sunday school. She was on the flower arranging roster for the Sunday services. She was also the Treasurer of the St Albans Primary School Mothers' Club in the 1950s, when my sisters Lorraine and Hilary were at the school.

### Growing up

I was born in December 1937 in the Sunshine Private Hospital, King Edward Avenue. It was the end of the depression and I can remember that clothing and food coupons still existed, but we never went without food or clothing. My Sister, Lorraine, was born in 1942 and my younger sister, Hilary, was born in 1947, both born at the Private Hospital in King Edward Avenue, Sunshine.

In retrospect, St Albans had been growing steadily and had reached 600 people by the mid 1930s. The train line to St Albans had been electrified, electricity was connected to the village centre, and now there were six shops.

Our house in Arthur Street seemed a long way from Cleveland Street where my grandparents lived. Mum and Dad used to ride bikes over there. I would be sitting on the bar at the front of Dad's bike, and Lorraine used to sit on the back of Mum's bike. That's the way we went backwards and forwards.



Smith home in Arthur Street, St Albans

Thinking back, I can't believe how rural the district was back then. The streets we rode on weren't made, of course. Arthur Street where we lived wasn't made at the time either. There was no sewerage and no luxuries; people went without. There were few phones around at the time. A public phone box was installed at the corner of Arthur Street and Victoria Crescent in the 1950s.

In some of my first memories I now realise that my mother did not refer to her friends by their first name. To her friends, my mother was always "Mrs Smith" and my mother always called her friends by their "Mrs" title – she never used their Christian name. Her friend Mrs Austin was always called "Mrs Austin" and never "Evelyn". Few people had phones when I was young, so when she wanted a visit from Mrs Austin, Mum

would peg a red jumper on the clothesline to invite her to come over the paddock for a cup of tea.



Gladys and Tom Smith with children

Growing up was a lot of fun. It was fun when the iceman arrived in his truck and he would cut off a sliver of ice each and then wrap our block of ice in a sack put it on his shoulder and take it around to the back of the house where our ice chest was outside on the back verandah. Previous to that we had a Coolgardie safe and a water canvas bag hanging under the verandah. My swing was also under the verandah at the back of the house.

Of course we had scooters and three-wheeler bikes which we were only allowed to ride on our home footpaths. I still have this three-wheeler bike parked out on my nature strip where I now live. It is so tiny.

If we weren't running we were riding our bikes everywhere. I got my first two-wheeler bike from my auntie Estelle – all nicely painted like new – which was probably for Christmas. Bearing in mind that we did not have made roads but lots of rocks and holes, my Dad took me out onto the side of the road to learn to ride this bike. On I hopped and he pushed me whilst running alongside, yelling "Pedal Norma. Faster, keep pedalling" and that's how I learnt how to ride a bike. All this was to the great amusement of the very big family of Gibsons<sup>1</sup> following along the road too, yelling "Pedal Norma!" Hilarious.

Another cycling highlight that we were always forbidden to do – as Mum said people would be rabbiting in the Gully and might shoot us! – was to ride along Arthur Street to Greens Gully (which is on the way to Keilor) and free wheel down the hill and end up in the prickly bushes, the only way to stop. Great fun, but Mum always knew what we'd been up to as we had lots of scratches on our arms and legs when we got back home. I was lucky having a bike because not many people had bikes during the

<sup>1</sup> Stanley and Evelyn Gibson (q.v.) with fifteen children came to St Albans in 1941 and were living on the corner of Arthur Street and Winifred (now Reis) Street. Their home was built in the late 1880s and is one of the oldest houses in town. It is currently being used as a Buddhist temple.

hard times.

Once a year we went to Footscray and bought a winter coat and shoes. We were lucky as Mum made all of our clothes. People did without for such a lot.

I remember the bread man, the ice man, and the milk man used to come around delivering their goods door to door. The bread and milk men came with their horse and cart, the iceman had a truck. Mum would hang a billy can on the side picket fence and Mr Honey would fill it up with milk when required. The rabbit man used to come along the streets on his push bike with rabbits hanging off his handlebars. You could get two rabbits for two shillings.

When we were little, Mum would take us shopping in our pram, going down to Self Bros. for groceries in East Esplanade and Moffat's in Main Road West for meat.<sup>2</sup> I can't remember where we got our vegetables. I think there was a vegetable place in Main Road West just past Moffat's butcher shop.

One of my earliest photos is a line of prams parked outside Bert Moffat's butcher shop in 1938 with Les Dickson on a tricycle, me holding the handlebars, and Myrna McIntyre standing on the other side.



Prams outside Moffat's butcher shop 1938

Another of our favourite pastimes would be to make cubby houses in the peppercorn trees at the train station, totally forbidden. Mum always knew because the trees would stain our skin. All such innocent fun.

At some time, probably 1944, the St Albans Mechanics Institute began showing movies and all the families went. I remember June Gibson was always late and had to find a seat at the front of the hall in the dark and she always tripped herself up as she walked down the aisle.

Around the same time, the St Albans Brownie Pack was formed in the Mechanics Institute Hall and we went there every Saturday afternoon. I think the Girl Guides was also started about then. I also started going to the Girls Gymnasium Club in the Mechanics Institute

<sup>2</sup> Bert Moffat of Sunshine married Beryl Bedford of St Albans. Bert was a local sportsman, worked as a butcher, and was a Keilor councillor in the 1950s. Beryl ran a pet shop. Refer to article in *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 50 Fabulous Years*.

Hall once a week. I loved it so much that I found myself still attending Calisthenics (name change) on and off until I was 42.



Norma McKay (R) on outing with Brownie pack

We had annual concerts in the Mechanics Institute Hall and in the hall of the St Albans Church of England. I still love it and my daughter-in-law also successfully competed over the years and now one of my granddaughters successfully competes in solos and team events around Victoria, culminating at the Ballarat competitions. My sisters, Lorraine and Hilary, also attended calisthenics at the St Albans Church of England.

The Selfs did a lot of work in St Albans. They used to make the most amazing ice blocks in the summer. I'd beg Mum to let me ride down and buy these milk ice blocks covered in chocolate. Mum would say they'll melt before you get back and I'd say "No, I'm going to ride very, very fast." Occasionally I could talk her into it. I think that either Mr Self or his daughters made those ice blocks at home. Mum made our own ice cream and water ice blocks.

I can't remember what year we got our ice chest. I remember as a tiny girl that we had a Coolgardie safe where the meat was kept cool by evaporation from the wet canvas sides, and Dad pouring water out of a canvas water bag because it kept the water cool. Later we had the ice chest, and we loved it when the ice man came. He came with his truck and would break off bits of the ice block and we'd pick them up and eat them – it was heaven.

### Piano Lessons

I started learning the piano when I was 8 years old, which would have been 1945. Bernice Self was the teacher, and she was from a local family who established the supermarket.<sup>1</sup> These lessons were held in the room behind the lolly shop until Bernice married Alf Goddard and moved to their new home in Victoria Crescent. It must have been such a busy time for Bernice, as she

<sup>1</sup> Bernice Self was the daughter of Lewis and Marion Self who established the Self Brothers and Goddard supermarket. Refer to chapter in *Stories About St Albans, Celebrating 125 Years*.

continued giving lessons, working in her family's grocery shop, and raising four children. It became just too much for her when her last child was born, so she stopped giving lessons.

Bernice found me another teacher in Albion, where I went by train on a Saturday morning for lessons, except when there was a polio epidemic during winter for six months. The trains were cancelled, and I had to ride on my bicycle to Albion rugged up against the freezing cold weather, bearing in mind I was still a little girl. Sometimes Bobby Gibson would be riding that long road out of St Albans and he would ride with me.

I must have looked so exhausted when I arrived on my bike there that my teacher made me a cup tea while she played me classical music that I might be asked to play during my exam. Exam times were so nerve-wracking for me and the person taking me, which later on was Mum. The music exams were arranged through the London School of Music in Melbourne.

I stopped going towards the end of my fourth year at High School, which I now regret. The exams I had been gearing up to would have given me letters ALCM and LLCM after my name, and then I would have been able to teach people to play the piano. I was 15 at the time.

### Sunday School

Every Sunday morning at 10am we went to Sunday School in the Presbyterian Church along with the McIntyre children and others. We were encouraged to go to the church service which commenced at 11am. Mr Evans<sup>2</sup> would let the children leave church after the collection plate was handed around. He called it half time in the service and would say "You can now go children". The plate was a round wooden bowl that was passed up and down the aisles of people so that they could make a contribution to the church.

We children were given money, often a thruppenny piece, to put in the plate. If we were lucky, we might have a penny for ourselves, and after we were let out of church we rushed over to Self's to spend it on a lolly.

In December 1946, just before my ninth birthday, we travelled to Williamstown Beach in an old furniture van for our yearly Sunday School picnic run by the Presbyterian Church. I can recall drinking red cordial, which I have never drunk again, and next day I was picked up by an ambulance as I had contracted Scarlet Fever.

When the ambulance attendants arrived, they were looking for Norman Smith and I was consequently dressed in a very small boy's pyjamas and a red jumper. (We come from a very tall family and they didn't fit.) Once the

<sup>2</sup> Reverend William Evans. MA, BD, was inducted into the pastoral charge of Sunshine and St. Albans in March 1933.

ambulance attendants carried me out to the ambulance, the kids in the street were out running at the back of the ambulance to wish me goodbye. My parents' house had to be isolated.

### Fairfield Hospital

I was taken for a six-week isolation into the Fairfield Infectious Hospital because I had Scarlet Fever. When I was due to leave Fairfield Hospital I came down with Measles, so I had to stay another week in hospital.

In those days at Fairfield Hospital we were bedded in a very long room with about 20 boys and girls and long open windows between each bed. We remained in bed the whole time, washed and toileted and had meals in our bed. No parents were allowed to visit but we wrote and received letters and presents. I had my ninth birthday and Christmas in hospital away from my parents (December 1946).

When my father finally came to pick me up, he was met by a nurse and a very bedraggled very, very skinny little girl, after having been put in a phenyl bath before leaving the hospital. (Dad must have gone through a very upsetting time as he gave up smoking when I was in hospital.) After leaving the hospital, we had to catch a train to Flinders Street and then one to St Albans. As we were walking home, Dad was so upset he said he would carry me, and I said I was okay. My gosh, I was so weak.

But worse was to come because when I woke up next morning to say hello to my mother, she had left to go to hospital in Sunshine to have my youngest sister (January 1947). I was mortified to see that she had left me, but it was lovely when she came home with a beautiful little girl, Hilary, and we adored her.

### Primary School

Lorraine and I went to school at a very early age so that we could keep the number of pupils up to 100 and keep all the teachers at the school.

When I started at the old St Albans primary school in 1943 there were three teachers, three classrooms, and 30 new students started in that year. I went into this little prep grade with Miss Sheddon as our teacher. We moved out of that prep grade very quickly.

The classes were grouped into pairs and spread over three rooms. There was grade 1 and 2 in one room, grade 3 and 4 in another, and grade 5 and 6. Grades 7 and 8 were at the school when I first started, and if you finished grade 8 you received a Merit certificate. That level was moved out of the primary school shortly after when the high schools and technical schools were formed, and grades 7 and 8 became forms 1 and 2 of the secondary school system.



Primary school images 1953-1956 from Hilary Smith

When I was in St Albans primary school my father became interested in some projects connected with the school. He made a brass bell for the school which was used to call the children into the classroom. Because Dad made the bell, I would get to ring the bell. I don't remember what year that was.

Later when I was in grade 3 and 4, Mrs Paul was our teacher. When she was conducting the singing, she used to use a wooden stick to conduct the class. Dad made a metal baton for her and that's how I got to conduct the class. I used to get called the teacher's pet.

I would look out the window and see the Great Dividing Range on the horizon – I'm not sure if it was from our house or my grandmother's – but I remember seeing the blue mountains of the Great Dividing Range. One day at school I painted a picture of these beautiful blue mountains and was so proud of my effort. My teacher, Mrs Paul, was not impressed and said to the class "Children, has anyone seen blue mountains? What colour are mountains?" I suppose she meant they should have been green for the trees. I wasn't impressed with her on that occasion because I can still see those blue mountains.

We were happy at school and did a lot of running around. I was good at high jumps and long jumps. We were a happy group doing innocent things and I don't remember anything really bad happening at primary school. It was amazing the things we did when we were so young.

Mr Malcolm was headmaster when I was there. He wrote in my autograph book "Be good sweet maid, and let who will be kind, do noble things, not dream them all day long." That advice still comes to me when I'm sitting around thinking what I will do next.



Norma, Hilary and Lorraine Smith

In those years at the beginning of going to high school we started going on our own from St Albans to the baths at Middle Footscray during the school holidays. My younger sister Lorraine would come with me. There were a few of us who would get on the train together and spend the day at the baths with our two shillings so we

could have our lunch there.

At one stage as a teenager, I used to go skating at the Glaciarium in Melbourne. It was over Princes Bridge not far from the Flinders Street station. A group of us from St Albans would go down there, but I went only for a couple of years.

Mum loved me going skating because she had been an ice skater, but that would have been before she was married.

### Empire Day



People in St Albans didn't really talk about the war as far as I remember; we children were remote from it. I started at the old St Albans primary school in 1943 and Lorraine started in 1947, so our enrolments straddled the end of the war. I still have a photo from 1946 where the primary school pupils were dressed up as soldiers and nurses to commemorate Empire Day. I remember feeling quite pleased that day

because I was dressed up as Miss Australia.

Empire Day was held each year in the school during May when we celebrated Queen Victoria's birthday, but it was also a celebration of the British Empire, of which Australia was a loyal member.

I think schools stopped holding Empire Day celebrations during the late 1950s.



Empire Day at St Albans Primary School 1946

### Air Raid Shelters

I remember that during the war we had our own air raid shelter in our back yard, and so did my grandparents.

Our air raid shelter was in the back yard. It was a big ditch dug into the ground and deep enough so that you had steps going down. It was

raised above the ground a bit and covered over with a roof, and there was a piece of canvass over the entrance. Ours used to be a bit deeper than others because Dad was 6 foot 2 inches tall, so it had to be fairly deep. I think the family built it themselves.

The shelter eventually filled with water and Mum was frightened that if we went down there on our own we could hurt ourselves. It was filled in later on.

We also had blackout curtains over our windows. Mr Moseley of Cleveland Street was the Air Raid Warden for St Albans, and he would patrol the streets at night to check that no lights were visible through the windows. There was also an air raid siren in town that was tested occasionally.

The 1940s was a tough decade for the family as several of the elders passed away. My grandfather Bill Smith died in 1945 at the Caulfield Repatriation Hospital. 1947 was also a sad year because my great-grandmother passed away at age 80; she was Mrs Lilly Barnes, who died at my grandmother's home in Cleveland Street.<sup>1</sup> My grandmother Ethel Eliza Bell<sup>2</sup> (Mum's mother) died in 1948, and my other grandmother, Annie Smith nee Barnes, died in 1949 at age 60.

### Holidays

Each year after Christmas we went on holidays to Sorrento and later on to Raymond Island where the Self family had a holiday house. Brenda Payne, one of the Self descendants, still lives on Raymond Island.



Holidays at Sorrento with Crawford & Dickson families

I think we went to Sorrento about 1940 when I was about two years old. Mum would save up money for the holiday. We would go by train from St Albans to the city, catch the steam train to Frankston, and then catch the bus to Sorrento, carrying lots of cases with everything we needed for a fortnight. We went there every

<sup>1</sup> Lilly Alice Barnes died in July 1947 at age 80 years. She was an invalid for several years but kept active through handicrafts and sewing for the Red Cross.

<sup>2</sup> William Thomas Bell and Ethel Eliza Bell had settled in Theodore Street, St Albans, by 1931, and later moved to Victoria Crescent.

year and stayed a fortnight. We rented the house from the Selfs.

I went down to Raymond Island when I was 14 with Glen Robb and Bernice and Alf Goddard when they had a house down there. That Christmas my mother and father rented that house and they did that for a couple of years. Then they went back to Sorrento and rented a house from Mr Bloomcamp who was a police officer in the district.

We had Christmas away every year. When my grandfather came to stay with us he would go to visit Mum's brother Les Bell in Carnegie and stay there a fortnight, and then come back to us when we came home.

### Father's work

Dad was lucky enough to be one person in a thousand who obtained an apprenticeship with the Victorian Railways at the Newport Workshops. He was very lucky because those positions were hard to get.

Dad was invited to attend the Lord Somers Camp in the early 1930s, I believe, because of his apprenticeship at the Newport Workshops. The Somers Camp's aim was to bring together people from different social backgrounds. Dad met a lot of highly regarded people: government people, industry leaders, wealthy and working-class people, and people like himself doing apprenticeships. They were brought together so that they could socialise and build connections across societal and industrial boundaries. He didn't talk about that to us either, but he kept several photos and he appears to have had a good time.



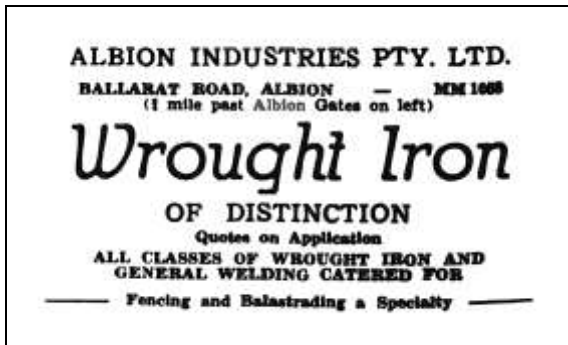
Tom Smith (2nd from right) at Somers Camp c.1935

In 1935 Dad's position at the Newport Workshops was listed as temporary until a couple of years later when he was confirmed in the appointment as a jobbing moulder. Dad worked with the railways for twenty years and during this time he went back to night school to study electrical welding.

He left the railways about 1954 and established his own metal work factory known as



Albion Industries in Ballarat Road, Albion. He was manufacturing wrought iron gates, balustrades, and fencing. Mum was the office girl!



One of our regular Sunday activities was driving around looking at wrought iron gates. My Dad made a lot of gates, fences, and balconies. In early 1970s, he built another factory and four smaller factories in Evans and Cranwell streets, Braybrook. That site has now been converted to residential housing. The four factoriettes have been converted into a house with five bedrooms and three bathrooms.

Mum and Dad moved to Service Street, Sunshine, in 1964. Not long before Mum passed away, he bought a house in Woodend, which they were going to use as a holiday home and then live there when Dad retired. Unfortunately, that didn't eventuate.

When Dad married Alma Hunter in 1969, he moved into Alma's home in Claremont Street, Albion, while they were looking for a small property for them to live together. Dad sold Woodend to my in-laws and he purchased a 25-acre property, called Pirete, just out of Anthony's Cutting on the way into Bacchus Marsh, and he finally had his hobby farm that he had been longing to have.

Dad got his yearning for a small farm over the years, probably, because during lambing time in the Kyneton area we all visited the Watson family (Mum's cousin, Edgar Watson) in Malmsbury and Dad would help Uncle Edgar with the lambing. Of course, this only occurred in the 1950s after Dad learnt to drive and bought his first car.

Dad raised poddy calves in Bacchus Marsh which were sold at the livestock sales yards in Kensington. He even named his cows and calves. There were times when he got top prices for his poddy calves which made him very proud as he had raised them with love.

Dad didn't learn to drive until about 1949, which was my first year at high school. He bought a Willys car, which was an old-fashioned car. It was very crowded when we all sat in it. My sister Hilary must have sat on my mother's knee and Lorraine and I sat on either side of my grandfather in the back. Every Sunday we drove around inspecting Dad's wrought iron gates and

ended up having a picnic of fish and chips in Bacchus Marsh.

Dad's business of Albion Industries kept operating in Cranwell Street, Braybrook, until he retired to Bacchus Marsh. Mum had died in 1966 and Dad remarried. He married Alma Hunter in 1969 and moved to their Pirete property in Bacchus Marsh. Later on, he built a home for Alma in Margaret Drive in Bacchus Marsh, so that she could be close in the town to shops and hospitals, etc.



Thomas and Alma Smith at 70th birthday 1984

### Musical Knights

My father came to Australia at age six, and one of the big questions in compiling the family history is working out where and when he developed his piano skills. He was so musically inclined. The only piano I remember in the family was the one in our home in Arthur Street, but thinking back there could have been a piano in Cleveland Street which was covered in a big blanket.

I've looked back through our family history and haven't found anyone else who was so musically inclined, though I do have a grandson who is as musically gifted as Dad was.

Dad used to practice every night and we used to go to bed listening to him play the piano. It was beautiful. When I started learning the piano, I had to practice for an hour every day after school. Dad always hoped that I would be good enough to take his place in the band, but that never happened.

At one stage when he had the band he had lessons from Graeme Bell, a well-known piano jazz musician in Melbourne who pioneered a resurgence of traditional jazz as dance music in Australia and parts of Europe and the leader of Australia's foremost jazz band, the Graeme Bell Jazz Gang.

Dad's band was known as Tom Smith's Musical Knights, though it was sometimes advertised as Tom Smith and his Rhythm Boys, and occasionally as Tom Smith's Band, also Frank Day's band. The line-up for the Musical Knights included Tom Smith (piano), George Mann Snr (saxophone), George Mann Jnr (saxophone) and Frank Day (drums). Sometimes there was a fifth member. Frank Day was so handsome.

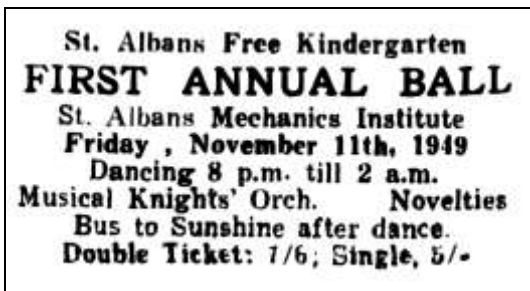


Tom Smith (R) with Frank Day's Orchestra

The Manns were from Sunshine and George Mann jr might have also played another instrument and I think it was a clarinet. Band members wore white tuxedo jackets and black bow ties when they were playing. A lot of their performances were at the Masonic Hall in Sunshine. Of course they played in St Albans and also in surrounding country areas such as Bacchus Marsh, Sydenham, Melton, and Rockbank; they played in Rockbank a lot. In Melton they were often advertised as the Musical Knight's Orchestra.<sup>1</sup>



Celebration at St Albans Mechanics Hall c.1949

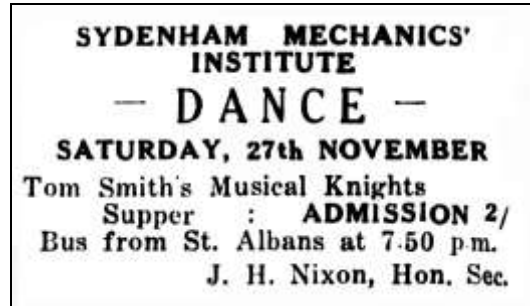


Advertisement in Sunshine Advocate Nov. 1949

They were a versatile group. When they were performing at Mervyn and Marie Missen's wedding reception at the Keilor Hall, George Mann senior acted as the Master of Ceremonies and George junior sang some songs. On other occasions my father acted as the MC.

I was always under the impression that it was George Mann's band, and I wonder if it was

called Tom Smith's band when they were playing locally. I think Dad might have met the Manns through the Masonic Lodge in Sunshine. The band would practice at George's house in Sunshine, which was okay for Dad because they had a piano there. Their biggest problem as a band was transporting the drums. Dance halls usually had a piano, but the drum kit had to be squeezed into the car with the passengers.



Advertisement in Sunshine Advocate Nov. 1948

A few years ago I went to see a jazz performance at Halls Gap and was listening to a guy playing the piano in a corner shop. It turns out he knew my father. Another man came up and asked if I remembered him because he had played the drums in my father's band. He had actually moved to Sydney but came to Halls Gap every year for the jazz festival.

My sister Hilary says that with Dad working full time in the railways, playing in the band at Masonic Hall dances, playing cricket and football, and picking fruit at Milburn's farm at Keilor, we did not see a lot of him at home. (When she was eight, Lorraine accompanied Dad to Milburn's farm and worked a full day picking potatoes and fruit but had a nap at lunchtime. She said she was very tired when they got home.) I believe this occurred when there was a polio epidemic and lots of businesses were closed.

Dad was always busy. We saw him at meal times after he came from work. On Friday and Saturday nights when they played in the band he would come home from work and get dressed in his musician clothes. Lorraine and I would brush down his white tuxedo top, make his hair look nice, and send him on his way.

### High School

I finished primary school in 1948 and went to Williamstown High School for four years, from 1949 to 1952. I was supposed to be going with my best girlfriend, Carol McIntyre, but she got very sick during the holidays and had to stay back at primary school for one year, so I trundled behind her older sisters.

This school was an eye opener because I had gone from nearly 100 primary school pupils to 1000 at the High School. We went by train from St Albans very early in the morning, changing trains at Footscray and arriving at

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 31 October 1952 p4



Williamstown Beach station, just in time for the bell at 9.00 am. I loved my uniform.



Norma in uniform w. Gma Smith and Lorraine 1949

I was far too young to be heading off to secondary school, to Williamstown High School; far too young. I was aged 11 going off on two trains by myself. I went into 1A and then 2A, which was the professional stream. Gosh they were such smart children.

When going to Williamstown High, I would get up at 6:30, get ready, and have breakfast. Mum was up before us and would make us breakfast of cereal, porridge, or boiled eggs. Mum would make sure we had a meal before leaving for school.

The train left at 7:15 or 7:30. Because there were not many trains, if you did not catch that train you were late for school. After school, we used to run to catch the train back so that we would get home about 4:30. It was a long day for a couple of young girls.

Because St Albans primary was such a small school, I don't think we were taught a lot of the things they taught at other schools. My concepts of algebra, geometry, and trigonometry were nonexistent; so I attended a school in Footscray run by the Masonic Lodge on a Saturday morning for two hours to learn those subjects. Once I did that, I was okay. That was good learning for me when I first went to high school. Lorraine and Hilary (who attended the St Albans High School in 1968) also went to the Saturday Morning School in Footscray.

At Williamstown High School, we had four house colours as school teams: yellow, green, red and blue, but they also had names: yellow (possums), green (wombats), red (dingoes), and blue (koalas). I was a possum. Unfortunately, because I lived so far away from school, I was never able to become terribly involved, because I had to catch a certain train to be at home in time for tea at nighttime.

I was good at running and high jumping at primary school, but I could never follow through with that at high school because their training was held after school when I was catching the train home. I would meet my father at the Footscray station and we came back from there

together. My father worked at the Newport Workshops and that's why he was coming back on the Footscray line.

In the third year at WHS we were split into professional and commercial courses, and I was put in the commercial area. I learnt shorthand and typing and was very good at it; it came naturally for me to do it. In fourth year we did our exams and I achieved 100 words per minute in shorthand and my typing was good.

I finished at Williamstown High in 1952 so that was the end of an era for me, but it was a new era for St Albans because migrants started to arrive in the district.

The population suddenly increased to 5,000 within a few years. The one local primary school could not cope with the large enrolment numbers and the Mechanics Hall was used as an overflow classroom. Some children were bussed to schools in Albion and Deer Park. Planning started for another primary school and the Catholic community also started organising their own school and church just around the corner from our home.

At the end of year four at Williamstown High I had turned 15 and was looking for a job. When I was leaving school, some students stayed on to do year 5 and some went to Teachers College. Others either went to nursing, hair-dressing, working in a bank, or secretarial work. That was the girls; I don't know what the boys did.

Many girls wanted to become hair dressers, but that was not for me. I thought of becoming an air hostess, but I was too tall for that. I went to Sunshine Council to be interviewed for a job as secretary, and I would have got it except for the fact that I lived in St Albans. They said the trains were not reliable, so I didn't get the job. That's the way it was.

I was going to start work at Myer in the children's department in a part-time job over Christmas. My uncle Les Bell,<sup>1</sup> my mother's brother, was the personnel manager at Olympic Tyres in West Footscray. He visited us one day and said, "I've got a job for Norma – she starts on the ninth of December." I thought that was not fair because having just finished school I didn't have time for a holiday.

Uncle Les was Mum's brother and was living in Carnegie. He married one of the Batten sisters and my father's brother married another of the Batten sisters. Mrs Batten was a dress maker and Mr Batten was an engine driver. When Uncle Les married Freda Batten they went to live in Carnegie, but he must have gone into the forces because he somehow worked with the army in Melbourne before he went to work at Olympic Tyres as the personnel manager.

<sup>1</sup> Leslie William Bell of Kyneton married Freda Lillian Batten of St Albans in 1940. Freda's parents were Frederick Nicholas Batten and Florence Adelaide nee Odgers of Victoria Crescent, St Albans.

Anyway, down I went on the appointed day and started with the Olympic Tyre and Rubber Company in West Footscray. Later I discovered Olympic was very well known for giving girls a good basis for work in the office environment.

When I first started there, I was washing glasses in the board room, I was cleaning up, I was delivering mail; very basic things that the children leaving school these days wouldn't think of doing. I went into the Buying Department and was typing purchase orders. Then I was given a secretarial position with Mr Lloyd Austin in the Technical Department.

My sister, Lorraine, also worked at Olympic Tyres as my uncle got her a job there as well. My sister Hilary also went to work at Olympic Tyres and then later to Olympic Cables in Tottenham. People were recruited to positions through family and friendship networks. As a result of my early office training, when I was working at ICI, I was often asked if I knew anyone whom I would recommend for a position in ICI-Orica.

I learnt so much when I was at Olympic Tyres. Sir Frank Beaurepaire, Chairman, along with his son Ian, manager, worked at West Footscray, and Derek Beaurepaire was manager at Mephan Street, West Footscray.

I met three girls working at Olympic Tyres when travelling on the train and we became great friends and got engaged at the same time, married at the same time, and had children at the same time. I still keep in touch with Janice, Barbara, and Dympna who worked at Olympic Tyres at that time. Occasionally we still meet and have lunch

## Marriage



Before I got married ... my mother used to sew, and I learnt to sew on her Singer sewing machine on cards. The first one we had was a foot-operated machine but later we got an electric one when we went to the dressmaking classes. Mum probably bought the machine from Mr Moseley who was the local Singer salesman and living in Cleveland Street near my grandparents.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Frederick and Ethel Moseley were from Birmingham and came to St Albans in the 1920s. They raised funds for the Church of England and the Women's Hospital, and supported the Boy Scouts. Fred was an Air Raid Warden during the war. Ethel was a cub-mistress, involved in children's pantomime, sang at social functions, and was secretary of the Women's Hospital Auxiliary.

My grandmother gave us these cards with pictures of a house and animals and things like that. They were drawn on very thin cardboard and we used to sew on those cards to learn to sew a straight line and follow a curve.

Before I got married, I made my wedding dress at the Sunshine Technical School night school classes. Two of the girls from Olympic Tyres told me about these classes. Lorraine and I went to the classes on Monday nights, where I made my wedding dress and had to stand on the table to measure the hem, etc. I made a lot of things in those two years at Sunshine Tech for my trousseau. I did that between 1956 and 1958 and that was a great experience. I think the teacher was from St Albans, but I can't remember her name.

I got married in March 1958 in the Sunshine Presbyterian Church. My Mum wanted me to get married in the St Albans Presbyterian Church where she was married, but I wanted to have the service at Sunshine. However, we did have the wedding reception at the Mechanics Institute Hall in St Albans. My sisters Lorraine and Hilary also married in Sunshine and had their receptions at the Mariana Hall, Sunshine.

I married Brian McKay and we settled in Albion where we raised our three children. Unfortunately, at that time when women got married, they had to leave work. Olympic Tyres let me stay when I married but I had to leave when I got pregnant – you definitely weren't allowed to work when you were pregnant. When I had my children, I had to stay at home because my husband didn't want me to be out working because the man was the provider for the family.

It was only when my youngest one was four years old that a neighbour said "I need somebody to go to ICI and do a tremendous amount of photocopying." A lot of pleading went on and I finally started at one day per week and never looked back.



I worked in secretarial and many other roles at ICI for 31 years. I went from section to section, from department to department. Whenever something new needed doing they would say "Norma will do it." I had a wonderful time, learning, traveling around Australia and training

personnel about internet technology, and going overseas to a conference on one occasion.

Unfortunately, during that period of time I got divorced, but that's all history.

## Postscript

My mother, Gladys Ethel Smith nee Bell, passed away with Acute Myeloid Leukemia very unexpectedly in June 1966, aged 53, just four days after she had visited her daughter Lorraine and granddaughters in South Australia. Mum and Dad would visit Lorraine in the school holidays when Lorraine and her husband, who was in the Air Force, lived in South Australia.

By this stage St Albans was a much bigger place with a population of about 20,000 people. When Mum arrived in the 1930s the population was only 600, so the old village had expanded enormously in 30 years.

When Dad was playing football, one of the teams he played with was the Deer Park Football Club. The Hunter brothers also played in this team and they had a sister Alma. Mum died in 1966 and a few years later Dad married Alma Isabella Hunter. I don't think he knew her from his football days in the 1940s as they were introduced to each other in the late 1960s through the Sunshine Methodist Church by a chap who is now a neighbour at the Lifestyle Village where I now live. It's a small world.

My father, Thomas Smith, passed away in 1985 when he was 71. By this stage the St Albans population was about 45,000 compared to only 200 when Dad arrived in 1920. The small rural village at the end of the railway line had become a dense urban area with more people than some of the neighbouring municipalities.

On reflection, Dad was more verbal than Mum, who was pretty quiet. When my brother-in-law, Jim McKay, got married not long after Mum had passed away, Dad used his car to escort the bride to the church and was MC at the wedding, and had been MC at other such occasions, so he was quite good with words. He always had his brain going and was always learning. Despite this, he didn't talk about any of the early days as far as family history goes, so it now relies on the hearsay memories of my sisters and me to piece together the family recollections.

We were taught to be seen and not heard, but now I think we should have asked more questions.



Norma McKay 2020

Family history researched and written by Norma McKay nee Smith, November 2020.



Marriage of Thomas and Florence Barnes

Marriage of Tom Smith and Gladys Bell 1937 © N McKay



Thomas and Gladys Smith 1940s © Norma McKay





Smith and Barnes families



Watson and Bell families



Marriage of Harold Smith and Estelle Batten



Marriage of Thomas Smith and Alma Hunter

## 1920 – St Albans Tennis Club

The St Albans Tennis Club started in 1920 at Errington Reserve so it has a century of history behind it but almost nothing has been written about it. The first local history book – St Albans The First Hundred Years – has only five lines about the Errington Reserve Tennis Club and a similar amount about the Linton Tennis Club, so the history of tennis in St Albans deserves better recognition.

St Albans in the 1920s was a small village with 75 families and a total population of between 200 and 300 people. It was a time of population growth after WW1 as well as a consolidation of village development around the railway station. Two churches, a public hall, and the Avenue of Honour were to the east of the station, and the school to the west. There were four shops nearby. Mrs Alice Errington had donated a recreation reserve close to the village centre and locals were starting to further develop the open field for recreational purposes. The electric train service came to St Albans in 1921 making it easier for people to get to work in Sunshine and Footscray and this also attracted people working there to consider St Albans as a home. A girls' gymnasium group was formed, and meetings were called for a boys' football team. A children's playground was established in the Pinnacle estate. There was even an attempt to renew the Dramatic Society that had been active some years earlier.<sup>1</sup>

In January 1920 the St Albans Progress Association decided to take over a vacant piece of land and make a public tennis court for the use of the residents. A committee was appointed to make arrangements for carrying out the necessary work. In May 1920:

*A public meeting was held in the local hall ... when it was decided to form a local tennis club. It was decided to make the court in the Recreation Ground, and a committee of nine was appointed to make necessary arrangements for carrying out the work. A subscription list will be opened immediately, and the public are asked to support the movement in the interests of the district. Mr. J. Robinson<sup>2</sup> was appointed secretary.<sup>3</sup>*

Rev Faulkner<sup>4</sup> was elected as President

<sup>1</sup> It is not known if this was successful. The St Albans Little Theatre was formed in the 1950s through Doug Stevens, Dorothy Baulch, Mary Hewitt, and Neville Thurgood. It functioned for a couple of decades.

<sup>2</sup> James Robinson came to St Albans c.1905. He was the station master for about 20 years before retiring in 1926. He died on 17 December 1928 aged 66 years. Refer to entry in *St Albans Settlers from 1905*.

<sup>3</sup> Footscray Independent 29 May 1920 p3

<sup>4</sup> Rev. Edward Henry Faulkner was ordained deacon of the Anglican Church in 1919 and served as curate at the St Albans Anglican Church in the early 1920s. He married Ruth Constance Rayson.

and Mr McKechnie<sup>1</sup> as Vice President. Working bees were arranged for every Saturday. Some of the early players included Gwen McKechnie, Gladys McKechnie, Neil McKechnie, Jean McKechnie, William Barnett, James Robinson, Ida Driscoll, William Hayes, Eileen Phillips, M Stewart, Angus McLean, Elizabeth Sheridan, Howard Blount, James Read, Frances Mottram, Alfred Clarke, Gladys Luxford, Douglas Hill, Edith Read, Charles Menesdorffer,<sup>2</sup> and Eric Perrett,<sup>3</sup> to name a few.

There was no cash to splash around so the fencing around the courts wasn't completed until 1924 and the pavilion started later that year.

In fact, there were two tennis clubs in St Albans in these early days: the Errington Reserve Tennis Club and the Linton Presbyterian Tennis Club. The Errington Reserve club started in 1920 and was based on the recreation reserve on Percy Street; it is still going. The Linton club started in 1926 and was based at the Presbyterian Church in Circus East. It was named after the Linton family<sup>4</sup> who were supporters of the church, but it was a club for the church members rather than the general public. They later opened up the membership to non-parishioners but that was in the 1950s not long before they closed.

In the late 1930s, Mr A J Clarke<sup>5</sup> was the Secretary of our club, Mr Norm Self<sup>6</sup> was the Vice President, and Miss Joyce Clarke<sup>7</sup> was the temporary Secretary.

In the 1940s there were 137 households with 700 people and the Errington Reserve Club, also known as the St Albans Tennis Club, had over 40 members. Committee members included Norman Goodwin Self, William Self, A Clarke, Charles Martin, and Fred Batten. The Sells, Goddards, and Clarkes were related through marriage and they were supporters of the club for many years. In 1941 the club had electric lights placed in the pavilion at its own expense and arranged water connection to the reserve.

By the late 1940s the old club had been operating as a pretty small and exclusive group. It was small and cliquy and on the verge of

collapse. That old tennis club was so cliquy that when Bill Self was transferred through work to Western Australia the club just about folded up. (During the 1950s it was resurrected, and afterwards had about 60 active members.)

By the late 1940s the population of St Albans had increased to 900. Then the migrants who had been recruited to settle in Australia started arriving. There were several new families arriving in St Albans every week and by the mid 1950s the local population was over 5,000. It wasn't long before some of the new arrivals were joining the sporting and recreational clubs and forming new ones. Football, cricket, table tennis, the scouts and girl guides, and other youth activities flourished on Errington Reserve during the 1950s. Soccer started elsewhere as an initiative of the new settlers.



I joined the St Albans Tennis Club in 1950 at age 15. There was a little green wooden building in front of the courts on the corner of Percy Street and Main Road East. I found it very difficult to get a game, so I approached Bill Self, who I

knew was a playing member, and asked him "How do I get a game?" He responded that "You have to be good enough." I said, "I reckon I could beat Charlie Martin." "Charlie Martin wouldn't play you," was his response, so I went to join the club at Albion and then decided to play cricket. I joined the St Albans Cricket Club and was with them for several years, but tennis was my first choice.

In my second year of playing cricket the tennis club collapsed because Bill Self had been transferred in his employment to Western Australia. Obviously, there was nobody in the club with the spare time to take his place, so a special meeting was called to bring about the closure of the tennis club. I got together with Laurie Haynes, Alma Rodgers, Mabel Hale, and John Perrett to attend this meeting and we were successful in saving the club and kept it going. Laurie Haynes was the new President and I took on the position of Secretary-Treasurer and goodness knows what. I was also one of the selectors because nobody else wanted to take on that job. We dropped players if they did not play up to standard, and that caused a bit of trouble. In any club it is difficult in getting a press correspondent to liaise between the newspapers and the club and that was difficult for us as well. But generally speaking, it ran very well.

I really appreciate what Laurie Haynes did because he took the job on when nobody else would. We went from there and progressed. Laurie lived in Victoria Crescent and was not related to the Haynes family in Main Road East

<sup>1</sup> The McKechnie family came to St Albans circa 1910. John Neil McKechnie born in 1868 at Ballarat East and married to Annie Rose McCoy born 1872 at Bendigo.

<sup>2</sup> Son of Alexander Ladislois Menesdorffer and Esther Jane Farmer who came to St Albans in 1900. Refer to chapter in *St Albans Settlers from 1905*.

<sup>3</sup> The Perrett family came to St Albans in the 1920s and ran the general store for three decades. Refer to John Perrett's story in *Stories About St Albans* 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Robert and Jane Linton came to St Albans about 1903. Refer to article in *St Albans Settlers from 1905*.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur James Clarke was the son of Gertrude and Alfred Clarke, after whom the Alfred Clarke Memorial Free Kindergarten was named.

<sup>6</sup> Probably Norman Goodwin Self, the brother of Lewis George Self who established the Self Bros & Goddard supermarket.

<sup>7</sup> Daughter of Gertrude and Alfred Clarke.

near the High School, who was George Haynes whose real name was Stan. George was with the football club and was named coach of the century when they had their big turnout.

The news about the club's renewal spread very quickly. We had the club running very smoothly but with so many players the clubhouse was totally inadequate (about 10 feet by 10 feet). My future wife Rae Fenner and I approached Sunshine councilors Don Joiner and Tom McIntyre about the possibility of getting a new clubroom. Eventually, through sheer persistence, Council saw fit to provide us with a new clubhouse which we still have today. At first, we had just the two courts. After the new clubroom was built an extra two courts were laid down so we ended up with four courts and they were generally full.

One of the biggest problems was that early on the club had no toilets. There were two very old toilets on the reserve, but they were so crude and filthy that no one dared walk in there.<sup>1</sup> People had to go to the railway station or the nursery opposite in Main Road East.

We had at least four teams playing in the district competition. Each team had six players with three men and three women, which enabled us to play singles and mixed doubles. We played three men's sets, three ladies' sets, and three mixed. We played in grades A, B and C depending on the success of individual teams.

My team included Kevin Jarred, John Horman, Mabel Hale, Joan Paterson, and Alma Rodgers. We played against teams from Albion, Deer Park, North Sunshine, Rosamond, Our Lady's and Footscray. Albion was the biggest and strongest club in the district and including juniors they had 17 teams. We won the championship one year, but I don't remember when. St Albans was always quite strong with the men's teams, but the other clubs had stronger women's teams. The competition developed more when Sunshine Park appointed Mervyn Rose as coach. He made a big difference to Sunshine Park and they became very strong opposition.

The competition matches were always on a Saturday afternoon, though if there was a special tournament that might include a Sunday. The tennis season started on the first Saturday in October and you'd have a bit of a break at Christmas and finish in the middle of February. For a while the Dunlop company was supporting the competition by contributing the competition entrance fee and having the winners' trophies on display in their Flinders Street Office.

Between seasons we would play just for fun. I would go down there with Kevin Jarred or John Perrett and you could just about spend all day on the court. Johnny Horman and Laurie

Haynes used to come down.

We also organized a few social activities such as an annual progressive dinner and a car trial. The idea for the progressive dinner came from the Albion club and that was successful because the people who volunteered for the cooking did a good job. The car trial was an outing for a day and might end up with a picnic at Hanging Rock, for example. You mapped out the route to be taken but you had to make stops along the way to solve the clues and collect points. We had a few of those outings. Everyone went in their own cars and we might get ten or twelve cars spaced a few minutes apart. That was always fun. After we had the bigger clubrooms built we also held some regular Euchre nights even though they didn't last long.

We didn't generally do much socializing between clubs, but one day before Christmas we decided to take a couple of beers to the game with Our Lady's, thinking that after the game we would share a glass in celebration. We played the first men's set and the ladies' set and one of their men didn't turn up for his game. We did the right thing and didn't claim a forfeit and continued with the second ladies' second set. The other bloke still hadn't turned up so in the meantime we said why don't we have a beer while we wait for him. One of the men for Our Lady's dobbled us in to the officials saying we were drinking during the game. This didn't go down too well because everyone had agreed and there was no harm done. That turned us off socializing.

One night I was going past the old club when I saw the light was on in the building, so I thought I better go and investigate because no one should have been in there. I walked in and found three guys there who were planning a housebreaking. One of them said to me "Don't worry, Jim. Nobody is going to get hurt." This was a chap who had been before the childrens court on many occasions. He eventually had a shootout with the police at Omeo.

The Linton tennis club closed in the mid 1950s when the court site was needed for an extension to the church buildings. However, a private court was built by the Goddard family in the 1950s, so once again there were two courts in the district. The Goddards' court had lights and they would let people come and use their court. They were always good supporters of tennis in the district. Bernice Self married Alf Goddard and he was secretary of the club for a while. He was a clever man and installed lights to their court. Sometimes when daylight ran out at the Percy Street court, the game might be finished under lights at the Goddard court.

In our early days many working bees were required to bring our clubroom and surrounds on an even par with other clubs. We became a very competitive club holding our own against all comers.

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Dickson and Edward Luxford built toilets on Errington Reserve in 1920.

I remember a number of the original tennis club members from the 1950s. It was the decade when the migrants were starting to come to St Albans and pretty soon we had some joining the club, so we became a mix of the old and new residents as membership increased.

Bill Self was a very tall guy and had something to do with the corner shop on East Esplanade. That was also known as Clarke's corner before it became Hampton's corner. Hampton was related to the Self and Goddard families as he was the nephew of Lewis George Self.<sup>1</sup> Bill was with the club during the early 1950s but got transferred to Western Australia and after that the club changed a lot.

Kevin Jarred was always good at sport. His family came from Horsham to St Albans about 1947 and his father became a local real estate and insurance agent.<sup>2</sup> Kevin was a good footballer, a good bowler, and a good tennis player. He was with the tennis club for some years and was club champion as a teenager in the 1950s. Kevin took over his father's insurance sales and related work but is retired and living in Gisborne these days.

Helena Dawidowicz was the sister of Wishy Dawidowicz who was with the football club. They were of Polish background and lived in Scott Avenue. Helen was the only one in the family with the tennis club, but we knew Wishy to say hello to because of connections with the football team. (My brother Bill used to be the first aid volunteer for the football club.) Wishy's name in Polish is Wiaczeslaw and it was always easier to call him Wishy.

Helen Eisner was a young teenager with the club. She came from Czechoslovakia and was the older daughter of Vlasta and George Eisner who was a real estate agent and had arranged for a lot of bungalows to be built in the district; they had a little office in their back yard in Collins Street.<sup>3</sup> Helen and her younger sister died tragically in the early sixties, as did their mother a few years later.

Helga and Ulrica Fuchs were the two older daughters in their family. Their father was Henry and they were of German background. They lived on the corner of Chelmsford Crescent.

Kuki Zsolnai was the daughter of Karl and Honni Zsolnai. They were also in View Street and I think they were Hungarians who came pre 1950. The mother Honni (Johanna) was also a member of the club. After they left the tennis club they joined the bowling club. After that they sold up and went to Queensland.

Adelaide Trusinskis married another of our

<sup>1</sup> Refer to chapter in *Stories About St Albans* 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the Jarred ancestors came to Australia in 1848. Arnold David Charles Jarred was from Beulah, Victoria; married Jane Margaret in 1954. Arnold died in 1960 at age 56 years. Kevin was their son.

<sup>3</sup> Refer to summary in *Bungalows of St Albans* 2018

club members and that was John Car of Glendenning Street. They moved to Clayton.

There were several members of the Car family who were involved in the club, including Liz, Adolf, Alois and John. I think they were of Slovenian background.

Dorothy Ihlenfeldt would have come in the mid 1950s and they were in Elizabeth Street. She was another player who came from the high school. They were German immigrants; the father was a driver and the mother a machinist. They moved to Glenhuntly during the mid 1960s. Dorothy had a brother Peter who became a public servant.



Mars (Marijan) Tomanek was of Czechoslovakian background. He came to Australia in 1954 with parents Stefan and Anastasia; they were in View Street. Mars became an accountant and was in private practice in the district before moving to Hoppers Crossing. His son went to America

where he met an untimely death. Mars, Bronwyn Goddard, and Maree Dealy would have been of the same era at the club.



George Szwadiak was living in Collins Street. He came across from the High School with Eddie Lacinski. George was a nice fella when he was with us at the club but later had a few run-ins with the police that I hear. His mother Zina was a lovely woman and his father

was Ivan known as John. They were another family from the Ukraine who came before the 1950s. George died quite early, at age 50 years.

Bruno Dapcich was the son of Bruno Dapcich the electrician. They came from Italy. The father had his office in Main West near Pennell Avenue. Mr Dapcich wired up a lot of places in St Albans. There were two sons and at least one daughter, I believe.

Zbigniew Rzeznik was a nice player too. His parents were Julian and Anna in Oberon Avenue. Zbigniew went to Melbourne University and became a quantity surveyor, so he did alright for himself.

George Szakacs was of Hungarian background and left for Australia in 1949. He was a good tennis player. His brother Les also played with the club even though he was less experienced. George and Kevin Jarred were quite competitive and both were club champions for some consecutive years. George went on to play at Kooyong and played internationally during the



1960s and early 1970s, including London and Wimbledon. He was living in London in the early seventies.



Eddie Lacinski<sup>1</sup> was also of Polish background. His family had migrated a bit differently to other families because they came to Australia by plane whereas most other people came by ship. I think they lived in

Ena Street near the railway station. He and Vic Mahorin played tennis at the high school. I hear that Eddie might now be living overseas.

The Shegedyns lived in View Street and were from the Ukraine. There was a son George and a daughter Alexandra. She married George Nosiara of Albion who became a doctor but died young. I think George Shegedyn was at the high school when he started with the club. He was a nice fella and could have been a very good tennis player, but he would get agitated and throw his racquet about when he was upset.



Victor Mahorin was another club member who died fairly young. I think they were either Ukrainian or Russian and came just before the 1950s. He liked soccer and tennis but of course I knew him through the tennis club. He became a solicitor in partnership with George

Legged at one stage with an office on Hampton's corner before branching out on his own. He died about 20 years ago in his fifties which is a fairly young age.



Karl Metha's parents had the butcher shop in the shopping arcade off Main Road East, which was the first arcade in the area. The parents were Bernard and Rosa and I think they were originally from Croatia. Their business was known as "B & R Metha Arcade Butchers". Karl Metha

worked as a painter.

Ron Pozar's real name was Renato but he didn't want anyone calling him Renato, so he was known as Ron. He said the family was from Fiume which was one of the disputed regions between Italy and Slovenia. His parents were living in View Street and Ron later moved to Kealba. He worked as a draftsman. I believe his wife Diane died of some brain disorder in the late 1990s.

<sup>1</sup> <https://greataustralianstory.com.au/story/st-albans-then-and-now>.



We had a couple of Peter Petersons in the club – they were father and son from Biggs Street. Peter Peterson senior was born in Australia but his family was originally from Norway and they came to Australia in 1850s. Peter and his wife Edith had six boys and then a girl, Pat Peterson, who also joined

the club. Peter Peterson junior went to the St Albans High School in the 1960s and became a salesclerk. The other boys include Russell, Steven, and a couple of others who didn't play tennis. The mother, Edith Peterson, also played. The family sold up in the 1980s and went to Mildura. Peter the father died five of six years ago and his wife Edith not long after.



Bernice Goddard was one of the club's early members and was from a very industrious family in Victoria Crescent, who were the Self half of the well-known Self Bros & Goddard super-market family dynasty.<sup>2</sup> They were early arrivals in the district when her father

Lewis Self came to work at the local quarry as the manager in the 1920s. Bernice married Alf Goddard who became the other part of the family business. They raised four children: Heather, Bronwyn, Sandra, and Andrew.



Bronwyn Goddard was the daughter of Bernice and Alf Goddard, so she was one of the second-generation club members. They were the ones who had their own court in Victoria Crescent and allowed our tennis club members to use it. The big disaster in the family was in 1964 when her father Alf

had a heart attack and died while waterskiing in Gippsland. Bronwyn married Alan Frazer who was a public servant and they went to live in Canberra.

June Deeble<sup>3</sup> married George Haynes. Her brother Don Deeble was probably one of the greatest baseball players who ever played in Australia.<sup>4</sup> He was Don Deeble who was a funny

<sup>2</sup> Refer to chapter "Self and Goddard" in *Stories About St Albans*, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Family on the male side traced back to 1794 in Cornwall, England, and came to Australia in 1869. Myrtle and James Deeble were in Sunshine in the 1960s.

<sup>4</sup> John Deeble started playing cricket and baseball as a teenager with clubs in Sunshine. He played for Victoria

bloke. I was with the Sunshine Cricket Club at the time and they had these entertainers at one of their functions. They picked Don to join them on stage for a bit of audience participation and it was the worst thing they could have done. Once he got up they couldn't get him to sit down because he was more entertaining than the entertainers.



Val Halela<sup>1</sup> was a friend of Antionette Semini and they would often come together for their training sessions. Val had migrated with her parents in 1949 but her father died in 1950 when he was crushed in the hydro-electric project at Kiewa. Her mother remarried and Val adopted her stepfather's

surname. Val developed a tumour on the brain and died in 1996.

Antoinette Semini was the daughter of Carmen and Edward Semini in Millawa Avenue; they were of Maltese background. Mr Semini was an unusual migrant when he came to St Albans in 1950, because he brought his first pre-fabricated bungalow with him all the way from Malta. Antoinette married Henry Blum and they moved to Keilor.

Alma Rodgers was one of the people who helped save the club. She was married to Tom Rodgers and they were living in Percy Street. Their son Jeffrey would play a game with us sometimes. He was a young fellow, the same age as Vic Mahorin and the others, and everyone used to call him Buck Rodgers. He was another strong player.



Maree Dealy came from New South Wales in the early fifties. Her parents were Lexie and Charles Thomas Dealy of Walmer Avenue. Mr Dealy was an engineer working with agricultural equipment. He was working with H V McKays and helped establish the Conner-Shea manufacturing company of Sunshine. Maree Dealy was

another of our members who came across from the St Albans High School. She and Eddie Lacinski were playing for the school teams in similar years.

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and Australia in international matches and said to be the best baseball player that this country has ever produced. Refer to background summary notes at <http://swrsc.com.au/don-deeble-winners/>

<sup>1</sup> Valentina (Valya) Jarczak born in Germany 1943 with Polish-Ukrainian heritage; migrated in 1949 under IRO program. Married Tomislav Debevc of St Albans. Val died in October 1996. Tom died in June 2000.

Jan de Vries<sup>2</sup> was playing with the club a bit but I can't remember when he started. He was from the Netherlands and his sister Alie de Vries married Kevin Missen. She's been writing about St Albans history for some time.



Mabel Hale was from one of the older families in St Albans, going back to the 1920s. She was a daughter of Bert and Marguerite Hale from Staffordshire, England, who came to Australia in 1922; they were connected to James Blount of St Albans and joined him here. Howard

Blount was a member of the tennis club when it stated during the 1920s, so that probably was Mabel's introduction. Mabel wasn't one to waste time on court because every Saturday night she went to the harness races. She played well in any combination she was given; she was good. She lived in St Albans Road and her back yard would have been close to Alma Rodger's back yard. They both came to the first meeting and gave all the support we needed. Mabel never married and died in 1977, also very young at 55 years. We have a nice photo of her holding one of our premiership cups with other players from the 1960s.

Joan Patterson was with the club for a while and she was also involved with the St John's Ambulance Brigade which my brother helped establish. Her father was Ernie and her mother was Laurel; they were in Main Road West. Joan was working as a stenographer and ended up as a medical secretary.

John Horman was an apprentice car builder at the Newport workshops. His father was the assistant stationmaster at St Albans and the family lived in the second railway house on the corner of St Albans Road and Main Road East.<sup>3</sup> (The Mulhollands were in the corner house.) Horman was one of the guys I used to practice with along with Kevin Jarred and John Perrett. Horman left Newport and was working for Dunlop and ended up getting married and going to Western Australia as a manager.

In 1968 there was a serious drought in Victoria and we were not allowed to water the courts, so we put on this stuff that was supposed to hold the existing moisture. Our courts had the red, crushed brick surface that you had to moisten. In the end we couldn't play tennis because we weren't allowed to water the courts, so we

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<sup>2</sup> Jan de Vries born July 1913; Tjitske (nee Landstra) born January 1914; Aaltje born January 1936; Jan born December 1937; Albert born January 1944 – Dutch – departing in 1952 under Netherlands Australian Migration Agreement.

<sup>3</sup> Edmond John Horman and Nora Helena nee Gaffney at 41 Main Road East with son John Francis Horman.

started playing table tennis. One bloke who was a carpenter, Garry Lawes, made the table tennis table and that's what we played on. We entered teams in the Sunshine District Table Tennis Association, and we did alright. Our "home ground" was the tennis club.

Garry Lawes was a good carpenter and the inside of his house featured a lot of dressed Oregon. He had a woodwork factory where he was making windows. He must have done alright, because when he started he had an old broken-down Holden van, and then he started driving a top of the range Brougham. He might have gone out of manufacturing as later he was selling real estate. He moved from St Albans to Keilor in later life. I hear he's not very well at present.

Charlie Martin was probably the Treasurer or Secretary when I joined the club. He lived on the corner of Victoria Crescent and East Esplanade. I probably had a bit of cheek in saying I could beat him because I didn't know much about him. I always had a bit of natural ability with tennis and I wanted to play but I couldn't get a game there and that upset me. Martin was a local player and I think he was a nice bloke but the challenge for me was how to get game with the club.

Unfortunately, there was a fire at the club that destroyed our records of office bearers and our honor board of champions, so most of our early history was lost.

Attached are the names of members that I remember from the 1950s' era. My apology to any member who has been overlooked:

- Halina Dawidowicz
- Alma Rogers
- Maree Dealy
- Bev McDonald
- Helen Eisner
- Bernice Goddard
- Edith Peterson
- Honni Zsolnai
- Gloria Petr
- Helga Fuchs
- Ulrica Fuchs
- June Deeble
- Val Halela
- Liz Car
- Susan Goddard
- Pat Peterson
- Kuki Zsolnai
- Mabel Hale
- Barbara Walton
- Muriel Newman
- Antoinette Semini
- Joan Patterson
- Bronwyn Goddard
- Adelaide Trusinskis
- Lesley Self
- Dorothy Ihlenfeldt
- Bruno Dapcich
- Adolf Car
- Kevin Jarred
- Ron Pozar
- Lindsay Johanson
- Eddie Lacinski
- George Szakacs
- Peter Peterson snr
- Peter Peterson jnr
- Karl Zsolnai
- Bill Craig
- Alois Car
- George Szwadiak
- Mars Tomanek
- Les Szakacs
- Kurt Ondrus
- Vic Mahorin
- Jim Craig
- John Car
- George Shegedyn
- David Roberts
- Karl Metha
- Richard Kaplan
- Zbigniew Rzezniak
- Ken Davidson
- Steven Peterson
- Richard Polonzac
- Jan de Vries



Back: Mars Tomanek, Carl Metha, Peter Peterson  
Front: Maree Dealy, Mabel Hale, Bronwyn Goddard

My involvement with the tennis club tapered off during the mid 1970s. I married Rae Fenner of Sunshine and we soon had a young family of two boys so that kept us busy as well as the family businesses. I'd spent twenty-five years playing tennis during a time of enormous change in St Albans, and that was mostly through the arrival of the migrants, the "New Australians" as they were known. From less than 1,000 people in 1950, by 1960 the village had grown to 7,000 and by 1970 it was about 20,000.

Probably the biggest threat to the St Albans Tennis Club occurred in 1994 when the McDonald's fast food company moved to acquire the site for one of their outlets. Sunshine Council supported the proposal and were going to close the tennis courts and relocate the club somewhere else. There was a huge protest about that especially by the St Albans Historical Society who pointed out that all that land had been donated by Mrs Alice Errington for community recreation purposes and not for commercial development. Tom Rigg had a lot to do with that.<sup>1</sup> Thankfully the local protests won the day and the tennis club stayed where it belonged.



Rae and Jimmy Knowles © Jim Knowles

Written by Jim Knowles and Joe Ribarow, 2019.

<sup>1</sup> Tom Rigg and Alie Missen *The Errington Reserve*, St Albans Historical Society, 2011.

## 1922 – Ethel and Frederick Moseley

Ethel Moseley and Frederick William Moseley migrated from Birmingham, England, to Australia in 1921, landing in Queensland on the ocean liner Themistocles.

Ethel was born about 1891, so she was aged 31 when she migrated. Her father was William Evans and her mother was Elizabeth Wooley; they were from Smethwick, England.

The Moseleys settled in their home “The Pines” in Cleveland Street, St Albans. This area west of the King’s farm had been owned by the Opie family of Deer Park and used for grazing. The Stevens’ farm was opposite on the corner of Jamieson Street and Main Road West.

In time this Moseley neighbourhood became known as “Pommie Paddock” because this is where the other English folk such as the Smith, Bedford, and Crosbie families also settled.

**DANCING**

**A Children's Class**  
will be held Every Saturday Afternoon commencing April 26th, in the  
**Mechanics' Hall, St. Albans**  
2.45 till 4 p.m. Admission 6d.  
All children will be expected to bring shoes to change.

**A Class for Adults**  
will be held every Wednesday Night, commencing April 23rd.  
Instruction 7.30 - 8. Dancing, 8 - 11  
**F. W. MOSELEY, M.C.**

In 1924 Ethel and Frederick ran some dancing classes at the Mechanics Hall in East Esplanade, which was always a popular venue catering for children and adults. Fred was the M.C. so Ethel must have been the dance instructor. Adults

must have had a good time because they started with a half-hour lesson and then could dance away the night till 11 pm.

The World Renowned  
**SINGER SEWING MACHINE**  
Sole Agent for Sunshine and District

**F. W. MOSELEY**  
CLEVELAND ST., ST. ALBANS

Any accessories at one day's notice  
Machines adjusted free of charge.  
Oils and needles always in stock

Fred became a salesman for the new Singer Sewing Machine company and advertised his wares as the sole agent for Sunshine and district: “Any accessories at a

day's notice. Machines adjusted free of charge. Oil and needles always in stock.”<sup>1</sup> In 1932 he was selling the Latest Singer Drop Head machine “as new” for only £12.

The Moseleys were members of the Anglican parish and were active in raising funds for St Alban the Martyr Church. They would organize gift sales from their home and ask people for donations. Ethel also put her voice into it and would be a soloist with others such as Winifred Stenson and James Read in a “service of song” at the church.<sup>2</sup>

Ethel was sometimes asked to sing at

social functions as a pleasant interlude. For some of these social entertainments Fred Moseley would amuse the crowd by trying to catch the rooster.

St. Albans Women's Hospital Auxiliary

**RADIO DANCE**  
(3LO Old Time Night)  
**MECHANIC'S HALL, ST. ALBANS**  
**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1933.**  
**EUCHRE**

Novelties : Admission 1/1  
Mrs. J. H. Stevens, Pres.  
Mrs. E. Moseley, Secretary.

In 1933, it was decided to form an auxiliary branch for the Royal Women’s Hospital. Mrs Agnes Stevens was elected president and Ethel Moseley elected as the secretary and the

treasurer of this new group.<sup>3</sup>

A membership fee of one shilling per half year had been decided upon and meetings were to be held on the second Wednesday of each month.<sup>4</sup> They held events such as sales of gifts at members’ homes and afternoon tea was available for 6d. They even held 3LO Radio Dance nights with euchre.<sup>5</sup>

**ST. ALBANS WOMEN'S HOSPITAL AUXILIARY**

**500 TOURNAMENT AND DANCE**

to be held in  
**ST. ALBANS MECHANICS' HALL**  
**SATURDAY, JUNE 16, 1934**  
Cash Prizes for Cards. Entrance Prizes.  
Novelty Dances  
Ern. Roberts' Orchestra  
Mr Patrick, M.C.  
**ADMISSION 1/1.**  
**E. Moseley, Hon. Sec.**

In 1933 a parents’ meeting in connection with the boy scout movement was held and Fred Moseley became Vice-President,<sup>6</sup> and later the President. Ethel Moseley became a leader:

*Last weekend the St. Albans Boy Scouts journeyed to Altona and in spite of the wintry conditions camped there and had an enjoyable time. On Monday (King's Birthday) the cubs trekked to the banks of a nearby creek and there set to work to learn the rudiments of camp cooking under the able leadership of Mrs Moseley.<sup>7</sup>*

Ethel Moseley became a cubs leader and did a lot of work for the scout movement, including as pack leader in the 1930s; many of the boys remembered her with affection.

During the war Fred was a sector leader of

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 20 February 1926 p4

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 10 June 1932 p1

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 12 May 1933 p4

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 5 May 1933 p4

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 3 November 1933 p8

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 9 June 1933 p4

<sup>7</sup> Sunshine Advocate 8 June 1934 p7

A.R.P. and patrolled streets at night to check that lights were not visible.<sup>1</sup> Mary Smith remembered him:

*Mr Moseley was an Air Raid Precautions warden around the district during the war. The ARP wardens took their jobs seriously due to "the imminence of likely air raids". They went round at night checking that the blackout curtains fitted properly and blocking the house lights from showing in case enemy bombers flying overhead could pinpoint their targets. An air raid shelter was built at the primary school and also at the back of the railway houses near the station and there were evening training classes held at the hall. We even had an air raid siren that would be sounded in case of an attack. I know it was sounded during some of the district's training exercises but of course there never were any attacks.<sup>2</sup>*

Life changed for the Moseleys in the early 1950s, as Ethel's health began failing. Ethel and Fred visited England in 1950 where her sister Mrs Currie was still living. Might it have been a final farewell to family in the old country?

After 30 years in St Albans, Ethel and Fred Moseley left in 1951 for Tootgarook. In 1952 Ethel became unwell and suffered several months of ill health before succumbing. Ethel Moseley nee Evans passed away in May 1952 at her home in Tootgarook (West Rosebud); she was 59 years of age.

It is not known what happened to Frederick William Moseley.



Ethel Moseley, children's pantomime c.1930-40s

<sup>1</sup> Air Raid Precautions wardens patrolled blacked-out streets, ensuring that home-owners had shaded lights that might be seen by the enemy. In an emergency, wardens were meant to identify the type of attack, ensure the population had taken cover, and support rescue operations. Ref: Museum of Victoria.

<sup>2</sup> Oral history discussions 2004.

## 1922 – John and Sarah Snaith

John Wilson Snaith was a carpenter by original occupation but settled down as a poultry farmer of Gertrude Street, St Albans, near the railway station. His wife was Sarah Snaith nee Rye who worked in munitions. They were both involved in the Presbyterian Church where they would participate in concert performances for the congregation, and their daughter Nora was a Sunday School leader for a time.

The Snaiths were from England and came to St Albans about June 1922. John Wilson Snaith was born in 1893 in Bolton, Lancashire, England. His father was John Snaith and his mother was Betsy Haslan or Mann from Bolton.

In 1910 John Snaith married at the age of 16 to Sarah Rye at Hartlepool, Durham. Her mother was probably Ethel May Rye and her step-father was probably David Frank Colegate.<sup>3</sup>

John was a carpenter and joiner and Sarah worked in ammunitions. At first they were living in Lincoln Street<sup>4</sup> and later they moved to Gertrude Street near the Erringtons.<sup>5</sup>

In 1925 there was one advertisement for a "J H Snaith" of St Albans who was a carpenter and joiner producing cabinet work.<sup>6</sup> He has not been traced and maybe it was John Wilson Snaith's ad with a printing error.

In that year Snaith joined a group that was trying to devise ways and means to raise funds for "a very deserving case" in the district,<sup>7</sup> so they were a socially conscious couple.

**J. W. SNAITH**  
**CRESCENT POULTRY FARM,**  
**ST. ALBANS**

To meet request for increased orders, I have installed a Petersime **ELECTRIC INCUBATOR**, and can now offer space and quality Chicks at reduced rates.

**SPECIAL FOR SEPTEMBER**

Custom Hatching . . . 10/ per 100  
**White Leghorn Quality**  
 Chicks . . . . £2/10/ per 100  
**Black Australorp Quality**  
 Chicks . . . . £2/15/ per 100

**EGGS FOR HATCHING**

**Black Australorp Eggs** £1 per 100  
**White Leghorn Eggs** . . £1 per 100  
 Eggs Set Every Monday.

**SATISFACTION GUARANTEED**

Advertisement from Sunshine Advocate 1934

<sup>3</sup> Based on the parentage of Sarah's brother, Percy George Rye, of East Esplanade, St Albans.

<sup>4</sup> Lincoln Street was near Grant Street off Main Road West in Opie Estate. It was later re-named.

<sup>5</sup> They had one of the few 'grand' houses built by the Cosmopolitan Land Banking Company in the 1880s. Refer to articles in *St Albans Pioneers*, and *St Albans Settlers from 1905*.

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 4 July 1925 p4

<sup>7</sup> Sunshine Advocate 20 June 1925 p7

The advertising for Snaith's Crescent Poultry farm starts about 1934. Why did Snaith abandon cabinet making and turn to raising chooks? Most probably it was because of the great financial depression, as a similar thing had happened to Raymond Hounslow who had a small furniture factory in Main Road East in the 1920s. In the 1930s people had no money for new housing, so Mr Hounslow found a job in a factory and converted his furniture work shop into a family home.<sup>1</sup> St Albans comprised of 110 households at the time, unemployment would have been high, and it seems the latent demand for new cabinetry was minimal. Sunshine Cabinet Works was the big competitor and no doubt the local market leader at the time.<sup>2</sup>

<b>Crescent Poultry Farm</b>	
<b>SUPER QUALITY WHITE LEGHORNS</b> SPECIALLY NOTED FOR STAMINA AND PRODUCTION	
DAY-OLD CHICKENS (mixed) £3	Owing to the great demand that we have been receiving, it will be necessary to book early to save disappointment.
DAY-OLD PULLETS (sexed) £8	
BREEDING EGGS -- 30/ per 100	
SETTINGS .. .. . 5/	
CUSTOM HATCHING 10/ per 100 eggs	
Multiple Electric Hatched. Sexing Done Weekly by Experts	
<b>J. W. SNAITH</b>	<b>ST. ALBANS</b>

There were a number of poultry farmers in St Albans during the early 1900s – you could buy a poultry farm in St Albans with a 4-room cottage, fruit trees and vegetables for £100.<sup>3</sup> In the 1930s the three biggest farms were those managed by Stephen Lewis in Walter Street, John Snaith in Gertrude Street, and a Mr Wilson in Arthur Street (but little is known about him). Snaith's farm was probably more prominent because he was close to the village centre and advertised regularly through the local papers.

In 1933 John Snaith was the District Commissioner with the scouting movement and called a meeting to reform the St Albans scouts. Few people turned up, but it was decided to form a cub troop. Agnes Stevens was Matron of Honour and Ethel Moseley (q.v.) was appointed as Club Leader. Reverend Nash of the Church of England had had similar ideas in the early 1930s, but these initiatives might have dissipated. The Snaith initiative might have survived a few years as camping trips along rivers and further afield were arranged for groups of scouts and cubs. A big event in 1934 was attending St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne. The Mechanics Institute Hall was always a good venue for celebrations and fund raising. Interest must have diminished

<sup>1</sup> Refer to article by Wendy Taylor nee Hounslow in *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years*.

<sup>2</sup> George Mochrie started his Sunshine Cabinet works in the 1920s and became the largest manufacturer of ice chests and kitchen cabinets in Australia.

<sup>3</sup> Age 30 April 1902 p10

as in 1937 there was another meeting to revive the St Albans scouts and Mr Cuming was now the District Commissioner.<sup>4</sup>

The poultry business must have been going well by the late 1930s, as Snaith was advertising for a teenage boy "about 15 to 18, years, willing and trustworthy for poultry farm".<sup>5</sup>

The 1930s was also a time of new family developments through their daughter. Nora Snaith was born in June 1916 in Bolton, England. She enrolled in St Albans Primary School in June 1922 and left at the end of 1925 for Kingsville State School. In the 1930s she was working in munitions at the explosives factory. Nora married Ronald George Deed, a cousin of the Deed family in Percy Street. Nora and Ron had a child before divorcing in 1938. In 1941 Nora married Robert Semmons, of Daylesford.<sup>6</sup>

One of the big problems in the area was terrible street conditions and John Snaith started lobbying Kellor Council for improvements during the 1930s. Council was reluctant to comply because they didn't want to take responsibility for private street construction; however, they would deliver a load of screenings provided Snaith spread it himself. There had been no private street construction at St. Albans for many years and Council had previously decided to let Snaith take as much stone from Green Gully as he wished, providing he arranged the cartage. At one stage Snaith said he had placed 40 yards of materials on the road, including 16 yards since the previous council meeting, but his vehicle was totally unsuitable for carting.<sup>7</sup> Residents in Biggs Street and in Millawa Avenue on the Pinnacle Estate had similar experiences.



St Albans residents repairing road 1940s © M Smith

In 1948 Snaith was one of the people who helped form the Sunshine and District branch of the Poultry Farmers Protection League. John Snaith was elected Vice President. They were a ginger group for their industry in the region.

In 1949 Snaith attended the inaugural meeting of the St Albans–Sydenham branch of

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 22 January 1937 p4

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 12 May 1939 p8

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 4 July 1941

<sup>7</sup> Sunshine Advocate Thursday 6 April 1939

the Liberal-Country party. Other local notables included Cr. James Eddie, Agnes Stevens, and her husband Cr. James Stevens. Snaith was elected Vice-President. Unfortunately, their later work on this formative group is not reported.

In 1952 the Snaiths decided to leave St Albans. The reason for their departure is not known, but it was probably both community pressure and financial opportunity. Local councils were under more pressure to control noxious trades and their impact within residential areas. The Snaiths would have started receiving complaints about their smelly chook farm from neighbours as the population density increased around the village centre. The financial opportunity was due to the rise in property values as the population started increasing, and the land near the school and the shopping centre, and around the railway station, was becoming desirable.

The Snaiths put their poultry plant and equipment up for sale in 1952, including their house and outbuildings and 12 building sites with frontages to Gertrude, Kate, Adelaide and Albert streets. Access to such a central portfolio must have been a boon for local real estate agents.

In 1954 the Snaiths were back in the business of poultry farming:

*Mr. J. W. Snaith, formerly of Gertrude St., St. Albans wishes to announce that he has purchased the poultry farm of Mr. Mills in Wright St., Sunshine. The business will be conducted on the same lines as formerly and Mr. Snaith will be pleased to render service to old and new clients.<sup>1</sup>*



This business might not have lasted too long as by 1954 John and Sarah were recorded as being storekeepers in Sydney Street, Sunshine. In 1963 they left the region entirely and became dairy farmers at Bamawm Extension.

John Wilson Snaith died on 1 June 1974 at age 81 years. It is not known what happened to Sarah Snaith nee Rye. They had been St Albans residents for more and than 30 years and St Albans poultry farmers for at least 20 years.

Postscript: Sarah Snaith's brother in St Albans was Percy George Rye (q.v.) who died when a sand cave at Green Gully, where he was working, collapsed on him in 1933.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate Friday 9 April 1954

## 1922 – Sassella Brothers

The Sassella brothers of Deer Park and St Albans were Tony, George, and Stephen. They were cattle dealers who came here in 1922.

Giorgio “George” Sassella was born in Lombardia, Italy, in 1845. He married Besia Orsola and they migrated in the 1870s with two children and settled in Lilydale then Whittlesea, with four more children being born during this time.

George Sassella snr established a “grand dairy herd” of 100 cows at Whittlesea and became involved in some real estate dealings in the 1890s. In 1895 he sold his dairy<sup>2</sup> and started raising cattle for the meat trade and established a slaughter house on his property. He bought the General Store and soon became the family butcher of Whittlesea, advertising “Small goods fresh daily. Families waited on for orders.” He won prizes for his cows in agricultural shows. He started buying bullocks from as far away as the Hunter River in NSW. His sons joined him in the business and expanded it dramatically.

The name “Sassella Bros.” was already in use by 1914 and they were George, Tony, and Steve. By 1915 Stephen Sassella went into partnership in Wallan as “Sassella and Reid”.<sup>3</sup> By 1916 the partnership was dissolved, and Tony Sassella took over.<sup>4</sup> In 1919 “Sassella & Co.” sold their Whittlesea butchering business<sup>5</sup> and Tony ended up in Deer Park. George jnr appears to have taken on much of the leadership of the business when it transferred to Melbourne's western suburbs in 1922.

By December 1922 the Sassella brothers bought O'Brien & Co.'s butcher shop in Footscray and rebranded it as “The Big Shop”.



Sassella Bros and The Big Shop, Footscray, 1922

The Sassella brothers who had some known connection with St Albans thus include:

<sup>2</sup> Age 11 March 1895 p2

<sup>3</sup> Kilmore Advertiser 17 July 1915 p2

<sup>4</sup> Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record 25 August 1916 p2

<sup>5</sup> Eltham and Whittlesea Shires Advertiser and Diamond Creek Valley Advocate 10 October 1919 p2



- Anthony “Tony” Francis (Antonio Paolo) Sassella was born in Lilydale in 1890. He became a butcher and grazier by occupation. He enlisted with the AIF for WW1 and volunteered for service in Egypt with the Light Horse Brigade. He married Dorothy May Watts and they were living in Deer Park. His name in local history is linked to the development of Sassella Park in Deer Park, which the St Albans Progress Association supported. Tony Sassella died at Deer Park in July 1934, aged 45 years.
- George James Sassella was born in Lilydale in 1891. He married Doris May Cranwell in 1928 and they were living in Deer Park. He worked as a grazier and butcher. George and his brothers were associated with the sale of stock from St Albans in the 1940s. They owned the Bringenbrong property in NSW which was a source of cattle for their Melbourne operations and sold it in 1938 after Tony died. George Sassella died in 1966 at age 75. Doris nee Cranwell died in 1974 at age 67 years.
- Stephen Peter Sassella was born in 1893 in Whittlesea. He married Charlotte Scales in 1916 and they had two children. He worked as a retail butcher and had six shops in the metropolitan area. He was probably the “S Sassella” who in 1936 had the butcher shop in Hawthorn with meat delivered by motorcycle. Stephen was listed as a St Albans resident in the 1942 electoral roll. Most likely it was he who attended and supported some of the St Albans community events in the late 1930s. He also had 500 acres of renowned bullock fattening country at Monomeith off the South Gippsland Highway. Stephen died in August 1971 at age 76 and was buried at the Memorial Park in Altona North.



Harold Paynting Collection, State Library of Victoria.

The full extent of the Sassellas’ involvement in St Albans is not known. Their presence in the

township appears to have been mostly for business rather than residential purposes; e.g. there are no Sassella children included in the primary school register, so the extended family were probably not living locally. Moreover, the firm of Sassella Bros. was active in Footscray, Newport, Elsternwick, and Brighton, so it’s possible that the brothers moved between these locations. However, they did contribute to several St Albans local causes and events, e.g. in 1924 donating to the village bazaar, in 1938 supporting the revitalized gymkhana held at Errington Reserve, and supporting the primary school picnic in 1940. There were probably more occasions.

**The Big Shop**

**SASSELLA BROS.**

The Shop that immediately gives the Benefit of any drop in the Live Stock Markets to the Public

**Great values in new season's Spring Lamb**

Also Astounding Reductions in Summer Lamb Prices

Come along and see OUR VALUES for yourselves  
OUR QUALITY HIGHEST GRADE as Usual

**160 Nicholson Street**  
and 215 Barkly Street  
**FOOTSCRAY**

Sassella Bros. & The Big Shop, Footscray 1922

They bought about five properties in Deer Park and St Albans during the 1920s and 1930s to supply their expanding retail outlets. Their first connection with St Albans appears to be in 1922 when they bought Thomas Burton’s farm in Taylors Road.<sup>1</sup> Their other properties were on the corner of Furlong and Station roads, the land on the corner of Station Road and Kororoit Creek that was later known as Sassella Park, and there was another block between Jones Creek and Deer Park. They mostly used these properties as holding paddocks for stock.

St Albans was a logical location for holding paddocks for stock as the western region was central for the meat processing industry from the 1850s. The Newmarket sale yards and abattoir were accessible by rail and road, and various meat processing and by-products factories were located at Footscray and along the Maribyrnong River. One of the oft repeated complaints was of drovers bringing flocks and herds into the district along the “long paddock” on their way to the stockyards, and some St Albans farmers earned a bit of money by offering grazing rights. In 1912

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Burton was born in Melton in 1867, married Annie Morrison in 1890. Family were living around Melton, Toolern Vale and St Albans.

there had been some rumours that a regional abattoir might be built at St Albans, but that never happened. That possibility was raised again in 1925 and the regional debate became divided when the Town Planning Commission proposed a site at Derrimut and the stockowners proposed Tullamarine. Tony Sassella was eloquent in his support for Derrimut.<sup>1</sup>

In 1914, Watkins & Co. (another butchering family) had 1000 acres in St Albans/Deer Park that they were using as resting paddocks for their stock brought from as far afield as Wagga Wagga and southern New South Wales and destined for the abattoirs at South Melbourne.<sup>2</sup> The Watkins group were master butchers who had 1,000 acres in St Albans-Deer Park by 1914 with similar business operations to that later adopted by the Sassella Bros.; i.e. in using their fields for resting and fattening purposes in the logistics of stock movement from New South Wales and country Victoria to Melbourne, with destinations in sale yards and abattoirs. This use of farmland was similar to that of Steve "The Colonel" Margrett and Thomas Derham in the early 1900s, the difference being that the latter two were bringing horses from Adelaide and agisting them locally before transporting them to India for the British military.

The Sassella brothers' St Albans connection occurred in 1922 when they paid £9,500 for Burton's farm of 566 acres.<sup>3</sup> Like their predecessors, the Sassellas' supply chain for stock reached interstate:

*There is nothing exhilarating about a five hundred mile journey, whether it is by Clapp's wagons or on the hoof – for a bullock. It is a fact that all beasts, whether cattle or sheep, suffer severely, and when rushed into the abattoirs the quality and value of the flesh is lost in the fatigue or strain of the trip. The firm of Sassella Bros., of Footscray, Newport, Elsternwick, and Brighton, however, allow nothing in the form of sweating, fatigue or strain. Their stock is bred principally at Bringenbrong Station, on the Upper Murray River, and brought to St. Albans, where they are rested till sufficiently prime for the slaughterman. Hence, it is that the beef, and mutton of Sassella Bros, is outstanding in quality at the economic prices that counts with the workers these days.<sup>4</sup>*

In 1932 Sassella Bros. expanded their holdings in Taylors Road by buying the estate of the late Samuel Evans<sup>5</sup>, which was later known as Westlands Pastoral. These 197 acres became

<sup>1</sup> Age 5 June 1926 p16

<sup>2</sup> Chiltern and Howlong Times and Ovens Register 2 October 1914 p4

<sup>3</sup> Footscray Independent 11 November 1922 p3

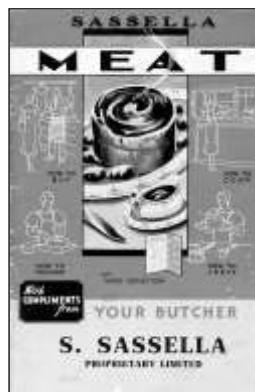
<sup>4</sup> Labour Call 30 March 1933 p9

<sup>5</sup> Samuel James Evans bought 196 acres of the Overnewton Estate in 1905. His wife Ida May Watson died in 1921 and Samuel died unexpectedly in December 1931. Refer to article in *St Albans Settlers from 1905*.

some of their "resting paddocks" that they had located in different regions to rest stock, many of which had hoofed it from the NSW border.

The Taylors Road property was also used for fattening sheep and they were growing some of their own fodder such as Lucerne. In 1935 George Sassella was still associated with the Westlands property where he was grazing sheep and cattle. He won a few first prizes at the Royal Melbourne Show for his Black Poll Oxen: "It was admitted by all butchers and graziers present that they were the best fattened cattle seen at Newmarket for many years."<sup>6</sup> It's interesting to note that the oxen were bred in NSW at George's Bringenbrong property and fattened in St Albans at his Westlands farm.

In 1935 Stephen Sassella addressed the Royal Commission on the Newmarket Saleyards. He spoke of the difficulties of transporting stock to the site and pointed out that the resting site at the abattoir was subject to serious flooding. His own resting paddocks were in Brooklyn and Derrimut.<sup>7</sup>



In 1938 Stephen was selling sheep from the Sassella Bros' St Albans property. The family's business structure was continuing to evolve as in 1938 "Sassella S. Pty Ltd" was formed to take over the butcher business at Richmond, Glenferrie, Brunswick, and city abattoirs carried on under the style of "S. Sassella and

Centenary Butcher." Stephen Sassella was one of the three subscribers.<sup>8</sup>

Often enough, Stephen and George were reported in the press as buying and selling stock at the premium end of the market:

*A truck of 10 prime cows, mostly Hereford and Black Poles, sold at Newmarket yesterday account S. and G. Sassella, St. Albans, selling at £11 17 6, making the good average of £109, which top price and average of the market.<sup>9</sup>*

And in 1940:

*A pen of Hereford and Black Poll cross heifers sold at Newmarket yesterday on behalf of Messrs S and G Sassella, from their St Albans property sold up to £18 ... easily top of the market and highest average for some considerable time. They were a particularly prime lot, and reflect great credit on their fatteners.<sup>10</sup>*

Furthermore, they didn't stint when raising money for Red Cross funds, because they donated

<sup>6</sup> Argus 7 November 1935 p9

<sup>7</sup> Argus 10 August 1935

<sup>8</sup> Argus 4 January 1938

<sup>9</sup> Argus 25 August 1939

<sup>10</sup> Argus 17 May 1940

“a truck of nine prime Hereford bullocks” to be auctioned at Newmarket. They raised £252.<sup>1</sup>

In 1938 there were 40 horses working on the St Albans farm occupied in the growing of fodder. The horses and related equipment were auctioned off in 1938, so perhaps the Sassellas were ending this type of farming.

Given that George was responsible for a string of butcher shops in several suburbs, it's unlikely that he was personally looking after the St Albans property, as that work was delegated to managers. John Ferris was probably the manager at “Westlands” St Albans in the 1930s until he died of an accident in September 1940.<sup>2</sup> Each of the butcher shops would have had a manager, because there were too many for the brothers to manage themselves.

The brothers also had 127 acres on the corner of Furlong and Station roads near Joseph Solomon's properties. These properties were later taken over by the Department of Defence when they established a presence in Deer Park.

In 1948, fourteen years after Tony Sassella had died, George was trying to buy back the Sassella Park:

*Offer to buy municipal reserve Sassella Park desired by former owner. Evidently regretting a decision of years ago, Mr. George Sassella wrote to the Braybrook Council recently and offered to buy back from the Council the area of land known as Sassella Park, Deer Park. In his letter Mr. Sassella stated that it did not appear as though the reserve was being put to much use by the Council.*<sup>3</sup>

It is not known when the Sassella brothers left St Albans but it might have been in the 1950s. The late Marion McAuley who'd lived in Taylors Road remembered that the Westlands farm was eventually taken over by Gilbertsons the butchers; people would take their cows there if they were being sent to the abattoirs.

According to incorporation records, the “Westlands Pastoral Co.” (presumably including the St Albans property) became incorporated under its new name of “Gilbertson's Pastoral Co Pty Ltd” in November 1951. The firm known as Sassella Bros. continued to operate in Newport in 1953 and in Footscray in 1954.

It's a shame that the history of the Sassella family was not written by someone like St Albans' author Sydney Porteous, because it includes the real life drama of family dynasties, bushfires and houses burning down, outbreaks of pleuro-pneumonia amongst the bullocks in Yarragon, poisoning of stock at Greta West, cars being burnt in the middle of the night, and publicity-driven gestures of slaughtering prize-winning bullocks for fund-raising barbecues. Such an epic drama it would be, the Sassellas of St Albans.

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<sup>1</sup> Argus 6 June 1940

<sup>2</sup> Herald 28 September 1940 p24

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 16 July 1948

## 1923 – Elizabeth and Thomas Magee

Mrs. Elizabeth Magee was known in St Albans as the “Lady of the Lolly Shop”, for she ran a small business in Main Road West for a decade, from 1923 to 1932.

Elizabeth Magee nee Byrne was born in April 1882 in Brisbane, Queensland. Her father was Thomas Henry Byrne who was from Nowra, NSW, and his father in turn was Henry Burns from Ireland. Elizabeth's mother was Julia Carroll, from Doneraile, Cork, Ireland. The family was based in Bundaberg and Brisbane during the 1890s.

Thomas Edward Magee was born in April 1880 in Long Gully, Victoria. His father was John Magee who was from Cavan, Ireland. His mother was Euphemia Chesney McClellan who was from Panmure, Kirkcubright, Scotland. The family was based in Muckleford, Victoria, during the 1890s. John Magee died tragically when he was kicked in the head by his horse in 1899.<sup>4</sup>

Elizabeth Byrne married Thomas Edward Magee in August 1909 in Melbourne, Victoria. He was a farmer and a blacksmith.

When did the Magees open up their shop in St Albans? Probably in 1923, because that's when the children were enrolled in the St Albans Primary School.

The Magee family were active in the St Albans community during the 1920s. It appears the family moved to Sydenham before 1910 and then settled in St Albans in 1923. Thomas Edward Magee was listed in the 1909 electoral roll for Sydenham as being a farrier, and in 1924 he was listed as a labourer living at St Albans Road. In 1924 Elizabeth Magee was also listed as living at St Albans Road, Sunshine, which presumably meant the family was living in one of the homes along St Albans Road between Main Road East and Percy Street.

Mr. Thomas Edward Magee was listed in the electoral rolls as farrier, blacksmith, labourer and, lastly, as pensioner. He died in St Albans in January 1924.

The family probably settled in St Albans in 1923, as the children transferred from Keilor primary to St Albans primary in that year. One of the children, Ernest, was originally registered at the St Albans Primary school in 1920, but was transferred later in the year to Sydenham Primary, so the family may have been relocating in the region. His father was listed as a blacksmith at that time.

In 1923 St Albans had 75 households and a population of about 150 to 200 people. Harry Harrison had recently sold the general grocery store in Boundary Road (Main Road West) to John Perrett. Several new houses were being built and two new shops planned. The second of

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<sup>4</sup> Argus 20 November 1899 p6

the original shops in the street belonged to Mrs Magee and was referred to as the "Lolly Shop". From her small weatherboard shop she sold items of haberdashery, tobacco, etc. For light refreshment there were biscuits and cakes, and she would boil the billy for tea and sandwiches.

All three of the Magee children had transferred from Keilor Primary School to the St Albans Primary School in 1923.



Thomas Henry Magee was born in Essendon in June 1910 and started at St Albans Primary School in 1923. He was known as Gubby. In 1925 he enrolled at Beckwith's Educational and Commercial College in central Melbourne which taught commercial business and secretarial courses.

Thomas must have succeeded in his education here because in 1931 he was working as a clerk.

He became involved with St Albans cricket club and held the position of secretary. He was mixing with the big boys in town because other senior committee members included John Perrett, Alex Dickson and Edward Luxford.<sup>1</sup> Thomas married Una Maud Lonergan in October 1939 and they had children. Thomas Henry Magee died in March 1969 at age 58.

Ernest John Magee was born in Alexandra in November 1912 and was first registered at St Albans Primary in 1920 and then re-admitted in 1923. He went to Sunshine Tech in 1924. The Sunshine Technical College was the closest secondary college at the time. He might have been a little bit reckless in his recreational pursuits growing up as he fractured his arm falling off his bike in 1925 and broke his leg while playing football in 1932. He was much better coordinated in 1927 in winning a balloon dance at the Mechanics Institute Hall. Ernest died in November 1956 at age 44.

Ronald McLellan Magee was born in Yarck in 1914 and died in June 1917 at age 3.

Agnes Joy "Peggy" was born in Hastings in March 1916 and was admitted to St Albans Primary in 1923. In 1927 she went to Sunshine Roman Catholic College which was opened in 1925 and in its first year had enrolled 80 pupils. It was the first Catholic college in the area, as the Sacred Heart Catholic School in St Albans did not open until 1954. She died in February 1986 at age 69.

Thomas Magee died on 22 January 1924 at Sunshine, at age 43 years, it being only about one year since they moved to St Albans. Elizabeth now had three children to support on

her own. Local people responded by arranging a concert at the Mechanics Hall with the proceeds being in aid of the family.<sup>2</sup>

Elizabeth continued running her shop but was open to opportunities. In 1927, Dr Ronald Fisher of Sunshine was diversifying his business and would visit St Albans every Tuesday; he could be consulted at Mrs Magee's premises.<sup>3</sup>

In 1928 an English tourist came to the little township to reconnoiter the scene and was not too complimentary in his observation:

*The shops are strung side by side near the station, each of them a confectionery and general store. I called in one to quench my thirst (the nearest public-house is three miles away) and endeavored to glean a little information. The tired-looking, care-worn woman who served me could not, however, provide much news, it appeared that practically all the working members of the population were employed in the near-by town of "Sunshine", three miles away, which accounted for the absence of any industrial or agricultural activity in St Albans itself.<sup>4</sup>*

Elizabeth Magee was still involved in the community and taking part in social events at the Mechanics Institute Hall. In 1929 she was one of the leaders of St Albans ladies who were helping with the Women's Hospital Appeal. Twelve ladies entered in a drive for the sale of cradle bands to assist the Women's Hospital appeal, with a dance that was planned for encouragement and assistance.<sup>5</sup>

In July 1932 Mrs Magee sold her shop to Edna and Margery Self, which was the start of the Self Bros. & Goddard supermarket dynasty.<sup>6</sup> A farewell event for the Magees was given at the Mechanics Institute Hall in August:

*There was a large crowd at the hall on Saturday last, when Mrs. Magee and family were extended a farewell evening as they are leaving the district. A cheque was presented to Mrs Magee by Mr. A. Dickson on behalf of those present and the organising committee, Mr. Dickson, Cr. Calder and Mr. Goddard all spoke in glowing terms of the good service which Mrs. Magee has always rendered to the public generally, as well as individually, and expressed sorrow at the family leaving the district. Mr. Tom Magee responded on behalf of his mother, brother, sister and himself.<sup>7</sup>*

Elizabeth Magee nee Byrne left St Albans with her children and eventually returned to her home state of Queensland. She passed away in Bundaberg in 1967 at the age of 86 years.

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 29 March 1924

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 14 April 1927 p5. Refer to article in People of 1950s St Albans, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Alec White, "St Albans, How the Town Looked to a Visitor in 1928", The Advocate 12 July 1978 p17.

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate Friday 31 May 1929

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 29 July 1932

<sup>7</sup> Sunshine Advocate 12 August 1932

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 18 September 1931

## 1924 – Euphemia and John McRae

John and Euphemia McRae were Sydenham and St Alban residents during the 1920s, before Euphemia and her daughters moved back to live in St Albans in the 1930s.

John Alexander McRae was born in 1864 in Newham, Woodend, and ended up in Sydenham. He was from the well-known McRae family of Tullamarine who came to Australia from Scotland. John's parents were Duncan McRae (1835-1910) and Flora Ann Patterson (1838-1891). Duncan McRae was originally from Kintail, Ross and Cromarty, Scotland. Flora Ann Patterson was from Harris, Inverness, Scotland. Duncan and Flora settled around Woodend.

John McRae had early connections with St Albans because his brother Farquhar McRae established a farm on Taylors Road on the old Overnewton Estate. Their sister was Catherine Gibson (q.v.) who settled in East Esplanade near the public hall and adopted several children.

Euphemia Elizabeth McRae nee Giggins was born 1870 in Kyneton, Victoria. She has true Aussie royalty in her background as her ancestry includes a couple of convicts from the early 1800s. Her parents were David Giggins and Elizabeth Popplewell. Her father's heritage goes back to 1795 in Essex, England. Edward Giggins junior came to Van Diemen's Land on a convict ship in 1836 at age 41 years. He was pardoned in May 1847.

Edward Giggins' son was David Giggins who came to Tasmania in 1841 as a 17-year-old. He married Elizabeth Popplewell in 1851 at Longford, Tasmania; they came to Victoria in 1856 and lived at Kyneton and Woodend. Elizabeth's parents were David Popplewell who came to Tasmania in 1820 and Mary Mason who came in 1828. David Popplewell was a convict from Yorkshire and was pardoned in 1827. David Giggins married Mary Mason in 1831 and had three children.

Elizabeth and David Giggins had 10 children and Euphemia Elizabeth was their sixth, born in 1870. She married John Alexander McRae in 1894. He was from Sydenham but had close connections to St Albans as he had a brother and sister living there in the early 1900s. John and Euphemia McRae raised 5 children:

- Christopher Victor was born about 1893 in Cobar near Woodend and became an engine driver. He enlisted in WW1 but his health was not good enough. He had suffered with rheumatic fever at age 14 and had several attacks over a decade. During training he experienced shortness of breath, his knees would swell up when marching, he had pains in his back during weather changes, and his heart was somewhat dilated. He was discharged.
- John Giggins was born in Lancefield

about 1898. Little is known about him. He married Margaret and they were living in Woodend. By the 1950s they were farmers at Cobar. John died in South Melbourne in 1979 at age 81 years.

- David Duncan was born in 1899 in Lancefield and married Edna May Ellis from Ballarat in 1929. Little is known about them. She died in 1971 and he died in 1981 in Ballarat.
- Flora Euphemia McRae was born in Lancefield in January 1911, and a bit more is known about her as she settled in St Albans. She started at St Albans Primary in 1924 from Cranbourne and left in 1925 for the Sunshine Technical School. She married James Garfield Stevens of St Albans, who was from a well-known farming, real estate and retail business family known as the Stevens Brothers. His parents were Agnes and James Henry Stevens who became long-term community leaders.<sup>1</sup>
- Gladys Elizabeth was born in October 1915 in Woodend, started at St Albans Primary in 1924 from Cranbourne, and left in 1928 for college. She later moved to Sunbury. In 1938 Gladys married Charles Robert O'Neill who was born about 1915. One wonders if he might have been related to the O'Neills who bought her mother's lolly shop business, but there were lots of O'Neills around the district at the time. Gladys passed away in Prahran in 1981.

John Alexander McRae of Sydenham died suddenly in August 1932:

*On Sunday last, Mr. John Alexander McCrae a very old esteemed resident of the St Albans District, collapsed at his home at Sydenham. On the arrival of Dr. Fisher he pronounced life to be extinct. Deceased, who was 68 years of age leaves a widow and 5 children. He was actively associated until recently with the St. Albans school committee. He was buried at Keilor on Tuesday last.<sup>2</sup>*

John Alexander McRae had been a member of the St Albans Progress Association, the treasurer of St Albans Church of England, and a "prominent member of all committees that had for their object the betterment of the district". It was said that he did most of the spade work at the Pinnacle Estate children's playground, which means he must have been active in St Albans during the 1920s.

Euphemia McRae and her two daughters returned to St Albans in 1934 and started their business at their shop in Boundary Road (Main Road West). This was the shop that had been

<sup>1</sup> Refer to chapter in *St Albans Settlers from 1905*, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 12 August 1932

run by Mrs Elizabeth Magee and was then taken over by Marjory and Edna Self in 1932. (The Self sisters moved to the new Self's General Store in East Esplanade in 1934. The store expanded quickly and became known as Self Bros. and Goddard, without any obvious credit to the hard-working Self sisters.)

Mrs McRae appears to have leased her "Lolly Shop" to Henry O'Neill, possibly in 1935. She retained ownership of the property, which became evident when she was asked to cooperate with footpath construction in 1939. The mid 1930s might have become a bit tougher for sweets shop owners, as there was agitation to close these shops on Sundays, as well as organized sports on reserves, to keep the Day of Rest free of trade and pleasure.

Henry O'Neill and his wife Mary Helen were an older couple from Sydenham where they had a poultry farm. Unfortunately, Mary Helen O'Neill died in August 1935 at age 65, and was buried at the Keilor Cemetery. Henry O'Neill stayed in the district and became involved in groups such as the progress association and the cricket club, of which he was vice-president; their annual general meeting was sometimes held at his home.<sup>1</sup>

O'Neill was still running the business in 1942, but by the end of the year he was leaving. A farewell presentation was organized by the St Albans Cricket Club:

*A Presentation Night was held recently in the Mechanics Institute, when the opportunity was taken to farewell one of St Albans most popular residents, Mr. O'Neill, by presenting him with a pipe and wallet of notes. Mr. O'Neill has been in business for a number of years, and will be greatly missed by all. The presentation was made by Cr. Jolly of the Progress Association.<sup>2</sup>*

Euphemia Elizabeth McRae nee Giggins passed away in June 1953 at her residence, Main Road, St Albans.<sup>3</sup> Her remains were buried with her late husband's at the Keilor cemetery.

Euphemia's elder daughter, Flora Euphemia McRae, married James Garfield Stevens in September 1937:

*A very pleasing entertainment was held in the hall on Wednesday evening, the occasion being a presentation to a young local couple who are to be married tomorrow. They are Miss Flora McRae, daughter of Mrs and the late J. McRae, of Sydenham, and Mr Garfield Stevens, son of Cr. and Mrs Stevens of St. Albans. ... The entertainment part of the evening comprised community singing, led by Mr R. Williams, dancing, with Mr Ern Roberts at the piano and Mr R. Young as M.C., while items were rendered by Miss Ada Williams, Edith Larcombe and Mr Doug. Stevens.<sup>4</sup>*

James Garfield Stevens, known as Gar, was born in March 1911 and attended the St Albans Primary School between 1916 and 1924, before going to the Sunshine Technical School. He became the manager at Torin Electrics, which was a branch of Braemar. However, he also assisted his parents with running their Edenhope property in St Albans and was listed in the electoral roll as a farmer.

The Stevens brothers, Garfield, Douglas and John, opened one of the first and most successful timber yards and hardware stores in the district. Les and Murray Stevens, sons of Flora and Garfield Stevens, became involved in establishing new retail business operations in St Albans during the 1970s. One of their real estate offices was on the corner of West Esplanade and Main Road West, near to Flora McRae's old lolly shop.

James Garfield Stevens died in March 1987 at St Albans at age 76.



James Garfield Stevens & Flora Euphemia nee McRae

#### Postscript:



Early family ancestors Farquhar and Margaret McRae migrated to Melbourne, Australia, in 1853. Their son Duncan (1834-1910) was the father of one daughter (Catherine) and eight boys including Farquhar and John Alexander, all of whom would become residents of St Albans during the early 1900s. The McRaes were real pioneers and undoubtedly a farming dynasty

whose history has been neglected despite the breadth of their survival and success in the districts of Keilor, Sydenham and St Albans.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 22 September 1939 p2

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 11 December 1942 p1

<sup>3</sup> Argus 25 June 1953 p14

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 1 October 1937

## 1925 – William and Catherine Glendenning

William and Catherine Glendenning were not residents of St Albans, but they had a business connection. William was a butcher and councilor with the Sunshine Shire, and his links with St Albans were through both of these roles.

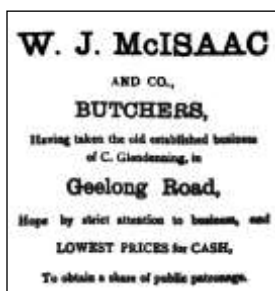
William Edward Glendenning was born in Castlemaine, Victoria, in August 1864. He traces his father George's heritage to 1796 in Parton, Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland; they migrated to Australia circa 1863. His mother Charlotte Cundick's heritage goes back to 1816 in England; they came to Australia in 1861.



Catherine Mclsaac was born in 1857. She traces her father's heritage to 1808 via Donald Mclsaac in Kilcalmonell & Kilberry Argyll, in Scotland. Her father, John Mclsaac, came to Victoria by 1857 and that's when Catherine was born in Collingwood.<sup>1</sup> Her mother was Janet Henderson whose

heritage is from 1235 via Robert Henryson in Scotland with a few baronets along the way.

William Glendenning came to Melbourne in 1880 and started working for the New Zealand Loan and Finance Company. He soon moved to Braybrook to work for his father, who had opened a slaughter yard. William married Catherine Mclsaac in December 1885 at the Footscray Wesleyan Church. They established their home at "Strathearn" in Nicholson Street, Footscray.



There was a common family interest in the butchery business and before long the firm W J Mclsaac and Co. took over the Glendenning butcher shop based in Footscray. W E Glendenning, as he was often referred to in the

press, started his Braybrook butchery connection back in 1886 when he was granted a slaughtering licence.<sup>2</sup>

William and Catherine's children included Charlotte Helen (1886-1974), Alan Duncan Wright (1889-1929), Grace Terrick (1892-1959), and Doris Annie (1896-1970).

By 1901 Glendenning had two properties in Braybrook Shire – in Maribyrnong and South Braybrook. The 1920s was not a good decade

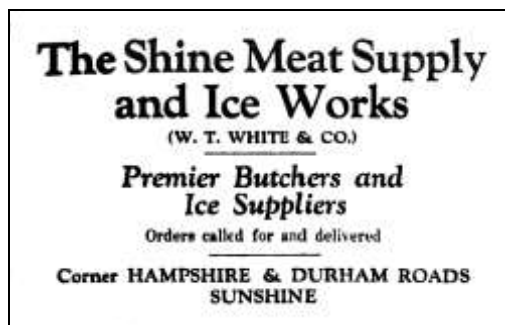
<sup>1</sup> They came to Braybrook in the early 1860s and took up sheep farming along Kororoit Creek. Janet Mclsaac married John Bradbury who was a butcher.

<sup>2</sup> Footscray Independent 9 January p2

for the family. William appears to have survived it by working harder.

Catherine Glendenning nee Mclsaac passed away in November 1923 at age 66 and was buried at the Footscray cemetery.<sup>3</sup>

In 1924 William Glendenning stood for the Western Riding of Braybrook, council, and was elected. Cr Pennell welcomed him, saying "the council required broadminded businessmen to carry on the business of the shire".<sup>4</sup>



In 1926 the business partnership between Glendenning and William White was dissolved and Glendenning took over the business known as The Shine Meat Supply and Ice Works. The following year he commissioned a two-storey brick shop and dwelling in Durham Road. He was again elected to Braybrook Shire Council in 1926 and was generally not challenged when his terms of service expired.



In 1928 because of the high unemployment in Sunshine due to the depression, Glendenning offered to supply free meat to bona fide unemployed workers.<sup>5</sup> A less generous attitude was shown him when he was fined for a technical offence detected at his St Albans store. When a health inspector checked some of the sausages, there was no label indicating that they contained preservatives. The prosecution admitted "that the sausages were high-grade stuff, but there was a

<sup>3</sup> Argus 17 November 1923 p17

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 1 March 1924

<sup>5</sup> Prue McGoldrick When the Whistle Blew: A Social History of the Town of Sunshine 1920-1950, p113.



*technical breach in that no label had been furnished with the purchase.*"<sup>1</sup> He was fined.

In April 1929 Glendenning took on a new venture – to build a new ice factory in Sunshine because demand for ice had been increasing. The new factory was designed to produce up to ten tons daily.<sup>2</sup>

Late in January 1929, William's mother, Charlotte Glendenning nee Cundick, died in her Flemington home at age 83 years.<sup>3</sup> For her it had been a decent span of life – her husband George had died much younger, in 1893, at age 56. This would have been a tough time for the family. William was aged 28 and as the eldest son would have been expected to take on more responsibility as he was now the senior male figure of the family – his youngest siblings were in their teens. More deaths had followed: his sister Elizabeth in 1908 and his brother George in 1916.

The sadness of the loss of his mother in early 1916 was deepened by the loss of his only son, Alan Duncan Glendenning, who died in September 1929 at the age of 40 years.<sup>4</sup> Alan served with the AIF in WW1 from 1915 until 1919, rising to rank of lieutenant. He was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal. He was a master butcher and whilst in London he upgraded his qualifications with courses in Sanitary Science and Certificate for Food and Meat Inspector. When back in Melbourne he started working as a health inspector for the Melbourne City Council with responsibility for monitoring the health conditions of factory workers and enforcing factory health regulations. He had just been elected as a councilor for the City of Mordialloc when he died.<sup>5</sup>

Glendenning's butcher shop in St Albans in the mid 1920s might have been on the corner of West Esplanade and Boundary Road (Main Road West) and the first manager was probably Tom Downes, later George Irons. They tried out a few innovative ways of getting the public's attention. In 1932 customers were invited to guess the weight of a carcass of mutton, and the guesses ranged from 25 to 244 pounds – the correct weight was 110 pounds.<sup>6</sup>

In 1933 they were in trouble for displaying an illuminated bullock's head with dead eyes gazing out the window. Two residents complained and the display was withdrawn with a sarcastic column appearing in the paper targeting over-sensitive shoppers. No doubt the butcher shop received the attention it was seeking.<sup>7</sup>

In 1934 the St Albans butchery business of

Messrs Irons and Glendenning was transferred to a new shop in Main Road West, which was built by John Perrett next to his grocery store.<sup>8</sup>

Little is known about George Irons. He was occasionally noted for donating meat or other items for local fundraising events, selling raffle tickets, and acting as treasurer for some local functions.<sup>9</sup> His last mention in the press was in 1940 regarding the raffle of a prize-winning horse to raise money for a tobacco fund for men who were serving overseas.<sup>10</sup>

In 1935 Glendenning was elected chairman of the Errington Reserve Committee. Apparently, the reserve was being neglected and Braybrook council thought the committee needed reform. Some of it was on the humorous side:

*When Cr Glendenning was elected chairman of the Errington Reserve committee by the Braybrook Shire Council he said he would take the position on one condition, and that was that he could have the chair he occupied formerly. At the meeting of the reserve committee last week, said Cr Glendenning, the shire president had to sit on a banana case, and you can't expect the dignity of the office to be upheld under those conditions.*<sup>11</sup>

Glendenning supported the proposal for a fence to be built around the reserve, because he said it was the only reserve in the Braybrook shire on which the Council had not spent any money. Council approved the proposal.<sup>12</sup> It was also decided to open a public appeal to erect memorial gates to the late Mrs Errington. The Braybrook Shire Council offered to subsidise any money that the committee might raise on a £ for £ basis up to £75.<sup>13</sup>



Errington Reserve gates in Main Road East

In 1937 there was a big community celebration in St Albans because not only was the perimeter fence built, but grand memorial gates were also installed on the reserve to honor the memory of Alice Errington:

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 25 August 1928

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 19 April 1929

<sup>3</sup> Charlotte was born in Surrey, England, and migrated in 1861. The family was in Castlemaine before coming to Footscray about 1880.

<sup>4</sup> Labor Call 26 September 1929 p5

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 21 February 1941

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 2 August 1932 p6

<sup>7</sup> Sunshine Advocate 4 August 1933 p4

<sup>8</sup> Sunshine Advocate 18 June 1934

<sup>9</sup> Sunshine Advocate 18 March 1938 p1

<sup>10</sup> Sporting Globe 17 August 1940 p2

<sup>11</sup> Sunshine Advocate 26 April 1935

<sup>12</sup> Sunshine Advocate 9 April 1936

<sup>13</sup> Sunshine Advocate 26 August 1935

*The western suburbs of Melbourne have been particularly fortunate from endowments by pioneer philanthropic citizens, whose good deeds ward manifold and a source of inspiration to the expanding populace. Footscray had its James Cumming and Rev. J H Goble, Sunshine its Hugh Victor McKay, and St Albans its Mrs Errington. Each has long since passed to the last resting place, but though they are gone the results of their benefactions will live forever.*<sup>1</sup>

The late Mary Smith nee Stein attended the celebrations and remembered them well:

*There was a gymkhana organised at the 1936 celebration and it was quite memorable. I was the Dad part of a Dad and Dave combination so I was driving Mr Self's delivery cart with its two horses. I had never driven a horse and cart before so it was a bit of an experience for us all. We went up Percy Street and around the block along the railway line. We were just turning into the gates and I just about took the new memorial gates off with the wheel of Mr Self's cart.*<sup>2</sup>

(The history of Errington Reserve has been written by Alie Missen and Tom Rigg in 2011 when the district celebrated the centenary of Alice Errington donating the recreation ground.)

William Edward Glendenning started experiencing health problems in his late 60s and in 1938 had a leg amputated below the knee.

He supported the development of St Albans through his position as a Braybrook councillor. In 1940 he supported the principle of allowing house building by stages. Braybrook Council was generally against the idea, as some councilors believed it would set the precedent for substandard housing and slum conditions. One specific request was supported by Glendenning:

*An application to build a home as finance permitted by progressive stages, the whole to be completed in two years, was made to the Braybrook Council by a widow, who desired to erect the structure on 7 acres of land off Boundary Road, St. Albans.*<sup>3</sup>

It was approved with the proviso that the building would be completed within two years.

Glendenning had had a long involvement with St Albans. Apart from his business interests he had been a member of the St Albans Water Trust for 20 years, was Chairman of the Errington Reserve Committee, and supported the St Albans Tennis Club in the establishment of its courts and clubhouse. He was a patron of the tennis clubs and in the 1930s there were twelve teams in the Sunshine District Tennis Association who would compete for the Glendenning Cup.

He became seriously ill and died in February 1941 at the age of 76 years; he was buried at the Footscray cemetery.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 9 April 1937

<sup>2</sup> Mary Smith in *Talking About St Albans*, 2019, p27

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 19 April 1940. The building of small bungalows was a significant phenomenon in the 1950s. Refer to *Bungalows of St Albans*, 2018.

## 1926 – Albert and Rose Tong



Albert William Tong was born in 1900 in Faversham, Kent, England, and migrated to Australia in 1922. He wed Rose Annie Elizabeth Sutton, who was born in 1897 in Sussex, England; she came to Australia in 1924 to become his wife. They held their wedding ceremony in Brunswick and afterwards were living in

Victoria Street. At this stage Albert was working as a stoker. They established their home at "Eggarton Lodge" in Biggs Street, St Albans, about 1926. Albert was working as a wood machinist. They might have moved to Elizabeth Street in the late 1930s, where they lived with his parents and raised their four children.

Albert's parents were Edward Robert Tong and Rose Hannah Barden, who were British. They came to Australia in 1917 and later came to St Albans. They had raised a family of one daughter and six sons, of which Albert was second-eldest.<sup>4</sup> Edward Tong worked as a labourer. At first, they were living independently in Elizabeth Street but later they were living with their son Albert and his family.

Albert and Rose Tong had four children: Teddy, Chrissie, Doris and Margaret, who all went to the St Albans Primary School. When Rose became seriously ill, the children went to stay with their grandmother in Williamstown and continued their education there. Chrissie wrote a rather poignant letter to the local paper:

*My name is Christine Tong. My home is at St Albans, but as my Mum is sick I am living with my Grandma at Williamstown, and have to go to school here. I am in the high 3rd grade. When I am at home I often watch the girls at the High School play basketball and hockey, right in front of my Gran's house.*<sup>5</sup>

The children came back to St Albans in early 1936 and continued their education at the nearby primary school.

Rose Annie Tong nee Sutton died in November 1936 at age 39, and was buried at Footscray. It must have been hard on the family, especially as the children were quite young.

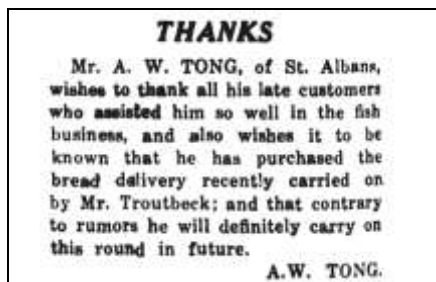
Albert joined the Progress Association soon after arrival in the district. One of his first voluntary tasks was digging post holes for the children's playground on Coleman's estate. In 1933 he was elected to the positions of secretary and treasurer, so he became a central committee

<sup>4</sup> The children were Edward George (1898), Albert William (1900), Alfred Matthew (1902), Victor Gordon (1906), Lewis Hector (1908), Eva Pearl (1911), and Stuart Sydney (1914).

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 30 August 1935

member.<sup>1</sup> He worked with other local leaders such as Fred Stenson, John Perrett, James Stevens and Lewis Self in promoting municipal interests of the steadily-growing village of 500 people, such as bringing electricity, sewerage, water and other amenities to the village and its slowly expanding neighbourhood.

Rose Tong also became involved in local community activities. She held the positions of secretary and treasurer of the Mothers' Club, and like her husband helped in many worthy causes. They were supporters of the Presbyterian Church and Albert was also a supporter of the Salvation Army.



What was Albert Tong's business? He first worked as a wood machinist and when his children started school his occupation was listed as storekeeper, and later bread carter. He had a fish business in 1933 before buying Troutbeck's bread delivery business.<sup>2</sup> That's probably when the iconic photo of Albert and Rose with their bread cart was taken. His delivery route included St Albans, Albion and Deer Park. This might have lasted for less than a decade, as from the 1940s to the 1960s Tong was employed as a munitions worker.



Albert and Rose Tong with bread cart, early 1930s

It's the family's association with bread deliveries that has lingered in local history. Many people remember the iconic horse-driven "Procera Wholemeal" baker's cart. It was indeed a family affair sometimes as both parents and sometimes a child made their way across unmade roads.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 15 September 1933 p5

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 28 July 1933. In 1934 Hutton William Robert Troutbeck was in Theodore Street as a poultry farmer. Did not stay long in St Albans.

Albert was still delivering bread in the late 1930s, as his bread van was involved in an accident "*and bread from Mr Tong's van was strewn about the road*".<sup>3</sup>

Rose Annie Tong became ill within a few years of arriving in St Albans and for a couple of years she had to be under constant medical attention. She passed away in Broadmeadows in November 1936 at the young age of 39 years. The funeral took place at Footscray and was well attended by many people from St Albans and other towns:

*The funeral took place on Monday to the Footscray cemetery. The Rev. G. Brown Calderwood, of the St. Albans Church of England, conducted the burial service. ... The late Mrs Tong was most popular among residents of St. Albans. She held the position of secretary and treasurer of the Mothers' Club, and like her husband helped in any worthy object. Testimony of the high esteem in which she was held was evidenced by the numerous floral tributes ... As a final mark of respect the four children, Teddy, Chrissie, Doris and Margaret Tong, placed a wreath at the casket before the funeral cortege left Mr Tong's home. The children of the St Albans school ... lined the main street while the cortege passed through.*<sup>4</sup>

Albert Tong was appointed as correspondent for the Advocate in the 1930s, and had a weekly column that was titled "St Albans News". He received an occasional byline as "our correspondent" or more rarely as "AWT" but he seldom had his name mentioned. He was performing similar duties in the 1950s.<sup>5</sup> People with items of news concerning activities in St Albans were asked to contact him to arrange publicity. It's likely that his daughter Doris Tong later took over this reporting role for a while. Sometimes his duties had unanticipated coincidences:

*About midnight on Saturday a shocking accident occurred on the Albion – St Albans Road when a large truck crashed into and smashed a jinker, killing instantly one occupant, Bernard Hall, aged 15 of Sunshine. The horse was also killed, the jinker smashed to pieces whilst the truck finished up on railway property after crashing through the fence. While your correspondent was checking on the above, two intruders entered his property, evidently with the approach of Christmas in mind and stole some fowls from a neighbour Mr. Rafter. The intruders upon being challenged by Mrs. D. Baum quickly made off into the night, so take the warning everyone and look after your feathered friends, at least until Christmas.*<sup>6</sup>

Albert William Tong celebrated his 80th birthday in 1980 and was featured in the local paper, The Advocate, for which he had acted as

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 4 February 1938

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 6 November 1936

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 1 October 1954 p10. Joyce Clarke was correspondent in the 1940s.

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 3 December 1954 p3

local correspondent for many years:

*80 years of memories. Albert Tong, a popular western suburbs identity, celebrated his 80th birthday recently in Sunshine. Albert is being cared for by his daughter, Doris Baum, in the house which was home to himself, his parents, and his four children in Elizabeth St. since 1927. In his younger days, Albert delivered bread to St Albans, Albion and Deer Park residents. He belonged to the St Albans Progress Association and was a correspondent for the Keilor Council to the Advocate when the Carlton family owned the newspaper. Albert now enjoys the companionship of his family and friends and is very proud of his grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.<sup>1</sup>*



Albert Tong at 80th birthday celebration in 1980

Albert Tong's father, Edward Robert Tong, died in St Albans in September 1953:

*The death occurred last Saturday at the age of 77 years, of Mr. Tong, senior, of Elizabeth Street, St. Albans. Although the late Mr. Tong had been ill for only a short period he had had to use crutches for the past ten years. He came to Australia from England twenty-six years ago and had resided with his son Albert and family. He leaves a widow, four sons, one daughter, ten grandchildren and six great grandchildren.<sup>2</sup>*

Albert Tong's mother, Rose Hannah nee Barden, died in 1966 at Armadale, aged 88.

Albert and Rose Tong had raised four children: Teddy, Chrissie, Doris and Margaret, who all went to the St Albans Primary School.

Albert Edward "Teddy" Tong was born in November 1925, started at St Albans Primary in 1930 and finished in 1939, after which he worked in a factory. His father was listed as a storekeeper. Albert Edward may have lived with his parents a while and worked as an assistant. He enlisted in 1939 at Royal Park for the Army Citizen Military Forces but the records are not available on the internet. In 1949 he married Winifred Alice Kuhnell,<sup>3</sup> who was born in 1925 in

Footscray. From the mid 1950s to the mid 1960s they were living at Elizabeth Street, St Albans, next door to his parents on the Albert Crescent corner. In 1968 Alice and Albert Edward were in Syleham Street, St Albans; he was now working as a storeman. Alice died in St Albans in 1975. In 1977 Albert was still based in Syleham Crescent, with Brian Edward and Gary Robert, who might have been his sons.

Christine "Chrissie" Rose Tong was born in April 1927, started at St Albans Primary in 1932, finished in 1939, and left for Sunshine Technical School where she passed the Intermediate level in 1942. She was involved in a number of youth activities in the district, including being secretary and treasurer of the Girls' Club. She married Vinnie Carr of Main Road, St Albans, in 1948. Vincent William Charles Carr had served in the AIF during the war and they married after he came back. Vinnie's parents were Henrietta and Setton Carr, who was the boot maker in St Albans.

Doris Ethel Tong was born in December 1928, started at St Albans Primary in 1933 and left in 1941 for Sunshine Technical School. She married Lindsay Gordon Baum in 1952, who was from Sunshine and worked as a machinist. Lindsay's brother Milton married Doris's sister Margaret.

Lindsay Gordon Baum died at St Albans in May 1992, aged 61 years, and was buried at Altona. Doris later married Harry Majewski, and they continued to live in the original family home in Elizabeth Street. She died in August 2016 at age 87 years. The funeral of Doris Ethel Baum-Majewski nee Tong was held at Altona Memorial Park. Her children include Heather, Linda, Sharon, Vicki, Ian and Andrew.<sup>4</sup>

Margaret Tong was born in March 1935, started at St Albans Primary in 1939 and left in 1947 for the Sunshine Technical School. She became engaged to Milton Kenneth Baum in 1952. He was from East Esplanade, St Albans, but his parents were from Manangatang.<sup>5</sup> Milton and Margaret Baum raised six children – five sons (Colin, Alan, Randall, Greg, and Richard), and a daughter (Deborah). During the 1960s they were living in Wildwood, Hepburn Springs. Milton and Margaret divorced and she later remarried to a Mr Solomon.

Albert William Tong died in January 1984 at age 84 and was buried at Footscray with his late wife, Rose Annie Elizabeth nee Sutton.

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and married Mary Ellen Cowperthwaite who was from Lancashire, England. Most of their children were born in Malmsbury.

<sup>4</sup> Published in Herald Sun 12 August 2016

<sup>5</sup> Family origins go back to 1847 in Prussia. Johann Friederich Herrmann Baum came to South Australia pre 1868 and married Johanne Pauline Dier who was also from Prussia.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 12 March 1980

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 2 October 1953

<sup>3</sup> Her father's family is traced to Johann August Kühnell in 1770. Teodor Franz Kuhnell came to Victoria pre 1870

## 1926 – Walmer and Helen Coleman

Walmer Ewart Coleman was a real estate agent who was based in Malvern and was associated with the Pinnacle Park Estate of St Albans for a couple of decades, from the mid 1920s to the mid 1940s. He combined his occupation of builder with that of land, real estate and sub-division agent. He is quoted in the history of Malvern as advertising bungalow housing with the message “*Every lot means a home and a home means a lot*”.<sup>1</sup> Another message was that “*Two pence per day over 10 years will buy a half-acre lot*”.<sup>2</sup>

He probably tried to emphasize these messages in St Albans, because he came to the district as a property developer in tough times between the wars. Though there was some optimism in the early 1920s, the financial downturn of the late 1920s through to the 1930s meant that people didn't have the money to buy houses.

Walmer Coleman's parents were Alfred Israel Coleman (1861-1943) and Florence Hannah Doolan (1870-1944). The Coleman family tree goes back to 1750 via John Coleman of Walmer, Kent, England.<sup>3</sup> The family came to South Australia pre 1882 and Alfred married Florence in Adelaide in 1882. They moved to Melbourne by 1883 where their first child was born.

Walmer Ewart Coleman was born in Melbourne in June 1886 – he was possibly named after the old hometown as a mark of nostalgia, because he appears to be the first Walmer in the family. He trained as a builder-carpenter, became a member of the Carpenters and Joiners Union, and established his own company (based in Queen Street, Melbourne) as a property developer and building contractor.

The first known reference to Coleman in the *Sunshine Advocate* was in September 1926:

*St. Albans. New Tiled-roof Bungalow, 5 rooms, bath room, washhouse, close station, 25/-. Apply. Walmer E. Coleman & Co., 90 Queen street, Melbourne.*<sup>4</sup>

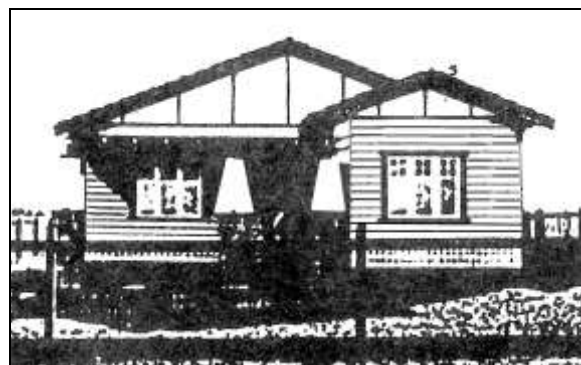


Coleman bungalow on Pinnacle Estate 1920s

Walmer Coleman's property development in St Albans was synonymous with the Pinnacle Estate. It was the land between Walmer and McArthur avenues, from Biggs Street to Main Road East. Local history recall is uncertain about the scope of operations. One reference says that the estate included 578 house lots and soon had 40 houses,<sup>5</sup> another that Coleman had 50 blocks and built 27 houses.<sup>6</sup> The ambition of building 578 houses was a serious challenge as at that stage St Albans had only 80 households.

The late Mary Smith remembered Pinnacle Estate very well, because her family came to the area during its original development and they lived on the Estate in a house in Walmer Street that was built by Walmer Coleman:

*The Pinnacle Estate was planned as a nice modern settlement. Nettlefolds were bringing workers out from England to work for them in their Albion factory. A lot of these workers bought houses in the Pinnacle Estate on a small deposit and monthly repayments. They had a few years of pleasure, and then the depression came. They lost their jobs and could not find other ones. They had to walk out of their houses because they could not keep up the payments.*<sup>7</sup>



Coleman bungalow on Pinnacle Estate 1920s

In 1926 Coleman sold three acres of the estate to council for a recreation reserve that was often referred to as a children's playground:

*Cr. Stenson, reminded the council that, thanks to the generosity of Mr. Coleman, the owner of the Pinnacle Estate, St Albans had a fine recreation reserve, and he wanted to know when the council intended to fence it. The residents were anxious, he explained, to make rockeries, plant shrubs, lay out gardens, etc, but owing to the cattle nuisance it was not considered advisable to commence until the fence was erected.*<sup>8</sup>

Coleman donated a tram dummy that was to be used as the basis for the playground, and outlined with the aid of drawings supplied by the Melbourne City Council, what he considered

<sup>1</sup> <http://images.heritage.vic.gov.au/attachment/70743>

<sup>2</sup> *Argus* 21 December 1927

<sup>3</sup> Walmer is located on the coast in the district of Dover, Kent, in England. Julius Caesar reputedly landed there on the beach about 55 BC. Wikipedia.

<sup>4</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 18 September 1926 p4

<sup>5</sup> *St Albans The First Hundred Years* p7

<sup>6</sup> Mary Smith in *St Albans Oral History from The Tin Shed Archives*, 2004, p19.

<sup>7</sup> *St Albans Oral History from the Tin Shed Archives*, 2004, p48.

<sup>8</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 10 July 1926

would be good ideas for the children's play area. Members of the St Albans Progress Association did the labour of digging holes and installing the fence that council provided. It is not known how long the reserve functioned as a children's playground. By the 1940s there were complaints about lambs wandering on the grounds and some residents wanted to use it for grazing purposes. In 1953 the St Albans soccer club received permission to use the reserve as their soccer ground for a nominal rent.

In 1926 Coleman applied to Keilor Council for 360 tree guards to be erected on the roads throughout his estate, and asked that the council contribute 5/6 per guard towards the cost. He proposed planting 360 flowering gums on the estate where there were no made roads and no connected amenities. It was an ambitious gesture. Mary Smith remembered the era:

*That's when most of the people who had been brought out by Nettlefolds were buying those homes, and they had no roads, no water, no lights, and no drainage. But they did have tree guards with young trees in them. Of course we only had tank water and the trees died and the cows knocked down the tree guards. In the depression we had a wonderful time taking all the street signs for wood, and the surveyor's pegs for wood, and the tree guards for wood to go with the cow manure for the copper.<sup>1</sup>*

The 1930s was not a good time for real estate, and especially not on the Keilor Plains. People remember home buyers walking out of properties because they couldn't pay the mortgage. Some houses stayed unoccupied for many years. A few were sold and moved to other locations, e.g. Lewis Self bought one of the houses and had it shifted to East Esplanade where he established a grocery store. Neighbours recall some empty Coleman houses being used as shelters by swagmen and stock.

Walmer Coleman was still active as a builder in the 1940s, but in a different setting. His contribution to the war effort was that he had enrolled in the Civil Construction Corps in 1943 and was released a year later to work with master builder Ernest Alfred Watts of Melbourne.<sup>2</sup>

The problems of the Pinnacle Estate were again highlighted in the mid 1940s when Coleman returned to normal civilian life and his newly-proposed sale of land on the old estate was blocked by the Federal Treasury, supposedly because the land titles were not properly consolidated. St Albans had grown in the meantime. The population was now about 850 people in 130 households. The pressure on the housing market was starting to increase as returning

servicemen and women were looking to establish their own home – even rental accommodation was inadequate and scarce. Local councils and state government were considering the idea of bungalows as housing options.

In 1944 Mr Tom Toby, the Secretary of the St Albans Progress Association, wrote to the Federal Treasurer, in reference to the refusal of the Minister to further reconsider the proposed sale of land on Pinnacle Estate.<sup>3</sup>

A conference was then arranged with the private secretary of the Hon. J. J. Dedman, in connection with the sale of land in the Pinnacle Estate. It was emphasized this area was part of the land proposed for home building and the present ban imposed by the Federal Treasury's Department was detrimental to the whole scheme.<sup>4</sup>

Keilor Council was in favour of the sales and even approached local MPs for support. There was talk of 150 houses to be built. The sales were eventually allowed to go ahead.

In 1946 Coleman's land in St Albans was being spruiked for sale by other vendors:

*Pinnacle Estate: 450 Large Home Sites. 4 minutes station. High undulating, well-drained land. Water and E.L. on estate. A few homes already erected. Government approved prices, £20 to £65. A number of blocks ready for home building specially reserved for service and ex-service personnel who guarantee to build within 12 months. Selling very rapidly.<sup>5</sup>*

In 1949, Keilor Shire Council approved more tree guards for tree planting in the estate, so attempts at beautification were on again.<sup>6</sup> Even the roads were under construction and Jack Wheelahan of Sunshine was awarded the tender to pave some of the streets in Pinnacle Estate, including Station, Oberon and Millawa avenues.<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, the late 1940s were not fantastic for local real estate either, as the outstanding war austerity measures meant that neither money nor building materials were readily available for home construction. Real estate developments in St Albans stayed in the doldrums until the European WW2 refugees and displaced persons, the New-Australians, started arriving in the 1950s because the land was cheap and they were allowed to build a small and affordable bungalow as their home.

Walmer Ewart Coleman died in July 1957 and his remains were buried at the Springvale botanical cemetery.

Helen Thrift Coleman nee Junor died in September 1981 and was buried at Springvale botanical cemetery.

<sup>1</sup> Oral history discussions 2004.

<sup>2</sup> The Watts group had numerous government orders to build defence facilities in Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania. They did major work at Fishermens Bend for the Department of Aircraft Production.

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 14 July 1944

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 15 September 1944

<sup>5</sup> Argus 6 May 1946

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 6 April 1949

<sup>7</sup> Sunshine Advocate 7 October 1949 p1

## 1930 – Norman and Lillian Honey

Norman McLeod Honey and Lillian May nee Hartshorne were early residents of St Albans on the old Opie Estate on Main Road West, across towards Station Road.

Lillian was born in Williamstown in 1887. Her parents were William Hartshorne and Ellen Ward. William was a native of London and came to Victoria about 1856. He was a resident of Williamstown for 60 years and was an employee of the local council for many years.<sup>1</sup>

Norman McLeod Honey was born in Daylesford in 1883. He traces his father's heritage to John Honey born about 1767 in St Alphege, London, England. The family came to South Australia about 1840 and Norman's father, Samuel John Honey, moved to Victoria by 1865. He married twice and fathered about 13 children.

Norman moved to Footscray by 1909 and married Lillian May Hartshorne in 1911. The family moved St Albans before the 1930s.

Norman McLeod Honey was at Gladstone Street, St Albans, in the 1930s and was working as a fitter. Apparently he was a leading authority on greyhound coursing.<sup>2</sup> Lillian May Honey's occupation in 1930s was listed as home duties but she was also running a chook farm, and in the 1940s she was asking Sunshine Council for assistance in getting the water connected.<sup>3</sup>

Norman and Lillian Honey raised two sons: John William Edward (born in 1912) and Norman McLeod (born in 1914).

Their first son, John William Edward Honey, known as Jack, was born in Williamstown in 1912. He became a blacksmith and settled at 24 Arthur Street, opposite the water tower on the corner of William and Arthur streets. He worked for the railways at the Spotswood workshop in the blacksmith's shop. He became a foreman and was very well respected by his colleagues. His team installed rail tracks and signals. Jack married Winifred Jean Stenson, the daughter of Frederick and Eva Stenson, who were early pioneers of the district living in the grand Keighlo residence.<sup>4</sup> She was a good singer and a long-term supporter of the local St Alban the Martyr Anglican church.

Jack Honey nominated for Keilor Council in 1960 against Robert Huart. In 1963 he was one of the Maribyrnong Ward councilors with James Eddie<sup>5</sup> and Robert Huart.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Williamstown Chronicle 3 April 1926 p2

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 31 March 1933

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 8 September 1944

<sup>4</sup> Refer to chapter in *St Albans Pioneers: Settlers and Speculators from the 1860s*, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> James and Marjorie Eddie came to St Albans in 1941. Refer to story in *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years 1956-2016*.

<sup>6</sup> Was a public servant living in Fox Street. Stood for senate in 1961 - not elected. Little known about him.

Jack and Winifred Honey raised three children: Fred, John, and Gwen:

- Frederick Albert Honey was born in August 1944. He went to St Albans Primary in 1951 and St Albans High in 1957. Fred started playing football with the St Albans Police Youth Club team at Errington Reserve, and played for the St Albans Football Club in the 1960s. He was in the premiership team in 1966 when they won the Footscray District League cup. He became a bank manager and was living in Thorndon Drive, St Albans. He worked for many years as a branch manager in regional locations. He and his family retired to Kalimna, which is near Lakes Entrance.
- John Honey was born in August 1946 enrolled in St Albans Primary School in 1952 and later went to St Albans High School. He ended up working for the RSPCA in the office and for the Lort Smith Animal Shelter. When he retired he went to live by the sea in Port Fairy.
- Gwen Honey was born in 1950, went to St Albans Primary and St Albans High School. She married Zenny Kratsis of St Albans in 1973 and they had two children. She has contributed to the history of St Albans through sharing oral history and family photographs.<sup>7</sup> (Gwen's aunt Emily Hall (q.v.) helped document the early life of the district through the 1986 St Albans railway centenary book.<sup>8</sup>)

John William Edward Honey passed away of a heart attack in his sleep in 1991. Winifred Honey nee Stenson passed away about 1997.

Norman and Lillian's second son, Norman McLeod Honey jnr, was born in Williamstown in January 1914. He was known as Norm and had some flare in playing football. In 1933 he was touted as the outstanding amateur champion:

*Norman Honey, the winner of the trophy for the best and fairest player for two years in succession in the Metropolitan Amateur League and who has been sought by many Victorian League teams, has agreed to play with Sunshine this season. He is recognised as one of the finest rovers in the game. He is 18 years, and is having one more season in junior football before accepting an offer from one of the leading league clubs in Victoria.*<sup>9</sup>

Norm Honey played with Footscray in the AFL at age 19 during the 1933-34 season, playing ten games and scoring four goals. That might have been his last full season with the club, as in

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<sup>7</sup> Gwen's story is included in *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years 1956-2016*.

<sup>8</sup> St Albans Railway Centenary Committee, *St Albans The First Hundred Years 1887-1987*, 1986.

<sup>9</sup> Sunshine Advocate 31 March 1933



1935 he had a serious accident on his motorbike while trying to avoid some young cyclists. He sustained concussion and a fractured skull,<sup>1</sup> which would have slowed his career somewhat.

Norm was also adept at playing cricket and that seems to have become his sport of choice after his motorbike accident. In 1938 he was with the ICI (Deer Park) Cricket Club when they were premiers of the A Grade of the Footscray District Cricket Association. Norm had the commendable metric of 5 for 39.<sup>2</sup> More commendably, he was awarded the medal for the best and fairest player in the league. He was also a Committee member that year.<sup>3</sup>

Norm Honey married Flora Janet McRae-Christiansen.<sup>4</sup> She was born in Sunshine in April 1913 to Agnes and Dugald McRae. In 1952 Norm and Flora were at 59 Williamstown Road, West Footscray, next door to his parents. Norm was a fitter and Flora was home duties. Her sister, Isabelle Davidson nee McRae, later recalled that:

*My sister married Norman Honey. ... Mum and Dad Honey were up in Buchanan Street, which is off Main Road West towards Station Road. The whole family were there: mum, dad, and the two boys Jack and Norman. Any Honeys in St Albans would be related, I guess. The old people used to have a poultry farm. ... The old Honeys eventually moved to Williamstown Road in West Footscray, next door to their son and my sister who had shifted there.<sup>5</sup>*

Norman McLeod Honey jnr died in June 1994 at age 80 years, in Albury, New South Wales. Flora Janet Honey nee McRae died in August 1999 at age 86 years, also in Albury.

Regarding the parents, Lillian May Honey nee Hartshorne died in July 1960, at age 71 years, and was buried at Footscray. Norman McLeod Honey snr died in October 1968, aged 85 years, and was buried at Footscray.



Family headstone at Footscray Cemetery

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 22 November 1945

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 8 April 1938.

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 25 March 1938 p4

<sup>4</sup> Flora McRae married Harry William Christiansen in 1935. He died in 1938.

<sup>5</sup> Isabelle Davidson has written about her family's background in *Stories About St Albans: Celebrating 125 Years*, revised edition 2017, p92.

## 1930 – Annie Collingwood

Annie Collingwood was a homeless woman who survived by her wits on the roadsides of the district. At one stage she had been living in Duke Street, Braybrook, but was a St Albans 'resident' in that she was listed in the electoral roll as being a hawkers of St Albans during the 1940s, so she must have had some affinity to the neighbourhood. Because she was homeless, she gave her mailing address as care of the post office wherever she was temporarily located.

Annie Collingwood nee Holmes was born in 1865 and was from Ireland though she has also been described as being English. She had worked as a servant. Before coming to Australia, she was living in England. It is not known when she migrated, though she was in Melbourne in the late 1890s. She was described as being 5 ft 6½ tall, of stout build, with dark brown eyes and grey hair. She married Mr Collingwood but where and when this occurred and other details are not known; he was in Melbourne in the early 1900s.

Annie appears to have become homeless in the late 1890s, as that's when she appeared before the courts on vagrancy and other charges. Her first appearance was probably in 1897 and she was imprisoned in Coburg gaol for being drunk and disorderly and for indecent behaviour. It was noted that she had no prior convictions. In 1899 she appeared before the Ballarat court for having no lawful visible means of support, and was gaoled for 3 months.<sup>6</sup> In February 1903 at age 38 she was charged again at Ballarat and it was noted that she had 5 prior convictions:

*Today at the police court the woman was charged with the careless use of fire, as well as resisting the police. In her defence, she stated that she had no intention of doing any harm when she lit the fire to boil a billycan of water, and that she did not know the constable was a policeman, as he was in plain clothes. She gave the name of Annie Collingwood, and wanted the case adjourned in order to communicate with her husband, whom she stated was in Melbourne.<sup>7</sup>*

By this time Annie was using the name Holder as well as Holmes and Collingwood. It is not known where the name Holder comes from.

Things did not improve for Annie, as five months later she was up before the Werribee court on vagrancy charges:

*The accused was found wandering about the district, and arrested on the 10th inst. She was on remand since her arrest in the Melbourne gaol. She asked to be given a chance, and she would leave the district. She was discharged.<sup>8</sup>*

No other references about police action have been found after this one, so maybe Annie

<sup>6</sup> AU7103-1899 Victoria Police Gazette 1899

<sup>7</sup> Argus 5 February 1903

<sup>8</sup> Bacchus Marsh Express 1 August 1903 p3

settled down or managed her homelessness well enough so that she was able to avoid the police. She became a hawker, traipsing through the district selling trinkets and knick knacks to support herself. She was homeless and constantly on the move, and might have lived like that for decades.

Her next reference in the newspapers was in 1945 when she was trying to trace relatives:

*Could any reader help an elderly English woman who came out from England some years ago and would like to get in touch with any of her people. She is Mrs Annie Collingwood, c/o Post Office, Deer Park, and her maiden name was Holmes. Before coming to Australia, her home was "The Limes," Epsom, England.<sup>1</sup>*

Annie was now about 80 and probably in failing health. One hopes that she'd found some permanent housing along the way.

Her time in the region has not been forgotten. Prue McGoldrick includes a reference to Annie in her book about early Sunshine:

*Annie Collingwood, in her button-up boots, was a retailer with a difference. For many years, she hawked saleable items in a pram, which she pushed in a semi-circle through Melton, Werribee and Little River to Sunshine. She pitched her own tent en route and travelled to a strict timetable. She was reputedly an expatriate Briton and around 70 years old when she died.<sup>2</sup>*

Annie Collingwood's story was also raised during discussions with some of the older St Albans residents who wanted to remember her as part of the local community and include her in the neighbourhood's history.

Marion McAuley – An old lady by the name of Annie Collingwood used to have a little camp near where Phil Hill lived, and she might have used the shed occasionally. Annie used to come around the district with her pram selling safety pins, elastic, pins, studs, and all little knick knacks. She must have had a bad time in the winter. I don't know where she came from and what happened to her. We used to call her "Flying Kate", but I don't know where we got that name. What a life she must have had.<sup>3</sup>

John Perrett – There was a woman who I always thought of as "Lady Collingwood" because although she lived a nomadic life she struck me as having an independence that spoke of better times. She had nothing but a pram of possessions and lived in the open, survived by selling knick knacks and throwing a bit of canvas against a wall if necessary for a place to sleep if there was nothing else available. My father said she had married in England but the rest was always a mystery. I think she may have received

some mail occasionally from England and dad would have known if that had occurred because he was running the post office agency at the time.<sup>4</sup>

Mary Smith – In St Albans we had an old lady who pushed a pram full of small goods and knick knacks that she tried to sell. She regularly walked her patch from Braybrook to St Albans and Keilor, then on to Melton and Werribee, before turning back for Deer Park and Braybrook, camping along the way in a shed or under a clump of bushes. Everyone knew "Old Lil" as a local character and she would drop in on the farmers' wives for a chat and a cup of tea when she was doing her rounds or trying to sell some of her knitting.<sup>5</sup>

Frank Farrugia – The Stenson family had property at the end of Biggs Street. Just over the road from there used to be a woman who would camp there periodically and she used to call herself Lady Collingwood. She used to come to our house and have a chat with dad. I remember as a young lad sitting on her knee. One time I noticed she had something tied around her neck but when I wanted to have a look at it and tried to touch it she never came back. Ben Hall went past there one time and poked his head in the tent and she pulled a gun on him so he took off. St Albans wasn't Lady Collingwood's hometown because you mightn't see her for twelve months.<sup>6</sup>

Merv Missen – Annie Collingwood survived by selling bits and pieces around the district; she sometimes parked in one of dad's paddocks. She had a revolver and wasn't afraid to show she could use it. At one stage she was camped down there and one chap, who was a bit rough, came a bit too close to her camp and she came out with the revolver and fired it into the air. She would go across to Keilor with her pram selling shoelaces and bits and pieces. She'd travel along Taylors Road and go to the McAuley farm and other families along there.<sup>7</sup>

Marie Missen nee Anderson – We used to have the farm in Keilor and Annie used to come and park down the bottom of the street with her pram and tent. She was a character but she was harmless. This was before the streets were named, so my father called that street Collingwood Lane. In those days you'd camp anywhere and it was okay.<sup>8</sup>

Annie Collingwood died in April 1949 supposedly at age 80 years but she could have been 85. Her remains were buried at the Keilor cemetery where many other former St Albans residents are also interred.

<sup>1</sup> Weekly Times 9 May 1945 p22

<sup>2</sup> Prue McGoldrick *When the Whistle Blew, A Social History of the Town of Sunshine 1920-1950*. Gippsland Printers, Morwell, 1989, p82

<sup>3</sup> Refer to chapter in *Stories About St Albans*, 2012

<sup>4</sup> Refer to chapter in *Stories About St Albans*, 2012

<sup>5</sup> Some of Mary's biography is included in *St Albans Oral History from the Tin Shed Archives*, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Oral History discussions 2012

<sup>7</sup> Oral History discussions 2012

<sup>8</sup> Oral History discussions 2012

## 1932 – Margery and Edna Self

Margery and Edna Self were the older daughters of Lewis Self and Marion Trudgen.<sup>1</sup> The Self family were originally from Wiltshire in England and forebears Lewis Henry Self and Sarah Self migrated to Victoria in 1857. Their grandson Lewis George Self was born in Footscray in 1889 and married Marion Grace Trudgen, whose family were from Cornwall, England, and came to Victoria in 1857.

This family came to St Albans in 1928 when Lewis Self the younger was appointed as the manager of the St Albans quarry. He was critically injured in 1930 when an explosive charge detonated prematurely. He survived though he lost sight in one eye, and he was no longer able to work at the quarry. Furthermore, the family had to vacate their quarry home and find new employment.

Lewis and Marion bought some land in East Esplanade next to the Mechanics Hall. They also bought one of the vacant houses from the Pinnacle Estate and relocated it on their site as their new home. They decided to support their family by establishing their own business.

St Albans in 1930 was a village of 110 households (about 600 people) and 6 shops. The local population had been increasing, so despite the economic doldrums there were some business opportunities for risk takers.

In August 1932 the two older girls, Margery and Edna, took over the small café and mixed business in Main Road West that had been run by Mrs Magee (q.v.) over the previous decade.<sup>2</sup> Marge and Edna extended the refreshments menu by baking home-made cakes and pies. They soon expanded their new venture to supply motor vehicle consumables:

*Motorists of St. Albans and surrounding districts are hereby notified that the business conducted by R. W. Hounslow for the sale of motor spirits and oils have been purchased by the Misses Self, and will be carried on in the new position Main street, St. Albans.<sup>3</sup>*

In the meantime, the family had been planning further ahead. Lewis Self had previously worked as a carpenter, so he built their new shop in front of their home in East Esplanade. He did this with his older son Norman and with help from friends. It was a milk bar and grocery store that was dubbed "Self's General Store", complete with the petrol bowser located outside on the footpath. Marg and Edna moved to these new, family-owned premises in March 1934:

*The Misses M. and E. Self have transferred their business to new and up-to-date premises close to Mechanics Institute. Groceries, confec-*

*tionery, bran, pollard, tobacco, petrol, etc. all at city prices. Why go to Footscray when you can trade there and save your fare.<sup>4</sup>*



Self's General Store in East Esplanade 1930s

The new location was launched on Saturday 9 March 1934. To celebrate the occasion and because of the warm weather, shoppers were offered free drinks, and staff were continually on the go serving ices and cool drinks. It was a good gesture to attract customers.

### Special Notice for St. Albans

The Misses M. and E. Self have transferred their business to new and up-to-date premises close to Mechanics Institute. Groceries, confectionery, bran, pollard, tobacco, petrol, etc. all at city prices. Why go to Footscray when you can trade here and save your fare. Orders delivered. Anything not in stock will be readily obtained. Special attention to children. Give us a trial and save money.

This was the era before electric freezers and refrigerators (blocks of ice were delivered to shops and homes to keep things cold) and the store became popular for its cooling refreshments. Children loved the chocolate-coated ice blocks that cost one penny. One story is of the Self women having to get up in the middle of the night to stir the ice cream that they were making to sell in the shop the next day. Occasionally, a large purchase request might be restricted so that there was enough left for other people.



Lillian Margery Self (known as Margery) was born in Footscray in 1912, so she was aged 20 when she started working in the family's first store. As the eldest daughter she would have been responsible for managing the store. She married Percival Edward Johnson in March 1940 in the St Albans Presbyterian church.<sup>1</sup> Percy had

<sup>1</sup> Refer to chapter about Self & Goddard in *Stories About St Albans Celebrating 125 Years*, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 5 August 1932 p6

<sup>3</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 21 July 1933 p8

<sup>4</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 16 March 1934 p8

started a green grocer's business in the 1930s from a house in Victoria Crescent, and he also delivered to the outer farming areas. Marge and Percy moved to Footscray by 1942, so she had worked in the family business at least a decade. Percy and his brothers bought and operated the ice works in Maidstone, but it is not known how long that lasted. He later worked as a fuel merchant.

Margery Johnson nee Self died in 1968 at age 56 years.



Edna May Self was born in Footscray in 1915, and came with her family to St Albans at age 13. Little is recorded about her in local history. She would have finished her schooling at Tottenham and thus she was not enrolled at the St Albans primary school. It is

not known if she attended any secondary school.

Edna started working in the family store in 1932 at age 17 and probably continued in that occupation until her health declined. The electoral rolls have her listed as living at East Esplanade with her occupation as storekeeper and later on as home duties. It appears that she had never married.

Edna May Self died in April 1951 at the age of 36. The circumstances of her death were not recorded in the local media, but it appears that she had been ill for some time. A funeral service was held for her at Footscray and her body was interred at the Fawkner Crematorium:

*It is with deep regret we record the death of Miss Edna Self, second daughter of Mr and Mrs L. G. Self, East Esplanade, St. Albans. The deceased had been in indifferent health for some considerable time and her passing away on Friday last was not unexpected. The funeral on Monday at the Fawkner Crematorium was attended by a very large number of friends, which was a tribute to the very high regard the deceased and her family are held in the district. There were many beautiful floral tributes. To the members of the family, much sympathy is extended in their great loss.<sup>2</sup>*



**INVESTMENT AUCTION**  
AUCTION DATE: FRIDAY 22ND JUNE 11AM ON SITE *Assesd in: 47 \$2225,000*

**SHELVE YOUR MONEY  
 IN A SUPERMARKET  
 AND CHECKOUT THE RETURNS.**

**ST. ALBANS LICENCED SSW.**

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 29 March 1940 p1

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 20 April 1951 p4

## 1933 – Bernice Self



Dorothy Bernice Self, known as Bernice, was born in 1922 and started at the St Albans primary school in 1928. She must have been a conscientious student because in 1930 she received a prize for 100% attendance. She was the youngest of the three

Self sisters and was still in primary school when her older sisters, Margery and Edna, started working in the family store in 1932.

Bernice started taking piano lesson while at school, and that was most likely with Miss Kath Feeney who ran a music school in Sunshine. Bernice must have been an avid pupil, as her first public performance occurred in 1933 when she was only 11 years old. "Miss Bernice Self" performed a pianoforte solo at the Mechanics Hall for the primary school committee's end-of-year speech night.<sup>1</sup>

In 1936 she was in the public light again in raising money for the school mothers' club. Between them, Valma Bedford, Clara Lodge and Bernice raised over £50 which was a good total. Bernice was Queen of Roses.<sup>2</sup>

In 1937 Bernice was one of "fifty talented children to stage an operetta" at the Sunshine Town Hall:

*Forty pupils of Miss Kath Feeney, assisted by members of Miss Donald's dancing class and other artists, will present a big concert in the Sunshine town hall on Thursday next, including an operetta in which the ages of the actors range from five to fourteen years. Among the high spots of the show will be a triple trio, three children on each of three pianos, and 25 violins will supply the music for the opening number.<sup>3</sup>*

Bernice passed her ALCM examination in music in 1937, and her LLCM examinations for piano in 1938. In 1939 she received a credit in the exam held at the Melbourne University.<sup>4</sup> At this stage she was aged 17.

She started teaching the piano in 1940 at age 18, and in that first year several of her students sat their examinations at the London College of Music in Melbourne.<sup>5</sup>

Bernice had also been active in the local girls' gymnasium club. In 1937 she was one of the prize winners at the Mechanics Hall.<sup>6</sup> In the following year, the Keilor Shire President awarded her first prize in the senior section.<sup>7</sup> Soon after-

wards, it appears that Bernice took over the musical accompaniment for the girls' gymnasium club and supported them musically for many years, and also the calisthenics group.

Bernice had started a Domestic Arts course at Footscray in 1937, and it's likely that she started working in the family grocery store soon after, probably when she was 16 or 17.

In the early days the Self sisters baked cakes and pies to sell in the store. They also made the ice cream before refrigeration was available. At first Margery and Edna were making the ice cream at home overnight. Later, one of Bernice's tasks was to buy ice cream from the Peters Ice Cream factory in Richmond. There were no instant delivery services available in that era and few people had cars, so Bernice would travel by train to collect the order of ice creams and then carry them back on the train in dry ice containers.



Lewis & Marion Self with children circa 1955

At this stage Self's Store was in East Esplanade and Bernice would teach her piano students in the family home behind the shop. This combination of working in the family store and giving private piano lessons continued for at least a decade. She also performed at various community events in the district and occasionally joined Tom Smith's Musical Nights on their gigs.

In 1947 Bernice became engaged to Alf Samuel Goddard and the occasion was celebrated in style at the Mechanics Institute:

*A very successful evening was spent at the St. Albans Hall on Monday last, when some 200 residents attended to wish Miss Bernice Self and Mr. Alf Goddard, the very best wishes on the eve of their marriage. Cr. Davis (President of Shire of Keilor) in a very happy speech made a presentation of a standard lamp on behalf of the residents. A further presentation was made by Miss Hazel Ankers on behalf of Miss Self's many pupils. During the evening dancing was indulged in and Mr. Harold Easton sang two songs in his usual capable manner. He was accompanied by Miss Joyce McIntyre, one of Miss Self's pupils. A very nice supper was served. Mr. Gordon Fawns proved a popular M.C.<sup>8</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 5 January 1934 p5

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 2 October 1936 p2

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 17 September 1937 p5

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 13 October 1939 p1

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 6 December 1940 p6

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 26 November 1937 p5

<sup>7</sup> Sunshine Advocate 9 December 1938 p4

<sup>8</sup> Sunshine Advocate 21 March 1947 p3

Bernice and Alf married at St Alban The Martyr Church of England on Saturday, 22 March 1947. The wedding breakfast was held at the Mechanics Institute Hall and was later followed with a reception where dancing was enjoyed. About 150 friends and relatives wished the newly weds all happiness.<sup>1</sup>



Alf was born in Warrnambool but he was a St Albans boy. His parents were Alfred Samuel Goddard and Agnes Elliot Holmes who came to St Albans in 1926. (Alfred snr died in 1934 and Agnes nee Holmes died in 1954.)

Alf and Bernice built their home in Victoria Crescent. As an extra feature to their home they built a tennis court, and it was even more special because they installed lighting. Sometimes, when daylight was running out, a few players from the public courts would come to finish their game at Goddard's. They were made welcome.

The 1950s was the migration era and the Self family responded by building a bigger shop on the corner of Victoria Crescent. Bernice and Norman Self's wife Eileen carried on in the small shop, while Mr Self, Alf Goddard and the boys built the new supermarket. It became known as Self Brothers and Goddard. It was the first of its kind in the area: a big self-service supermarket including a butcher, delicatessen, fruit and vegetables, groceries, and (later) a liquor section.

The Self brothers were Norman (married Eileen Pyle), Dudley (married Betty O'Hare), and Lance (married Shirley Greig). They became the new generation of managers at the supermarket.

It was still a family business and everyone worked at something, even after hours. At the start everything was still done by hand and weighed using basic scales. Brenda Self recalls bagging oranges into net bags. Boxes of dried fruit would be spread out over the table and picked over for any bits that shouldn't have been there and then packed up. Potatoes were all hand packed. Broken biscuits were packed into bags because nothing was wasted.<sup>2</sup>

Bernice and Alf Goddard had four children:

Heather, Bronwyn, Sandra, and Andrew. Norma McKay, one of her former piano students, recalls that it must have been a busy time for Bernice, as she continued giving piano lessons, working in Self's grocery shop, and raising four children: "It became just too much for Bernice when her last child was born and she stopped giving piano lessons."<sup>3</sup>

Alf Goddard died unexpectedly in January 1964 at age 42, while holidaying at Raymond Island. He was given one of the biggest funerals ever in St Albans, with several hundred people attending the service in Anglican Church and over 140 cars joining the cortege.

The next generation of Self brothers and Goddard were Colin Self, John Self, Andrew Goddard, and Phillip Self. Their wives and children worked in the store part time. About 100 staff now worked at the supermarket.

At some stage the Goddard name was dropped and the store continued operating as Self Bros. Licensed Supermarket. At this stage, five of the Self grandchildren — John, Anthony, Colin, Phillip, and David — were responsible for its day-to-day operations. When they decided to retire the store was put to auction but did not reach the reserve price. It was then sold in 1988 to Melray, who sold it on in 1992.



Colin Self, John Self, Andrew Goddard, Phillip Self

When interviewed by a reporter at that time, Bernice confirmed that the store held many happy memories for her:

*I am very sad about what has happened to the present owners. But it is very hard for anyone to make a living in business these days ... We were lucky. The area expanded with us. Forty years ago we had the largest delicatessen space and stock in an independent store in Victoria. The business just built up over the years. We got on well together as a family. We worked and holidayed together. It was a great time for us.*<sup>4</sup>

Bernice Goddard nee Self died in October 2004 at Southport, Queensland, at age 82.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 28 March 1947 p3

<sup>2</sup> Refer to chapter about Self & Goddard in *Stories About St Albans : Celebrating 125 Years*, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Recollections of Norma McKay nee Smith.

<sup>4</sup> St Albans Keilor Messenger 4 November 1992 p1

### 1933 – Effie Clara Boadicea Hughes

Effie Clara Boadicea Hughes was born in Collingwood in 1909. Her parents were William “Will” Sener Hughes and Clara Howqua who were from Percydale. William’s ancestry is not known. Clara Howqua was the daughter of Ellen Caroline Derrick and Ah Kin How Qua (q.v.) who was from Canton, China, and came to Victoria in the 1850s during the gold rush.

Clara Howqua and William Sener Hughes married in 1887 and settled in Percydale. Their children were Margaret Ellen (1888), William Sener (1890), Grace Louisa (1892), Albert Oscar (1895), Caradoc Llewellyn (1898), and Effie Clara Boadicea (1909).

William Hughes died prior to 1927. In 1928 Clara Hughes was living in Grant Street, St Albans – the reason for moving here and when this had occurred is unknown, but it appears that the family came earlier in the 1920s and settled in Opie Estate in Main Road West. Clara’s sister, Louisa Howqua, had married Harry Harrison and they ran the general store from 1914, so maybe they were maintaining family connections. They were members of the Anglican congregation and Louisa would play the organ at St Alban The Martyr Church in East Esplanade.

In 1922 Louisa and Harry Harrison sold their store to the Perrett family. Effie Hughes married the son, William Eric Perrett, in 1933:

*Glorious spring-like weather prevailed on Saturday afternoon last for the wedding of Eric, only son of Mr. and Mrs. Perrett, and Effie, the youngest child of Mrs. and the late Mr. Hughes. The Church of England which had been tastefully decorated by friends, was overflowing with visitors, and the choral service was officiated by the Rev. F. Cerruty, a former minister of St. Albans. The bride who was given away by her brother, Mr. Albert Hughes, made a dainty figure in an ankle length dress of pure white over satin, with lace godets. Her lovely veil being held in place by a wreath of orange blossom buds. The bouquet she carried was centred by a rare orchid. Mrs. Buntine, sister of the bride, was matron of honor, and was frocked in rose pink with toque to match, and carried a bouquet of pink flowers.<sup>1</sup>*

Effie and Eric’s only child, John Perrett, was born in June 1934 and passed away in 2020.

Effie’s mother, Clara Hughes nee Howqua, died in 1936 at age 69:

*Much sympathy is extended to Mrs Bedford and Mrs Perrett, jun., whose mother, Mrs Hughes, died at a private hospital in Footscray on Tuesday, after a long illness. Mrs Hughes was an old resident of this district and was greatly respected. The funeral took place on Wednesday, when deceased was laid to rest in the Footscray cemetery.<sup>2</sup>*

Effie was a supporter of the Mothers’ Club and the local branch of the Red Cross Society. In 1940 she was elected pro tem secretary of the St Albans Hospital Auxiliary to work for the Footscray and District Out-Patient and Welfare Centre.<sup>3</sup> The Auxiliary was established with Agnes Stevens as president, Gwen McCreery as vice-president, Margaret Bedford as secretary, Mary Hutson as treasurer, and Effie Perrett assistant secretary. In 1940 Effie was on the Committee of Management of the Out-Patient and Welfare Centre.<sup>4</sup> Her husband Eric Perrett also became involved with the committee.

The family’s grocery and postal business must have been progressing well, as in 1937 the store was considerably enlarged. Effie began experiencing health problems and required major surgery in 1938.<sup>5</sup> Her father-in-law, John Perrett, died in October 1938 and her husband Eric took over the management of the store. Effie was his partner in business so she was very busy. Also being a mother and housewife, she would leave the store before closing time and go home to prepare the dinner. After a full day’s work at the store she still aimed to have dinner ready for her husband and son when they arrived home. Her workload may have reduced somewhat in 1952 when they sold their store to the Wardle family and established their news agency nearby.

Effie Clara Boadicea Perrett nee Hughes died of a stroke in August 1960 at age 50 years. Eric Perrett retired to a farm in Gisborne where he bred cattle and horses. Effie and Eric’s son, John Perrett, trained as a chemist and established Perrett’s Pharmacy on the corner of Main Road West and McKechnie Street.<sup>6</sup>

Effie’s brother, Caradoc Llewellyn Hughes, took over Aunt Louisa Howqua-Harrison’s store at Torquay in the early 1920s.

Effie’s sister, Margaret Ellen Hughes, married Ernest Bedford of St Albans and they raised four children: Reuben, Beryl, Valma and Shirley.

Reuben married Kathleen Bloxham. He served in WW2 and was awarded the 1939/45 Star, Pacific Star, War Medal, and the ASM.

Beryl Louis Bedford married Clarence Herbert “Bert” Moffat in 1941 and raised two sons. Bert and Beryl established a local butcher shop. Bert became a community leader through the Youth Club, Errington Reserve committee, the football and cricket clubs, the St Albans High School, and Keilor Council. Bert died in 1962. Beryl Louisa Moffat nee Bedford died in 1999.

Valma Clara Bedford married Ian Lawrence Bloxham and they raised four children: Denise, Margaret, Graeme and Sherill. Valma died in Ferntree Gully in October 2013, aged 91 years.

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 3 May 1940 p3

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 9 August 1940 p8

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 3 June 1938 p3

<sup>6</sup> Refer to chapter by John Perrett in *Stories About St Albans Celebrating 125 Years*.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 1 September 1933

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 31 January 1936 p4



### 1933 – Thomas and Emily Toby

Thomas and Emily Toby came to St Albans in the early 1930s and were active in the district for nearly three decades.

Thomas Toby was born in April 1895 in Shotton, Flintshire, Wales, to Thomas William Toby and Mary Agnes Poynton. They had married in June 1897 in Chester, Cheshire, England, and had 7 children. The Toby family was from Budleigh Salterton, Devon, England in 1822. The Poynton family was from 1766 in Witton cum Twam-brooks, Cheshire, England. The family came to Melbourne in March 1920 and settled down in Williamstown.

Emily Henrietta "Etta" Hale was born in 1895 in South Yarra; she had an older brother John Charles and a younger sister Winifred Myrtle. Their parents were John Peter Hale and Emily Ellen Litchfield. John senior was born in Flemington in 1861. The Litchfield family trace their origins back to 1760 in Northamptonshire, England; Emily Ellen was born in 1870 in Bedford, and her family migrated in the 1880s.

Thomas Toby married Emily Etta Hale in 1927 in Victoria and they settled down in Newport. He worked as a labourer and was a member of the Ironworkers' Union. She had worked as a tailoress prior to the marriage, after which, as was the custom, she took on the ubiquitous responsibility of home duties.

Tom and Emily Toby arrived in St Albans in 1933. It appears that they did not have any children as there are none listed in the St Albans Primary School enrollment register. There were several other Hale families living in St Albans but it is not known if Emily was related to them.

Unfortunately, Toby's first mention in the *Sunshine Advocate* was of bad news, when he had a spring cart stolen from his yard in the week before Christmas.<sup>1</sup> Despite this unwelcome setback, Tom and Emily were soon helping with entertainment for fundraising events at the local Mechanics Hall. Amongst other activities, Emily attended the functions of the St Albans Girls' Gymnasium Club. Alf Clarke, of the Progress Association, complimented Tom for the good work he put into organizing artists to help raise funds for the school committee and shire picnic.<sup>2</sup>

St Albans in the 1930s was becoming a place of change. Despite the hardships of the depression there was some optimism. The township comprised of 110 households with 600 people. Electricity was recently connected to the village centre, some new shops were starting up, and the new road by the railway line to Albion had been completed. The drawn-out struggle for a reticulated water supply was still progressing.

By the late 1930s there was some gene-

rational change becoming apparent at the St Albans Progress Association. In 1938, the younger newcomer Tom Toby ousted the 75-year-old long-term incumbent Edward Luxford for the position of President.<sup>3</sup> Luxford had started the Progress Association in 1908 and had been its President for 30 years.<sup>4</sup> The situation was soon reversed when Toby's election was annulled due to an alleged nomination error, and Luxford was reinstated as the President at a better-attended meeting.<sup>5</sup> Someone had obviously done some number crunching in the meantime. Toby stayed on the committee. In 1939 both Luxford and Toby nominated for positions as vice-presidents and Sid Rule<sup>6</sup> became the new President.

Further ructions in Progress Association were about to occur. In 1939 Alfred Clarke (q.v.) challenged 66-year-old Cr. James Stevens for the St Albans seat at Keilor Council. Stevens was another long-term member of the Progress Association with 30 years of local experience. This time the Association chose to back Alf Clarke, who stood against Francis Jolly<sup>7</sup> for election to the Maribyrnong Riding, and Tom Toby became the secretary of Clarke's campaign committee. Francis Jolly easily won the election with 275 votes against Clarke's 193 votes. In retrospect, this challenge may have caused some antipathy between the parties concerned, which would surface again some time later.

The spectre of world war impacted even small communities like St Albans when Germany invaded Poland and Britain declared war. Sons and daughters enlisted and were sent to fight overseas. Agnes Stevens started a local branch of the British Bombing Refugee Clothing Depot. The township had its own Air Raid Precautions Warden and people were implementing blackout conditions and digging slit trenches.

In the early 1940s, Toby wrote a series of letters to the local paper, the *Sunshine Advocate*, in response to criticism about the Soviet regime and the Russian people. Amongst other comments he wrote that:

*... under Capitalism world slavery and wars are unavoidable. In the meantime, I suggest we all get down to the task of winning the war, for loss can only mean one thing – Fascism and all the vileness it implies.*<sup>8</sup>

It was probably comments like this that led some people to believe that Toby was either a communist or a communist sympathiser.

The lead up to 1943 Federal elections had a local presence from 1940. The Communist

<sup>1</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 5 January 1934 p5

<sup>2</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 12 October 1934

<sup>3</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 16 September 1938 p7

<sup>4</sup> Refer to article in *St Albans Settlers from 1905*.

<sup>5</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 14 October 1938 p3

<sup>6</sup> Sid and Veronica Rule arrived in 1924. He was an electrical fitter involved with the Public Assistance Committee, the School Committee, and the Reserve Committee. They left the district in 1942.

<sup>7</sup> Francis Jolly was manager of Sydenham Quarries.

<sup>8</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 24 July 1942

Party candidate for the Corio electorate was Dr Gerald O'Day who in 1940 was addressing a meeting in Sunshine.<sup>1</sup> Capt. John Dedman, the Labor Party candidate, was elected to the House of Representatives in 1940. In 1942 there were long letters in the Sunshine Advocate regarding the Russian question, with Harold Toby being one of the correspondents.

Some of the locals decided to form a branch of the ALP in 1942. In 1943 Francis Jolly was approached by the United Country Party to stand for them at the state election,<sup>2</sup> but he must have had some competition as John Milligan of Sydenham became the endorsed candidate.<sup>3</sup>

During this time, Toby continued to be active on the Progress Association. In 1942 he stood as publicity officer and in 1944 he was elected as secretary of the Association. In late 1944 he argued that the local war precautions of trenches and blackouts should be dismantled.

In 1944 St Albans wanted to become part of a Braybrook housing scheme. Tom Toby and Alf Clarke approached Sunshine Council for moral support for St Albans to be included as an area to be developed. They pointed out that vacant land was there in abundance, an electric train service was available, and electric light and water were there for the asking.<sup>4</sup>

St Albans was routinely confronted with the Catch-22 scenario of immovable government instrumentalities. When arguing for public housing to be built locally, the locals were told this could not be done because a regular water supply was not connected; and when arguing for water to be connected, they were told there was not enough housing to justify the expenditure. Toby went on to argue that:

*In St Albans there is unlimited land, high, dry, and above all, cheap, which would provide ideal home sites for workers engaged in Footscray, Sunshine, and Deer Park. Excellent transport facilities exist, water and electric light are available, and shopping at competitive prices is also available. Mothers of young children can take prams and pushers on the train if it becomes necessary to visit Sims in Footscray, or the city.<sup>5</sup>*

In 1945 Thomas Toby held the positions of

secretary and treasurer with the Progress Association and appears to have been their chief spokesman with Keilor Council. In 1945 in one of his letters Toby refers to a "veiled threat" by Cr. Jolly to bar co-operation between the Council and the Association and maybe this was one of the signs of political squabbles starting.

In 1946 Toby was arguing the case for a general hospital in Sunshine. He was also being very critical regarding the Keilor council. Some of these councilors thought Toby was acting without his committee's knowledge and the Association was not representative of the area; e.g. Cr Dickson is quoted as responding:

*I am satisfied that he has not got one per cent of the people of St. Albans behind him. ... It is not a Progress Association, but a mutual admiration society. When you go to a meeting you are put down as wrong before you have spoken.*

Cr Jolly, the Shire President, opined:

*Mr. Toby is the Progress Association! Out of about 700 people I do not think the Progress Association has ten financial members.<sup>6</sup>*

In 1946 Norman Self as President of the Progress Association wrote to Keilor Council regarding the persistent personal attacks on Toby as Secretary. Keilor Council refused to receive the letter:

*After some lengthy discussion and much adverse criticism of the aims and objects of some members of St Albans Progress Association, it was decided at the meeting of Keilor Council on Saturday last to accept no further correspondence from the Association's secretary (Mr. T. Toby).<sup>7</sup>*

The Council President produced a lengthy letter he had received from the Keilor Shire Council, relative to an alleged action taken by Toby during the recent Transport Dispute. As a result of this allegation, the Council informed Mr. Self that it would not receive any further correspondence from Mr. Toby and asked that steps be taken to give effect to this decision.<sup>8</sup>

In 1947 the Keilor Shire President, Cr. Davis, was present at a Progress Association meeting when Toby expressed the opinion that "the Shire of Keilor should be liquidated on the grounds that administration charges ate up too much revenue, that opinion is entirely without malice or a desire to embarrass anyone, I am open to be convinced otherwise, but not by slander or abuse."<sup>9</sup>

Locally there had been attempts to equate Australian Labor Party and Trade Union supporters as being communists – it was the touted paranoia of Reds under the Beds – which might explain some of the rhetoric exchanged between

<sup>1</sup> The Communist Party of Australia was founded in 1920 and had peak in the 1940s with about 2% polling in the Senate. The party was banned by Menzies in 1940 but the ban was lifted by Dr Evatt of the ALP-led government in 1943. In 1946 the ALP cut ties with the Communist Party of Australia.

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 12 February 1943

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 8 March 1940 p8. The United Australia Party led by Robert Menzies formed a coalition with the Country Party led by Arch Cameron. They defeated the Labor Party led by John Curtin. In 1941 Menzies lost a confidence vote and the ALP formed a minority government led by John Curtin.

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 28 January 1944

<sup>5</sup> Argus 4 July 1946

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 7 June 1946

<sup>7</sup> Sunshine Advocate 9 May 1947

<sup>8</sup> Sunshine Advocate 23 May 1947

<sup>9</sup> Sunshine Advocate 6 June 1947

Thomas Toby and his critics.

Cr. Dickson went on to say that:

*Mr. Yeomans and Mr. Toby travelled together in a train to certain meetings, and Councillors could rest assured that those were not of sporting interests or of the Liberal or Country parties. ... Cr. Jolly after saying he agreed with what Cr. Dickson had said, declared that in less than 12 months these people would be attempting to unseat Cr. Dickson for the purpose of getting a cell in the Council.<sup>1</sup>*

The tensions continued, as Cr. Francis Jolly declared he had no intention of withdrawing any statement he had made concerning the Communist control of the St Albans Progress Association.<sup>2</sup>

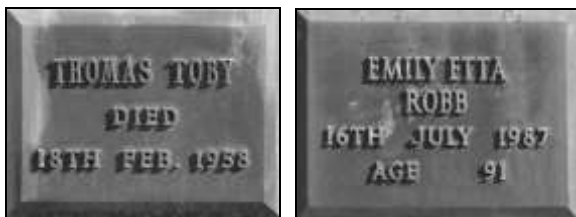
Thomas Toby resigned from the Progress Association in August 1948. His stated reason was that he had been in indifferent health for some time past and was unable to continue. The Association passed a vote of appreciation for his past services.<sup>3</sup>

The final reference for the Toby family of St Albans in the *Sunshine Advocate* was in March 1949, when Mr William Toby of Cleveland Street passed away in March and was interred at the Fawcner Crematorium.<sup>4</sup> It is not known if he was a close relative of Thomas.

Thomas Toby died at Footscray in February 1958 at age 63 years. His remains were buried at Altona Memorial Park.

Emily Etta Toby moved to Douglas Parade in Newport and worked as a tailoress. She married William Nicoll Robb and they were living in Williamstown during the 1970s.

Emily Etta Toby-Robb nee Hale died in July 1987 at age 91, and was buried at Altona Memorial Park.



Postscript: The inaugural meeting of the St Albans–Sydenham branch of the Liberal-Country Party was held in the Mechanics Hall in 1949. The office bearers were President James Eddie, Vice Presidents John Snaith and Agnes Stevens, Secretary, James Stevens, and Treasurer William Morton. Unfortunately their later activities were not reported in the local media.

<sup>1</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 7 November 1947

<sup>2</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 8 August 1947

<sup>3</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 6 August 1948 p2

<sup>4</sup> *Sunshine Advocate* 25 March 1949 p1. William was married to Elizabeth. Their son Harold enlisted in 1941 with the AIF General Reinforcements.

## 1935 – Percy and Frances Rye

Percival “Percy” George Rye was originally from Malling, Kent, England. His mother was Ethel May Rye (1883-1947) and his stepfather was David Frank Colegate (1877-1926). Percy came to Australia in 1923 at age 21 years.

Percy married Frances “Fran” Snaith in 1924. She was born in 1898 in Bolton England, and her parents were James Snaith (1852-) and Betsy Haslam or Mann (1863-1903).

Percy and Frances were living in St Albans in the 1920s and in the early 1930s they were in Toolern Vale on an allotment near the Djerrivarrh Creek before returning in 1935 to a house in East Esplanade. Percy’s occupation is listed as a labourer and motor driver, and they returned to St Albans for employment purposes.

Their daughter Betty was born in November 1925 and was admitted to the St Albans primary school in September 1935. She left in August 1939.

Percy George Rye came from Toolern Vale in September 1935 to work at the Green Gully sand pit on the St Albans-Keilor road as a sustenance worker.<sup>5</sup> He probably thought he was lucky to have a job, but he wasn’t, because he died on the first day of his job at the pit in May 1936, when a wall of sand collapsed on top of him and smothered him. He was dead at age 34 years.<sup>6</sup> His fellow worker survived.

Thomas Yates of St Albans said that about 5 p.m. on May 25 he was working with Rye in the sand pit when he heard a movement of sand and called to Rye to run for his life:

*Both men ran away, but Rye, who was a little behind, was caught by the fall of sand and buried completely. The men had only one pick and one shovel, and these were buried also. Yates stopped a motor-truck, which he had heard approaching, and the men scratched away the earth. Rye was buried for only three or four minutes. It was the first day Rye had worked at the pit<sup>7</sup>*

In the following investigations the jury found that Rye died from suffocation caused by misadventure through negligence on the part of the Keilor Shire in not taking proper precautions in safeguarding the working of the pit.

Keilor Shire council passed a motion expressing sympathy with Mrs Rye on the death of her husband. The Shire President launched a series of functions to aid the appeal for the widow and child, the first of which was held in the St Albans Hall. In August 1936 a court settlement was made where Keilor Shire would pay £675 in damages. His Honor approved the compromise and

<sup>5</sup> Sustenance work was a form of welfare assistance for the longer-term unemployed, particularly during the depression. Often referred to as *susso*.

<sup>6</sup> Age 27 May 1938 p1

<sup>7</sup> *Argus* 3 June 1936 p11

apportioned £450 to the widow, and £225 to be invested for the benefit of the child, of which 10/- a week would be paid to the mother for the support of her child.<sup>1</sup>

The problems with the sand pit did not stop, as it was a place of fascination and maybe more so after the tragedy. Cr. Fred Stenson said that he had often seen 10 to 20 children playing about the pit on Saturdays. Cr. Jolly said he had seen motorists exploring the excavations. There was little the council do about this as the sand excavations were on private property.<sup>2</sup> In 1942 Stenson referred to the danger of the sandpit as three soldiers were camped there and the sand continued to fall while they were there.<sup>3</sup>

Frank Farrugia of St Albans recalled that a lot of swagmen used to come through the district during the depression years and some of them would stay in the old sand caves near the river:

*Dad would always say don't go near the sand caves. What did we do? We'd take matches and candles and light the candles and walk through the caves.*

Colin Missen, whose grandfather owned land in Green Gully, remembers there was a sandpit which was used as an unofficial tip. There was also a sandpit on the left side as well as a tunnel.<sup>4</sup> Some people understood them to be Aboriginal caves.

The long history of Aboriginal heritage at St Albans was proved beyond doubt with the 1965 discovery of Aboriginal bones at a burial site in Green Gully on the riverbank; stone tools and charcoal from a fire suggested that the site may be about 17,000 years old.

Frances Rye nee Snaith remarried in 1938 to Samuel Joseph Pace, who was from Malta. At first they were living in Collins Street, St Albans, and Samuel was a quarryman with the Commonwealth Quarries in Sunshine. In the 1960s they were living in Hampshire Road, Sunshine, and Samuel was employed as a cement worker.



Green Gully in the 1950s © Kon Haumann

<sup>1</sup> Age 26 August 1936 p19

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 12 December 1941 p5

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 7 August 1942 p3

<sup>4</sup> Colin Missen *St Albans: The Way It Was And The Way We Were 1939-1950*

## 1935 – Michael and Ida Doherty



Michael Dennis Doherty was born in 1901 at Nagambie, Victoria, his parents being Michael Patrick Doherty and Mary Agnes Ryan who had married in 1899; their earlier histories are not known. Ida May Holmes was born in July 1909 in Geelong, Victoria, her parents being Philip William

Holmes and Agnes Cooper. The Holmes were from England and arrived in Geelong in 1855. The Coopers were in Hamilton, Victoria by 1869; their earlier histories are not known.

Michael Doherty and Ida Holmes married in 1927, and at that stage he was working as a share farmer at Cudgee, Warrnambool. Later the family was listed as being from Cassidy's Bridge in Warrnambool. They raised a son John (1927) and a daughter Irene (1929).



John Doherty was born in July 1927 at Warrnambool and started at the St Albans Primary School in August 1935; his father was listed as Mitchell Doherty, working as a brick layer. John went to Williamstown High. He enlisted with the RAN Flinders Naval Depot.

In 1945 he joined a "very strong committee" to form the St Albans Boys' Social Club, with First-Constable Shaw of Sunshine as instructor and general manager.<sup>5</sup> John Doherty married Maureen Catherine Beasley of Werribee in 1952.<sup>6</sup> They were living in Station Street, St Albans, in 1972. John worked as a postman.



Irene Doherty was born in 1929. She is lucky to be alive because in 1935 she was knocked down by a car and suffered a broken leg and also facial injuries. She started at St Albans Primary School in 1935 from Warrnambool. In 1940 she was the top scholar in the sixth grade. She joined the Girls Gymnasium Club and in 1940 was the best all-round junior pupil. Irene completed her schooling at the Sunshine Technical School. She assisted with fundraising for the St Albans Red Cross branch and received a special recognition for her efforts

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 14 September 1945 p2

<sup>6</sup> Argus 8 December 1952 p6

with the "Australian Tea" held at the Mechanics Hall.<sup>1</sup> She was a member of the girls' basketball club, often being noted as one of the best players, her teammates including June Gibson and Maureen Turner. In 1947 Irene was a debutante in the St Albans Football Club's first Annual Ball.<sup>2</sup> She was crowned "Belle of Belles" in the competition at the Sunshine Football Club ball in 1950 – often these were fund-raising events for charitable purposes:

*The title of "Belle of Belles" was bestowed on Miss Irene Doherty, of St. Albans, at the Sunshine Football Club's Ball held last Friday night. Miss Doherty, an attractive brownette, proved a popular choice. She was dressed in white broderie anglaise over pink satin. Each of the seven young ladies competing for the title presented a charming appearance and the judges were faced with a distinctly difficult task. The winner received a sash and a handsome string of pearls from the Football Club.*<sup>3</sup>

In 1952 Irene Doherty married Donald Colin McPherson, who was a Sunshine boy.<sup>4</sup> They lived on the corner of Main Road East and Percy Street, opposite the tennis courts.

The Doherty family had come to St Albans in 1935 and was living in West Esplanade. It must have been a bigish house because two families ended up sharing the premises for a while – the Dohertys and the Goddards. They also must have had a bit of land as they had a house cow for the milk, which was common at the time. They might have made their own butter as in the mid 1940s they were selling their hand-operated separators.

The Doherty and Goddard families were related through the wives: Ida May Holmes wed Michael Dennis Doherty and her sister, Agnes Elliot Holmes, married Alfred Samuel Goddard.<sup>5</sup> By the late 1950s Ida and Michael Doherty had moved to Victoria Crescent.

Michael Doherty was also known as Cuddy Doherty and Old Man Doherty. He was said to be a bricklayer when he came to St Albans but he would have found little work in that trade locally as there very few brick houses being built in the neighbourhood; what was being built was in mostly timber. The housing market remained depressed until the 1950s.

Michael Doherty became a Jack of all Trades, picking up some seasonal farm work and establishing his own business as a carrier. One of his regular work contracts was building hay stacks on Farquhar McRae's old farm in Taylors

Road. Frank Farrugia recalled that:

*After the stooks were dry Cuddy would have the contract for building the haystacks. He'd build the haystack during the week and of a weekend he would clean out the truck and take us to the dances over to Sydenham. The truck had a canvas top and there were a couple of bench seats placed in the back for passengers.*<sup>6</sup>

By 1945 he was working as a general carrier under the name of "M Doherty and Son". In 1947 the football club committee engaged him to transport players to matches. Gavin Aitken remembered him during those football years:

*Cuddy Doherty was a long-term supporter of the football club; he was one of the vice-presidents in 1947 when Eric Perrett was the president. Cuddy had a truck and they'd put seats in the back and they'd drive the players to their matches. They'd also pick up the girls and the guys and take them to the dances at Truganina and Sydenham. That was a good service because there was no public transport apart from the train.*<sup>7</sup>

Ida Doherty was involved with the St Albans Mothers Club and Irene also assisted with their bazaars. In 1944 Ida was lucky to have survived a car accident which cause facial injuries and a fractured skull.<sup>8</sup>

In 1949 the St Albans Football Club presented Ida Doherty with a trophy for outstanding service to the club.<sup>9</sup> Part of this service was probably for the refreshments and suppers that she provided for the club; e.g. when the club appointed Malcolm McBean as coach, Ida put on a house party to welcome him.

Ida and Cuddy were the first people to be made life members of the St Albans Football Club, and Ida might have been the only woman to have been made a life member in the 1960s.

Michael "Cuddy" Doherty was a member and president of the football club and good with the transport. As well as helping with the transport of the football players he also drove people to the local dances of a Saturday night. They would go to places like Bacchus Marsh, Truganina, Melton, and Sydenham. He'd load up the back of the truck with the dancers, drive them there and then bring them home.<sup>10</sup>

The Dohertys had a holiday house in Mathoura near Echuca on the Murray River, and they appear to have retired there. Michael Dennis Doherty died in 1978 at Echuca at age 78 years.

Ida May Doherty nee Holmes died in New South Wales in 1987 at age 78 years and was buried in the Mathoura Lawn Cemetery.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 17 September 1943 p4

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 1 August 1947 p2

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 27 October 1950 p1

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 30 May 1952 p3

<sup>5</sup> Alfred died in 1934. Agnes and Alfred's son, also named Alfred Samuel Goddard, married Dorothy Bernice Self and helped establish the Self Bros & Goddard supermarket. Refer to chapter in *Stories About St Albans : Celebrating 125 Years*, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Refer to chapter in *Talking About St Albans 2019*

<sup>7</sup> Oral history discussions 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Sunshine Advocate 14 January 1944 p2

<sup>9</sup> Sunshine Advocate 4 November 1949 p2

<sup>10</sup> Recollections of Frank Farrugia.



## 1936 – Geoffrey Tremayne Sambell



Geoffrey Tremayne Sambell was born in October 1914 in Broadford, Victoria. His parents were Edgar Sambell and Barbara McPhee. The Sambell family was from Cornwall England in 1813 and came to Melbourne in 1863. The McPhee family was from Argyll and Bute Scotland in 1687, and came

to Australia in 1855.

Sambell's connection with St Albans occurred in 1936 when he was appointed as lay reader at Footscray and was deployed to St Albans. His workload required dedication:

*The area consisted of a monotonous flat basalt plain, with some paddocks where hay competed with scotch thistle and sheep grazed. It was punctuated by the explosives dumps of Imperial Chemical Industries. New modest houses were slowly reaching out into this barren region. ...*

*On Saturday morning, he travelled by train to the nearest station, Sunshine, cycled 6 kilometres to St Albans for the sports program and parish visiting, and then returned to the college. He repeated the trip next day to conduct Sunday school at St Albans at 10 am, Morning Prayer at 11 am, followed by a confirmation class at noon. He would then ride across to the other centre at Deer Park to lead Evening Prayer at 3 pm, followed by another confirmation class.<sup>1</sup>*

On the night before his theology exam, a young St Albans boy drowned, and rather than taking time to study, Sambell stayed with the family the whole night to support them in their grief.

Sambell was soon forming youth clubs. In 1938 it was for boys between 14 and 18, and a similar plan for boys under 14. He soon had about 40 boys as regular attendants. He formed a cricket club which competed in the Footscray and District Sunday Schools' Competition and reached the final four.<sup>2</sup>

He had a vision of building clubrooms, a young people's hall to be available nightly for boys and girls' clubs and young people's work:

*It will be used for social evenings, interesting lectures, travel talks, etc., indoor games (billiards, table tennis, quoits, badminton, boxing and gymnasium) for the boys, debates, and, on Sundays for Sunday school work, community singing and supper after Sunday evening services, etc.<sup>3</sup>*

In early 1940 Sambell was ordained as deacon and left St Albans to become the curate at St. John's, East Malvern.<sup>4</sup> A farewell evening

<sup>1</sup> Michael C Challen, *Sambell A Man of the Word*, Melbourne University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 10 March 1939

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 21 April 1939

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 9 February 1940

for him was held at the McKechnie home.

Sambell retained a connection with the district by attending some youth functions and church services. Apparently the success of the Young People's Friendship Club could be estimated from the volume of noise:

*The Friendship Club's Cartie Night held at the home of Mrs Batten on Monday evening last passed very pleasantly. There was an attendance of about 50 young people, and Mr Sambell, as usual, delivered a bright and happy talk.<sup>5</sup>*

The memorial service in 1941 was for Mrs King and Mrs Griffith.<sup>6</sup>



In 1941 Sambell was ordained as priest and in 1942 appointed as chaplain in the Citizen Military Forces. He transferred to the Australian Imperial Force and served as an Army chaplain based in New Guinea for five years, taking on the duties of canteen officer and also arranging sporting competitions.<sup>7</sup>

In 1947 he was appointed to take charge of the development of the Melbourne Diocesan centre.<sup>8</sup>

In 1951 he used his war gratuity to go to England and learn more about helping people. When he returned he joined the Brotherhood of St Laurence and was still working with children, organizing holidays for hundreds of underprivileged children from Melbourne suburbs.

In retrospect, Sambell did not stay long in St Albans, but he was a leader for a while and was respected by the parishioners. John Perrett followed his progress after he left the district:

*That young minister went on to make quite a name for himself within the Anglican system and through much broader social action in Victoria and nationally because of his involvement with the Brotherhood of St Lawrence. He became the executive director of the Brotherhood as well as achieving the level of Archbishop within the church hierarchy. He died in office as the Archbishop of Perth. These days the Brotherhood holds an annual "Sambell Oration Dinner" in recognition of his vision for social justice.<sup>9</sup>*

The idea of a young people's hall came to pass in 1960 when the first St Albans kindergarten was built adjacent to the church building.

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 5 April 1940

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 31 January 1941

<sup>7</sup> <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/sambell-geoffrey-tremayne-11606>

<sup>8</sup> Argus 15 March 1947 p23

<sup>9</sup> John Perrett in *Stories About St Albans: Celebrating 125 Years*, 2012, p122

## 1940 – George Gallagher



George Gallagher was a character of St Albans from the 1940s. In his youth he was described as being 5' 6" tall, having a fresh complexion with black hair and hazel eyes. In his St Albans' days he was an 80-year-old pensioner who lived alone in a one-room, corrugated iron shanty and earned a bit of money by minding sheep. He died in 1953 when he fell into the old quarry:

*The body of an elderly man was found jammed in a crevice in a disused quarry at St Albans last night by two children. The man has been identified as George Gallagher, 83 years, a shepherd, of St Albans. Police think the old man overbalanced and fell into the quarry when returning home from Coronation night celebrations at Footscray on Tuesday night. Deep gashes about the knee and head at first suggested suspicious circumstances, but no action can be taken until the body is examined.<sup>1</sup>*

George Joseph Gregory Gallagher was born in 1871 in Footscray, his parents being Peter Gallagher (1832-1882) who was an engineer, and Bridget Selina Fleming (1844-1916). There is some indication that George was a ward of the state in 1872 but the reason for this is not known.

Peter Gallagher traces his heritage to 1800 through his grandfather in Ireland. Peter came to Victoria before 1867, as that was when he married Bridget Fleming, who was from Sydney. They were living in Footscray by the late 1860s, moved to NSW in the 1870s, and were in Geelong in 1880. They apparently had a very tough time when Peter became ill and had to be hospitalised, because they were destitute and some of their children were removed:

*The following children, the neglected offspring of an engineer named Peter Gallagher, a hospital patient, were dealt with: Peter, aged 3 years, sent to the Royal Park schools for 10 years; Alice, aged 4 years, sent to the same schools for eight years; George, aged 7 years, sent to the Sunbury schools<sup>2</sup> for five years; Isabella aged 10 years and 6 months, sent to the Royal Park schools for two years and six months.<sup>3</sup>*

George Gallagher became a seaman and married Ernestina Louisa Sticken in 1891. She was born in Belfast (Port Fairy) in 1872; her parents were Henry Michael Sticken and Mary Jane Newman. Henry was from Hannover in

Germany, and Mary was from Middlesex in England and migrated to Australia in 1868.

In 1894 George Gallagher was charged with false pretences and uttering. He spent time in prison and it was noted that he had a previous conviction. In 1896 he was convicted for using insulting and threatening words. He was not a model prisoner and consequently was given several days of solitary confinement for spitting on cell walls and insolent behaviour.

George Gallagher and Ernestina Sticken had three daughters: Minnie (1896), Florence (1897), and Selina (1904); and four sons: Samuel (1898), twins Alfred and George (1900), and Ernest (1902). In 1903 the family was in Byron Street Footscray and George was working as a labourer. He might have left the family soon afterwards.

He was in court again in 1905 for stealing goods from his wife. At this stage they had been separated for a couple of years – she was living in Carlton and he was staying at the Metropole hotel. It obviously had not been an amicable separation as when they came across each other in Collins street he said "You — I will leave you without a bed." Ernestina later reported to the police that when she returned home she found that her room had been tossed upside down, her wardrobe was open and her clothes were on the floor all torn up, and most of the bedding was missing. His defence was that he had been drunk the previous night and had been evicted from his accommodation. The police charged him with house breaking and stealing. He pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of larceny and was sent to gaol for two months.<sup>4</sup>

George Gallagher might have been a merchant seaman during WW1 – one family descendent cites the issue of British campaign medals to a George Gallagher born in 1871 for service as a merchant seaman.<sup>5</sup>

The Gallagher family seems to have had a tough life as two of the daughters died relatively young. Minnie died in 1926 at age 30 years and Florence died in 1949 at age 52. Samuel lived longer, dying in 1957 at age 59 years. Details about the twins Alfred and George have not been found. Ernestina Gallagher nee Sticken outlived her immediate family, as she died in Brunswick in 1961 at age 89.

George Joseph Gallagher was living in South Road, Sunshine, in the 1930s, working as a labourer. In the 1940s he was in St Albans working as a shepherd.

George Gallagher of St Albans was remembered by a couple of people during oral history discussions over recent years. Mervyn Missen remembered that:

<sup>1</sup> Age 5 June 1953 p3

<sup>2</sup> The Sunbury Industrial School educated and housed destitute children. The site was later used as an asylum for the mentally ill and became the Sunbury Lunatic Asylum before being named as a psychiatric hospital.

<sup>3</sup> Geelong Advertiser 23 March 1880 p2

<sup>4</sup> Herald 26 August 1905 p6

<sup>5</sup> There was only one George Gallagher who was born in Victoria in 1871 – the one who died in St Albans.



In the early days of St Albans there was the old quarry near the railway line. Before the quarry started there was a caretaker by the name of George Gallagher. There were a lot of sheep on that property which was about 300 or 350 acres in area. George had a tin shed out towards Furlong Road. He had a few dogs and worked as a shepherd.<sup>1</sup>

Jimmy Knowles remembers the discovery of the body:

In the fifties there used to be an old quarry being used as a tip right opposite where the hotel in McKechnie Street is now located. One of the local personalities at the time was George Gallagher, an elderly pensioner who sometimes worked as a shepherd around the area and lived in a little shack not far from the quarry. Young lads always liked to explore that old quarry and one day Maxie Hempenstall found Gallagher's body in the tip.<sup>2</sup>



George Gallagher of St Albans lived a hard life from his earliest childhood days. His hardships include separation from his family as a young child and family break-down from his wife and children in later life. He was jailed on a number of occasions and he died a

hard death in St Albans.

Postscript: The St Albans quarry opened in 1913 and was operating until 1935. The quarry site was where the small soccer ground is now located on McKechnie Reserve. The quarry had a history of accidents over it's lifetime.

In 1923, Charles Heyward died when he fell with a load of crushed rock into a truck. In 1928 Andrew McKenzie had his leg amputated after being crushed by a fall of stone. Lewis Self, the big supermarket pioneer of St Albans, started as the manager of the quarry in 1928 but retired after being injured in 1930 in an explosion at the rock face. In 1933 a horse and dray fell over the face of the quarry hole and the horse had to be destroyed. There were lots of injuries.

The quarry closed in 1935 and all its plant, machinery and buildings were auctioned off in 1939.<sup>3</sup> In 1945 two factories were proposed for the old site. It was said that the smaller factory would employ 20 men and the larger one up to 200. Neither went ahead. In 1950 a proposal by the Vacuum Oil Company to use the site for depositing the sludge waste product of Altona refineries was rejected by Braybrook Council. The site was subsequently used as a garbage dump until it was rehabilitated as parkland by Sunshine Council during the 1960s.

<sup>1</sup> Oral history discussion 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Jimmy Knowles in *Stories About St Albans: Celebrating 125 Years*, revised edition, 2012, p75.

<sup>3</sup> Argus 24 June 1939

## 1941 – Stanley and Evie Gibson



Stanley and Evie Gibson came to St Albans in 1941, and are remembered because they were such a large family: "There were about sixteen of them – when they hit town it almost doubled the population." In 1940 the St Albans population was about

600 people, so the hyperbole is not quite correct but refers to the welcome arrival of new residents in a decade of fairly static population numbers. The Gibsons were Australians with a blend of Scottish and German heritage.

Stanley Robert Finlayson Gibson was born in March 1900 at Raglan, near Beaufort in Victoria. His paternal origins go back to 1756 to Ayshire, Scotland. Robert and Jane Gibson migrated to Australia in 1852 and settled around Beaufort, Victoria. Their grandson, Stanley R F Gibson, became a blacksmith at Sheep Hills.

Caroline Christina Evelyn Schmidt, known as Evie, was born in January 1903 at Warracknabeal, Victoria. Her paternal origins go back to 1795 to Kalzig, Zulichau, Prussia. Johann Gottlieb Schmidt migrated to Victoria in 1853 and settled in Germantown.<sup>4</sup> His son Carl Heinrich Schmidt married Christina Isabella Stewart (who was of Scottish background) in 1901, and their daughter Caroline Christina Evelyn Schmidt was born in 1903.

Stanley Robert Gibson and Evie Schmidt married in 1924:

*Much interest was displayed in the wedding which was celebrated at St. Saviour's Church of England, Kellalac, on October 22, the contracting parties being Miss C. E. (Evie) Schmidt, eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs C. H. Schmidt, of Kellalac, and Mr Stanley R. Gibson, of Sheep Hills. ... The church had been prettily decorated by the friends of the bride, the chief feature being the beautiful wedding bell and the initials of the bride and bridegroom.<sup>5</sup>*

Stanley and Evie raised 15 children between 1925 and 1944: Beryl Evelyn, Raymond, Ivy May, Lorna Olive, Valma, Betty, Robert Henry, June Hazel, Ivan George, Leslie, Beverley Joy, Mavis, Phyllis Margaret, Barbara Joan, and Yvonne Patricia. Most of the children were born in Warracknabeal, except for the two youngest, who were born in St Albans.

The family came to St Albans in 1941 and settled into 16 Arthur Street, St Albans, which was on the corner of Winifred Street. The house

<sup>4</sup> A number of Germans from Prussia established Germantown near Geelong in the 1850s. The name was changed to Grovedale during WW1.

<sup>5</sup> Horsham Times 5 December 1924 p7

was built in the 1880s by real estate developer Alfred Padley and purchased by one of his relatives. The property was later acquired by James Blount (q.v.) who subdivided it into suburban blocks and offered them for sale in the 1920s. The Freeland family eventually bought the house and rented it out. The Gibsons were living there long enough for it to become known as “the Gibson house” in some of the oral history recollections. They might have had a bit of extra land around the house as they had enough space for a milking cow.

The reason for moving to St Albans is not known, but it may have been related to Stanley’s work. He was a blacksmith in Sheep Hills, but when he came to St Albans he was working as a motor mechanic, most likely in Sunshine.

In 1947, Ivy May Gibson married Charles Farmer, of Leongatha, at St Alban The Martyr Church. It was a true family affair as the best man was Ivy’s brother Ray and the bridesmaid was her sister Beryl. The wedding tea for 50 guests was held at the Mechanics Institute Hall. An unusual feature of the occasion was that it received good coverage in one of Melbourne’s main daily news papers.<sup>1</sup>

Two of the sons, Robert and Ivan, received local press attention because of traffic accidents. In 1952 Robert broke his arm when his car collided in the fog with a parked vehicle.<sup>2</sup> He was unfortunate in that a few months later he was again injured one night when a truck with defective lights struck his car.<sup>3</sup>

Ivan Gibson’s accident was more serious but not reported in the press. Joe Farrugia remembered the incident occurring about 1952:

*Ivan should have been dead when he was eighteen. He was riding his motor bike when there was only one car in Main Road West near the doctor’s place near the chemist in Main Road West and he hit the car head on and it*

*was the only car that would have been on the road for that hour. I happened to be passing and saw him laying on the road with his head split open and the doctor wouldn’t move him. The doctor said “If you know his mum, go and get her because this boy won’t be alive when the ambulance gets here.” That boy lived but even though he was a bit effected by that brain injury he worked, he married, and he had kids. He died only last year or the year before and he was the first of the Gibson kids to have died.<sup>4</sup>*

In 1953 Beryl Gibson married James Robinson from Werribee. They married at St Alban The Martyr Church and the breakfast was at the Mechanics Hall. Guests came for far afield as Wentworth, Warracknabeal, Swan Hill, Halls Gap, Beaufort, and Chelsea.<sup>5</sup> This might have been the family’s last public appearance in St Albans, as in the following week they were evicted from their rented home, with a stay of three months; the order was not opposed.<sup>6</sup> The reason for the eviction was not stated, but it seems that the owner, Jack Freeland (q.v.), was moving back to the district and wanted to live there with his family.

The Gibsons left St Albans in February 1954 and moved to Dillon Street, Braybrook. The younger children continued their education at the nearby Tottenham North primary school.

The Gibson family received more press coverage in 1965 when Yvonne Patricia Gibson, the youngest in the family, married Mr James McGuinness at St John’s Church in Footscray. Once again it was a big family event. This time the newspaper report included a photograph of the family lined up to congratulate the bride and groom. Undoubtedly now a family treasure.

Stanley Robert Finlayson Gibson died in September 1973 at age 73 years.

Caroline Christina Evelyn “Evie” Gibson nee Schmidt died in September 1984 at age 81.



<sup>1</sup> Herald 26 July 1947 p3

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 17 July 1953

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 4 September 1953

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Farrugia in *Talking About St Albans* 2019, p58

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 18 September 1953 p3

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 25 September 1953

## 1941 – Henry and Dulcie Scoble

The Scoble family of St Albans originated from Cornwall, England, and was part of the broader migration that occurred from that region in the 1800s. Cornwall in the nineteenth century was known for its mineral wealth and mining industry that stretched back to pre-Roman times.

The decline of mining in the 1840s as a source of employment was a major factor in the 'great migration' from Cornwall, as miners ventured to establish a life for their families in the new world, and many came to Australia. Adelaide was a popular destination because of opportunities in mining, and with the settlement of Cornish immigrants around Burra Burra the area became known as Australia's Little Cornwall.

However, even here the changing fortunes of the mining industry could not guarantee a secure livelihood, and the discovery of gold in the 1850s meant immigrants were willing to trek the extra mileage to places like Bendigo and the allure of instant fortunes on the diggings. From such beginnings, some of the Scoble clan settled on the plains around Castlemaine, Malmsbury and Kyneton, into the more predictable livelihood of a farming community.

Henry Joseph Scoble's family originates from England when James Scoble married Mary Jane Tretheway. Their first child, Thomas, was born in Cornwall, and they had 9 more children after they migrated to Victoria, Australia. After Mary died James married Emma Jane Bennett.

Albert Henry Scoble was a son of Thomas Scoble and Emily Ann Bishop. Tom came to Australia with his parents between 1854 and 1857. In 1876 at the age of 22 he married Emily Ann Bishop in Ballarat. Tom died in Malmsbury in 1918 aged 62. He was a farmer.

Henry Joseph Scoble was one of seven children of Albert Henry Scoble (1886-1962) and Jane Trickey (1885-1958). He was born in Malmsbury in March 1914 and became a fitter by trade.

Henry Joseph Scoble married Dulcie Jean Smith in 1935. She was born in Launceston, Tasmania, in 1915, but her family's history is unknown. Henry and Dulcie moved to Leongatha by 1936. They raised four children:

- Irene Ethel was born in September 1935, started at the St Albans primary school in 1941 and left in 1949 to work in a factory. She married Ossie Opie of Deer Park.<sup>1</sup> He was a builder and they lived in Station Road.
- Valda Rae (sometimes known as Val or

<sup>1</sup> Not to be confused with the Ossie Opie of Deer Park who died in the Nobel's factory explosion of 1941. The Opie family were early pioneers in the district. Refer to articles in *St Albans Pioneers - Settlers and Speculators from the 1860s*, 2018.

Valerie) was born in August 1936, started at St Albans primary school in 1941 and left in 1947 for the Footscray Girls School. She also did some piano training with Bernice Self. Valda married Edward James Whitten<sup>2</sup> the famous footballer from Footscray. They probably met when they were working at the Southern Can Company in West Footscray. They had one son, Edward junior. Ted Whitten died of cancer in August 1995 at age 62 years. Valda nee Scoble died in April 2000, at age 62, after a two-year battle with lung cancer.

- Albert Henry was born in December 1937 started at St Albans primary school in 1943 and left for the Sunshine technical school.
- Robert John was born in June 1939 in Leongatha and started at St Albans primary school in 1945 and left in 1950 for the Sunshine technical school. He married and had three children but the details are not available. He died in August 1982 at Mildura at age 42 years.

Henry Scoble enlisted in 1942 at age 29 years and was placed in the Fifth Australian Division Mobile Laundry Unit. His address was given as Oberon Avenue, St Albans, so the family had moved here in the early 1940s. He served in New Guinea and was discharged in April 1945. He was given a celebratory party when he came back on leave<sup>3</sup> and his name was included in the St Albans Roll of Honour.<sup>4</sup>

When he came back, Henry was still living in Oberon Avenue and working as a labourer. He started his car repair service in Boundary Road (Main Road East) in the mid 1940s. The family lived near Mrs. Judd who was where the present Safeway store is located (erstwhile owned by Woolworth).<sup>5</sup>

In 1950 Scoble was in partnership and the business was known as "H Scoble & Foster".<sup>6</sup> In 1953 Scoble applied to Sunshine Council to establish a service station in St Albans Road on the Percy Street corner and he moved into his new premises in August.<sup>7</sup> He sold the occasional car and motorbike but his main work was in re-boring, re-sleeving and engine reconditioning – prompt service, all work guaranteed.

Evelyn Mullenger remembered them in their early days in St Albans:

<sup>2</sup> Valda and Ted's story "E.J. –Ted Whitten" has been written by Jim Main, Wilkinson Books, Melb; 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 27 April 1945

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 13 July 1945 p1

<sup>5</sup> Colin Missen "St Albans: The Way It Was and The Way We Were 1939-1950".

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 6 August 1948. It is not known who Foster was.

<sup>7</sup> Sunshine Advocate 28 August 1953

In Main Road East there was Scoble's, where you could get your battery recharged. You could also buy petrol there. That was near where the present Safeways store is located. By 1960 he had moved to 29 St Albans Road on the corner of Percy Street.<sup>1</sup>

Gavan Aitken recalled that:

*Henry Scoble served in New Guinea during the war and when he came back his first workshop was on Main Road East. That was in the late 1940s. He established his service station in St Albans Road in the 1950s. That was probably only the second building along the stretch of road. Then Endress moved in and it became Auto Endress.<sup>2</sup>*

In December 1953 Henry Scoble expanded his business, calling it St Albans Motors, and announced the opening of a Service Station where petrol and oil would be available.<sup>3</sup>



Sunshine Advocate 18 December 1953

In the 1960s Scoble sold his business to Ernst Endress (q.v.) a German immigrant who came to Australia in 1954. The business became known as Auto-Endress Shell Garage and they specialised in Holdens and Volkswagens.

During the 1960s and early 1970s Henry and Dulcie Scoble were living and working in Echuca. By the late 1970s to the 1980s they had moved back south to Melton.

Dulcie Jean Scoble nee Smith died in July 1984 at Melbourne, aged 69 years. She is another local woman about whom we know little through both written and oral history. The only reference to her found in the local paper is that she joined the State School Mother's Club in 1946 after her son Robert started there.<sup>4</sup> Local historian Alie Missen has referred to Dulcie Scoble as "a darling and a lovely person".

Henry Joseph Scoble died in July 1997 at Ballarat, aged 83 years.

NB: thank you to Kerry Scoble for providing the Scoble family background and genealogy.

<sup>1</sup> Evelyn Mullenger in *St Albans Oral History from the Tin Shed Archives*, 2004, p100

<sup>2</sup> *People of 1950s' St Albans*, 2019 p 98.

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 18 December 1953 p9

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate Friday 12 April 1946

## 1946 – Richard and Myrtle Yeomans

Richard William "Dick" Yeomans was born in Fitzroy in September 1888. He traces his forebears to 1571 in Duffield, Derbyshire, England. His family came to Port Phillip Bay in 1852 through William Richard Yeomans (1826-1904), whose son, also Richard William Yeomans (1854-1933), was the father of the St Albans' resident Richard William Yeomans.

The youngest Richard Yeomans married Myrtle May Hills in 1938. She was born in Carlton and traces her forebears to 1703 in Ramsey, Huntingdonshire, England. Her family came to Victoria through Mr Alfred Charles Hills who arrived pre 1860 and married Sarah Elizabeth Mallett in Chewton, Victoria. One of their granddaughters was Lilian Violet Hills, whose daughter Myrtle May Hills was born in 1912 in Carlton. Myrtle trained and worked as a knitter.



Family of Alfred Hills and Sarah Mallett

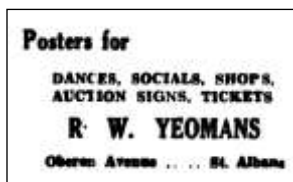
Richard William Yeomans and Myrtle May Hills raised three surviving children:

- Robert William was born in May 1940, started at St Albans primary school in 1946 and left in 1951 for the Sunshine technical school. His father was listed as a sign writer. Robert became a fitter, married Edda Endress<sup>5</sup> and became a service station proprietor. They were in Percy Street, St Albans.
- Pamela was born in March 1944, started at St Albans primary school in 1949 and left in 1951 for the Sunshine technical school. Her father was listed as a storeman.
- Valerie Fay was born in November 1945, started at St Albans primary school in 1951 and left in 1955 for the St Albans East primary school. Her mother was listed as her guardian-parent. Valerie followed in her father's footsteps and became a

<sup>5</sup> Ernst and Annie Endress were German nationals who migrated in 1954 with children Ursula, Edeltraud (Edda), and Hans. Ernst was a motor mechanic and Hans also became a mechanic.

sign writer. She married Fred Lorensini who was a computer programmer. They had a daughter and son and were living in Gisborne before migrating to Cairns in Queensland.

The Yeomans family came to St Albans in the early to mid 1940s and moved into one of the Coleman houses in Oberon Avenue, part of the Pinnacle Estate that was developed by Walmer Ewart Coleman (q.v.). As a resident, Yeomans sometimes raised problems on the estate at the Progress Association meetings, e.g. requesting additional lighting as well as improved drainage and street construction.



Yeomans was a sign writer who designed posters for dances and socials, auctions and shop signs. He put that skill to good use

for his local activities. By 1945 he was part of the St Albans Progress Association debating a proposal to set up a housing group in the district. Yeomans prepared an attractive advertising board inviting further members to join the group.<sup>1</sup>

At a meeting of the Progress Association in 1947 he complained about the lack of entertainment offered in the district and raised the question of forming a co-operative picture organisation in St Albans. This was the first known meeting that raised the possibility of a kindergarten, which was left in the hands of Norman Self and Thomas McIntyre to follow up with representatives of the School Committee and Mothers' Club, and it became one of Yeomans' interests for the next few years.<sup>2</sup>

Yeomans was the assistant secretary of the Progress Association in 1947 and had to use diplomacy in negotiations with Keilor Council representatives who were upset with Tom Toby, the secretary of the Association.

Yeomans and Toby were a team because of their secretarial roles on the Association and sometimes they would attend together as delegates representing the group, e.g. regarding the expansion of the Footscray and District Hospital.<sup>3</sup> The new building would cost over £500,000 making the hospital the most modern in the Metropolitan area. Unfortunately their meeting with the public in Braybrook proved an embarrassing failure.<sup>4</sup> Despite this setback, Yeomans was re-elected as Secretary at the Association's AGM.

Other issues that Yeomans raised with Keilor Council include the implementation of a garbage collection service and recurring problems

of stock wandering about the district.

In August 1947 Yeomans had taken over as Secretary of the Progress Association and was convening a meeting to organize a Christmas carnival. The improving rapport with Keilor Council had not lasted long, as in November 1947 the councilors criticized Yeomans at some length:

*... after the Council had dealt with a letter affecting St Albans interests and signed by Mr. Yeomans, as assistant secretary of St. Albans Progress Association, Cr. Dickson stated that the Association was simply using Mr. Yeomans as a dummy, but he (Cr. Dickson) refused to be fooled in regard to the position. Cr. Dickson went on to say that Mr. Yeomans and Mr. Toby travelled together in a train to certain meetings, and Councilors could rest assured that those were not of sporting interests or of the Liberal or Country parties.<sup>5</sup>*

Apparently some councilors saw the Progress Association as being persistently anti-Keilor and recent debate about severance had aggravated perceptions of animosity.

1948 was an important year for the development of a local kindergarten, because two members of the Association, Messrs. Alfred Clarke and Richard Yeomans, convened a public meeting to discuss the question of starting a branch of the Free Kindergarten in St. Albans:

*A speaker from the Free Kindergarten Union will attend, as will also Mr. D. McLean, of Spotswood, where a most successful branch has been operating for the last three years. Mr McLean is a former resident of St. Albans and will be remembered by many old residents. Considerable interest has already been created in the move.<sup>6</sup>*

At this "small but enthusiastic" meeting, Alfred Clarke was elected President pro tem, and Richard Yeomans was elected Secretary pro tem, though the availability of suitable premises was a "matter that was left in abeyance for the time being".<sup>7</sup> In the following week Yeomans issued a number of questionnaires to parents with eligible children as it was intended to enroll pupils at the next public meeting. This was probably quite ambitious as they had not yet secured an appropriate venue. Nevertheless, this formative work by Clarke and Yeomans meant that over the next decade they were credited with starting the St Albans Kindergarten.<sup>8</sup>

In August 1948, Tom Toby resigned as secretary of the Progress Association and Dick Yeomans took on the position. The kindergarten project progressed by identifying the public hall as a potential venue. The 'energetic secretary' Yeomans had arranged a deputation with:

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 23 November 1945

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 24 January 1947

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 18 July 1947 p2

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 22 August 1947

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 7 November 1947

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 9 July 1948 p2

<sup>7</sup> Sunshine Advocate 16 July 1948 p1

<sup>8</sup> The kindergarten was not built till 1960.

... the Free Kindergarten of Victoria and the Dept. of Public Health; from both these bodies much valuable information was obtained and on Friday of last week, Miss Goldberg of the Dept. of Public Health, visited St. Albans, and in company with Mrs. S. Thomas, Cr. H. Easton and Mr. A. Clarke made an inspection of the local hall.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime Yeomans was also active on other Progress Association business. He wrote to Keilor Council requesting a tree planting scheme for St Albans, stating that his Association would assist in the planting and maintenance if Council would supply trees and guards. He also wrote to the Railways Commissioner asking for an additional train in the afternoons.

The kindergarten project continued with a fundraising carnival on A.N.A. Day. They were becoming quite ambitious in their advertising:

*The committee of the local Free Kindergarten would like to make it known that they are in need of a Play Leader, and are happy to announce that they are in a position to assist any suitable young lady who may be interested, in this type of work. The minimum age is 18 years and offers a direct stepping stone to a Kindergarten Directress.<sup>2</sup>*

In 1951 the Kindergarten Committee was holding its third annual meeting. Despite its earlier positive plans and ambitions, a local kindergarten service had not been established, but local commitment was still there, and the leadership had diversified: Agnes Easton was now president, Alfred Clarke and Lloyd Coleman were vice-presidents, Dorothy Self was the treasurer, and Richard Yeomans was secretary.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, the references to Richard William Yeomans in the digitised records for the local paper at the time, the Sunshine Advocate, stop in August 1951. There is one last reference to a "Mr Yeomans" in 1953, and the digitised records for the Sunshine Advocate stop in 1954, thus there is little reported information about the family in St Albans during the 1950s.

Myrtle Yeomans' role in St Albans was seldom mentioned in local history. She was occasionally mentioned as raising funds through running stalls and baking cakes, but she must be recognised as being a foundation member and President of the St Albans East State School Mother's Club in 1956.

The Yeomans family appear to have moved to Ridley Street, Albion, by 1963 and were there at least a decade. By 1977 Richard William Yeomans and Myrtle May nee Hills were at Bulltown Road in Ballan, and Richard was once again working as a sign writer. Little else is known about their new lives.

Myrtle Yeomans nee Hills may have passed away in 1991.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 24 September 1948 p2

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 21 April 1950 p3

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 17 August 1951

## 1949 – Jack and Doreen Freeland



Jack and Doreen Freeland are remembered as living in one of the oldest houses of St Albans, built in the 1880s for Mrs Clara Clarke. In more recent memories it was known as "The Freeland House". It still exists at 16 Arthur Street.

Jack Freeland was born in Ouyen in 1916, one of six children born to Elsie May Scown and John George Freeland who was from Horsham. Elsie May was born in Terang in 1886; her father's family originates in 1452 from Walterus Scawen in Saint Germans, Cornwall, England. The family arrived in South Australia in 1839 via William Scown and Elizabeth Hawke.

Doreen Callanan was born in February 1918 in Ararat. Her father was Michael Joseph Callanan who was born in 1873 in Graiguefrehane, Tipperary, Ireland; he married Ella May Clarke in Ararat in 1908.

Jack Freeland married Doreen Callanan in 1938 and they settled in Moonee Ponds before moving to St Albans in 1949. Jack was a butcher and they had a small piggery in Fox's lane as well as the Arthur Street house, but that was possibly acquired later. They raised at least six children: Carmel (1938), Rhonda Doreen (1945), Yvonne (1946), Kaye, and twins Jill and John:

- Carmel was born in September 1938 and started at St Albans Primary School in 1949 from Ascot Vale. Her father was listed as a farmer. In 1951 she obtained a Parents' Association Scholarship that enabled her to sit for an entrance exam and she started attending the Sunshine Technical School.
- Rhonda Doreen was born in July 1945 started at St Albans Primary School in 1950. Her father was listed as a carrier. In 1957 she was attending St Albans High School in form 1A and came top of class in the June and December examinations. She was in Form 5 in 1961. This was the highest class level at the school, as the Matriculation year (Form 6) was not yet available. She trained as a teacher and was staying with her parents in the early 1970s.
- Yvonne was born in May 1946 and

started at St Albans Primary School in 1952. Her father was listed as a council worker. She left in October 1954 for the Richmond State School, as the family had resettled there.

- Kaye was born in the late 1940s and attended St Albans High School during the 1960s. Other details not known.
- Twins Jill and John were the last of the children but their details are not known.

The Freelands moved away from the district in 1954 and went to live in Richmond.

Stanley and Evie Gibson had rented the Freeland house and were living there during the 1940s. They were a large family who came from Sheep Hills in the Woomera. Stanley Robert Gibson was a motor mechanic and Evie Schmidt was the eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs Charles Henry Schmidt of Kellalac. The Gibsons' lease was terminated in 1953 when Freeland was granted an eviction order against them.<sup>1</sup>

The Freeland family returned to St Albans. Between 1954 and 1963 they were in Foxes Lane and Jack was working as a driver. By 1960 they had moved back into 16 Arthur Street and Jack was working as a butcher. During the 1970s he was working at Zane's Autos in McKechnie Street near the railway station.

The Freelands probably lived in their Arthur Street home through to the 1980s. At that stage the house was looking neglected and was possibly being rented out. Brimbank City Council through their Post-contact Cultural Heritage Study had identified it as of local significance as one of the few surviving buildings which reflected the late nineteenth century development of St Albans.

Jack Freeland (butcher and slaughter man) died in October 1999 at Port Fairy, and was buried at Melton. His obituary refers to 6 children, 20 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren.

Doreen Freeland nee Callanan died in July 2008, and her remains were also buried in the Melton cemetery.

The Freelands' old home in St Albans has been renovated and is now being used for religious purposes as the Chùa Hoàng Pháp Buddhist temple.



Chùa Hoàng Pháp Buddhist temple 2018

## 1949 – Garnett Jack Cameron



Garnett "Garry" Jack Cameron was born in April 1948 to Lorna and Jack Cameron who came to St Albans in 1949 and helped establish the St Albans Community Youth Club in 1954. Jack Cameron died in a motor car accident in 1962 and Lorna Cameron afterwards continued as the primary leader for the Community Youth Club until she retired in 2004, which is fifty years of inspirational leadership.

Garry Cameron attended St Albans High School in the 1960s and became a talented footballer. He played with the St Albans Football Club and was part of their victorious Footscray District league premiers team in 1966. He was subsequently recruited by North Melbourne and played for them in the VFL competition before extending his career as captain-coach with some Victorian country football teams.

Garry was an accountant by profession and his early working life combined accounting and football careers. He came back to St Albans in the 1970s and supported his mother to run the Tin Shed community centre for the next thirty years, taking on various Board of Management responsibilities including secretary, public officer, treasurer, and newsletter editor. He was also a willing handyman and "keeper of the key" for various after-hours activities.

Garry was an accountant by profession and his early working life combined accounting and football careers. He came back to St Albans in the 1970s and supported his mother to run the Tin Shed community centre for the next thirty years, taking on various Board of Management responsibilities including secretary, public officer, treasurer, and newsletter editor. He was also a willing handyman and "keeper of the key" for various after-hours activities.

His community activism came to the fore in the late 1970s while working at the St Albans Community Health and Resource Centre when he became a whistleblower regarding alleged mismanagement. The subsequent investigations introduced some significant changes to the Health Centre's operations.

Garry Cameron was a determined advocate for the local community and a strong voice in promoting local needs, particularly in discussions with various state government instrumentalities. He was an articulate observer and commentator and much of the youth club's major correspondence with government departments benefited from his pithy insight. In recent decades he worked as a forensic accountant helping investigate the financial practices of small business operators. In his retirement he was dealing with the settlement of his late mother's estate and documenting the family history.<sup>2</sup>

Garnett Jack Cameron died suddenly at home in December 2017 due to a blood clot. His son continues to live in St Albans.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 25 September 1953

<sup>2</sup> Lorna Cameron passed away in November 2014.



## 1950 – Claude and Alice Coupe

Claude Coupe was born in 1917 in Melbourne East. His parents were John Charles Coupe and Elizabeth Marguerite Huxtable. John traces his parentage back to 1818 in Nottingham-shire, England; the family came to Victoria prior to 1889. Elizabeth traces her family to 1791 in Filleigh, Devon, England; the family migrated to Tasmania about 1828.

In the 1930s Claude Coupe was living in Sale, Gippsland. As young teenagers, Claude and his twin brother Charles took to playing football in the South Gippsland League and they later played some matches with East Hawthorn. Presumably they never made it to the highest ranks because Claude's career developed more industrially; he was working as a turner before becoming a "manufacturer" or factory manager.

Claude Coupe and Alice Carrigan married in 1943 and moved to Footscray before coming to St Albans about 1950. Their home was in Foxton Street near Errington Reserve. They had three daughters: Claudia, Marguerite, and Charmaine.

Lenine Claudia, known as Claudia, was born in April 1944 and started at the St Albans primary school in 1949; a classmate was Pam Yeomans whose parents were also involved in the youth club. Claudia went to St Albans High School in 1956, the inaugural year when the school started in Sunshine. She enjoyed athletics and was on the softball team with Bev Toogood, a long-term youth club member and supporter.

Claude and Alice Coupe became foundation members of the St Albans Police Youth Club. When they first arrived in the district the club had not been established and there were no organised activities for teenagers, so Claude was one of the people who started some:

*Being a supporter of the underdog, I considered that effort was required to improve this state of affairs. The obvious answer was a youth club. Steps were taken in this direction and through the efforts of Sergeant Miller, Mr and Mrs Jack Cameron, Eddy Mundy, Mr and Mrs Salai, and many other good people.<sup>1</sup>*

Alice and Claude started teaching dancing once the club venue was established. He later was assisting with the football, athletics and softball. He must have inspired his daughter Claudia as she took part in athletics and softball competitions at the high school. The other daughter Marguerite was secretary of the club's Junior Committee when it was functioning.

When Jack Cameron died in 1962, Claude took over as president of the committee.

Alice Coupe nee Carrigan passed away in 1957 at age 35, which was very young.

Claude Coupe and his daughters left St Albans in 1964 and moved to Elgin Street, Sale.

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<sup>1</sup> Observer 17 September 1964 p2

## 1950 – Katryina and Petro Cebisev

Ivan Cebisev and Katryina nee Neidenov were Ukrainian nationals from Crimea who migrated to Australia on the Wooster Victory and landed in Melbourne in May 1949. They were being accompanied by Petro and Lina Cebisev. Petro was their son and it seems likely that Lina was married to Petro. The family came to St Albans about 1950 and they were all living together in Princess Street opposite the railway line.

The Cebisev family was associated with two major disasters: one related to the death of Katryina Cebisev, and the other the death of Stanislaus Kaska (q.v.).

Katryina's death occurred in June 1950 only 14 months after their arrival in Australia and not long after their settlement in St Albans. She would travel by train to work at a cotton mill in Footscray, and one day was over-carried past Footscray and stopped off at South Kensington station to head back. She was crossing the line illegally between platforms when she was struck by an express train and died instantly.<sup>2</sup>

Katherina Cebisev had died tragically at age 58 years, and was buried at the Footscray general cemetery.

At the inquest into her death, her son Petro told the City Coroner he had repeatedly warned his mother against crossing the line. When the Coroner asked if it was allowed in the Crimea, Petro replied that the stations over there were different.<sup>3</sup>

The tragedy became more mysterious a couple of years later with the discovery of a calico bag of £5 notes totalling £180 amongst scraps of clothing. After the 1950 accident a railway worker saw some shredded clothing on the track and buried it in ballast. Later when the ballast was being cleared, workers tossed the scraps over the fence. A couple of years later some school boys were fossicking along the line and found a calico bag amongst the scraps and thus discovered the money. The money was given to the Public Trustee to find its rightful owners.<sup>4</sup> Katryina's family knew it must have been hers because she was in the habit of carrying her money in a calico bag tied around her waist.

The mystery of ownership was resolved in January 1953. Twelve people had claimed that they were the rightful owners, but Ivan Cebisev proved his claim. Amongst the notes in the calico bag was a 1900 gold coin and Ivan Cebisev established ownership by producing a gold coin identical with the one in the bag.<sup>5</sup>

Jimmy Knowles recalls Petro Cebisev's link to the mysterious death of Mr Kaska, who was a Polish immigrant from Sunshine:

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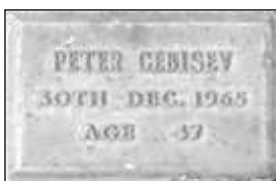
<sup>2</sup> Age 28 June 1950 p5

<sup>3</sup> Age 21 July 1950 p4

<sup>4</sup> Canberra Times 29 January 1953 p3

<sup>5</sup> Barrier Miner, Broken Hill 30 January 1953 p7

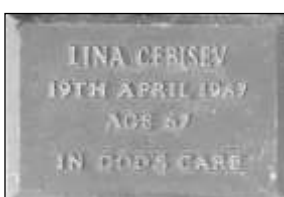
*Peter Cebisev's dog found the body down the old well near the St Albans railway station ... and when they checked it out they discovered Kaska's body. At that time there would not have been too many people who would have known there was a well there because it was concreted over. Kaska was a businessman from Sunshine who had gone missing and the discovery of his body confirmed that he had been murdered. It turned into a big affair with the police, the fire brigade, coronial inquests, even reporters from the main papers all taking an interest. It was even reported as front-page news in the Age, which was very rare, as news of St Albans seldom made it into the dailies.<sup>1</sup>*



Petro "Peter" Cebisev died in December 1966 at age 47 years and was buried at the Altona cemetery. He'd worked as a motor mechanic.

He was remembered in local history as the man who discovered that there was a body dumped in a disused well near the railway station. The corpse was later identified as being that of Stanislaus Kaska (q.v.) of Albion, who had been murdered in November 1950.

Ivan Cebisev died at Kew in November 1980 aged 76 years, and was buried at the Springvale cemetery. It does not appear that he had any children.



Almost nothing is known about Lina Cebisev. She was listed as an "attendant" in the electoral roll and in 1976 had the good fortune of winning a

small prize in the De La Salle "Midwinters Art Union" raffle. She died in April 1987 at age 67 years, and was buried at Altona Memorial Park. It does not appear that she had any children.

Postscript: In 1954 the Ukrainian community of St Albans was probably one of the first groups to start planning their own hall:

*A group of Ukrainian migrants, numbering some 90 families residing in St. Albans, have applied to Sunshine Council for permission to erect a community hall in Scott Ave., St. Albans. The migrants propose erecting the hall at their own expense to provide a centre for religious and cultural activities.<sup>2</sup>*

They were not successful there, so they built classrooms and a hall for social activities on the Keilor side on the corner of Alexina and Arthur streets. It is still there. Now there is also a Ukrainian elderly people's home, known as Kalyna Care, based in Delahey.

<sup>1</sup> Jimmy Knowles in *Stories About St Albans : Celebrating 125 Years*, revised edition 2018, p34.

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 19 February 1954 p2

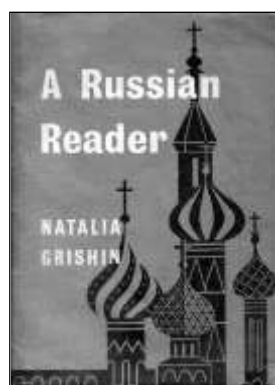
## 1950 – Dmitry and Natalia Grishin

Dmitry Grishin and Natalia Luzgin were residents of St Albans for a few years during the 1950s. They were a very talented family and it's a great shame that the district wasn't able to leverage their intellectual and artistic expertise for local community benefit, or at least for the kudos.

Dmitry Vladimirovich Grishin was born in 1908 along the Volga River in Russia. While he was away at university, the rest of his family were arrested and sent off to Siberia. Dmitry persevered and became a teacher and lecturer. He married Natalia Dmitrievna Luzgin in 1940 and taught at Moscow University. During the war they were captured and sent to work in Berlin and were very lucky to have survived the allied bombing. They fled to Emden.<sup>3</sup>

The Grishins came to Australia in 1949 and were sent to Bonegilla, where Dmitry started protests against the poor living conditions. He was assigned employment as a lab assistant at Monsanto in Footscray, and this might have been when they came to St Albans. There was a Grishin family in Millawa Avenue in early 1952, and it's likely to have been them.

Dmitry began working as a part-time tutor in the Russian department of the Melbourne University. He progressed rapidly and continued his research into Russian literature: "*An indefatigable participant in international congresses, he was founder and vice-president of the International Dostoevsky Society*".<sup>3</sup>



Natalia Grishin became a naturalised citizen in 1956. She had graduated from the Pedagogical Institute of the Moscow University and became a senior tutor also at the Melbourne University's Russian department. She was a painter and writer, and one of her publications was a textbook, printed in 1963 and titled

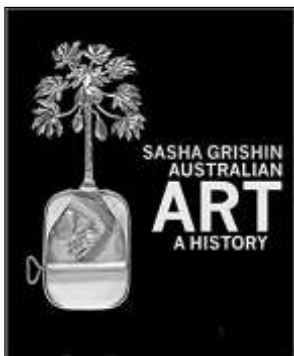
"A Russian Reader". It was about language, targeting foreign speakers.

Natalia's first son, Vladimir Grishin, was born in May 1945. He started at the St Albans Primary School in 1952 and transferred to the new East Primary in 1956. He was at the High School in 1958 and 1959 before the family moved to Coburg in 1960. Vladimir was awarded a B.A. in Russian from Melbourne University in 1972 and became a teacher. He married Victoria and they settled in Seaford.

Natalie's second son, Alexander "Sasha"

<sup>3</sup> Nina Christesen "Grishin, Dmitry Vladimirovich (1908–1975)" *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 14, (MUP), 1996

Dmitrievich Grishin, was born in St Albans in April 1950 and lived there until he was 10 years old. His schooling started at St Albans and then he went to Coburg primary in 1960, before his secondary schooling at Coburg and University High. He once said that his father had taken him to the city and showed him where the artist Samuel Thomas Gill died as a pauper on the steps of the post office in Bourke Street; and that was part of Sasha's introduction to art.



Sasha's tertiary studies were at Melbourne, Moscow, London and Oxford. He developed his interest in art into a successful academic career as an historian, lecturer, critic and writer. He has published over twenty-five books and over two thousand articles dealing with

art. One of his most acclaimed works, his magnum opus, was "Australian Art: A History" which was published in 2013. He has been awarded many academic and civic accolades. He is an Emeritus Professor at the Australian National University, guest curator at the National Gallery of Victoria, and an approved valuer with the Australian Government Department of Communications and the Arts.<sup>1</sup>

In 1974 Sasha Grishin married Christine Mary Jane Falkland (aka G.W. Bot) who was a Canberra-based artist. Her work is featured in numerous national and overseas galleries.

Dmitry Vladimirovich Grishin, late of St Albans, died in September 1975 at age 67 and was buried at Sorrento. Nina Christesen, a biographer, wrote that Grishin was remembered for the very Russian atmosphere he created around him, his sincerity, his passionate devotion to his native-land and his infinite capacity for work:

*Grishin insisted on speaking his native tongue to those who could understand the language and teaching it to those who could not. Students and colleagues invited to his home were treated to a lavish display of flowers; fruit trees and beehives crowded his small garden, and the house was crammed with books, Russian artefacts and his wife's paintings. Musical performances (guitar, balalaika and mandolin) were provided by his sons; Dmitry and Natalia gave poetry recitations and the guests were plied with Russian food. Grishin was an energetic entertainer with his whimsicalities, puzzles and quizzes.<sup>2</sup>*

Such a very Russian and a very talented family. How did we lose them?

<sup>1</sup> There are many references to Grishin's work on the web. Refer to his site at [www.sashagrishin.com](http://www.sashagrishin.com)

<sup>2</sup> Nina Christesen <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/grishin-dmitry-vladimirovich-10373>

## 1952 – Mollie and George Wardle

Mollie and George Wardle came to St Albans about 1952 and stayed about a decade. They became storekeepers in Main Road West, having taken over Perrett's General Store.

George Eric Wardle was born in April 1906 at Rutherglen. His forebears came to South Australia pre 1860. His father Thomas Wardle married Annie George in 1903 and they moved to Rutherglen. Later they moved to Melbourne and in 1930 George was working as a motorcar salesman in East Malvern.

Mollie Hazel Evans was born in October 1911 in Melbourne. Her father was Albert Ernest Evans of Williamstown and her mother was Emma Marie Hewish of Lilydale.

Mollie Hazel Evans married George Eric Wardle in October 1938 at St George's Presbyterian Church in East St Kilda.<sup>3</sup> They settled in Caulfield and then Camberwell, and by 1949 they were in Glen Iris.

Mollie and George Wardle came to St Albans in September 1952, because that's when the children started at the primary school. The Wardles had bought the general store at 346 Main Road West that had been operated by the Perrett family for the last 30 years.<sup>4</sup> It was a time when major change was about to occur that would change the village forever.

The 1950s was a decade of major change in St Albans. In 1950 the population was less than 1,000 people. Then the European migrants started arriving and bungalows were being built everywhere. By the mid 1950s the population was already over 5,000 and by 1970 it was about 20,000.

Communication must have been an interesting experience on both sides of the counter as these residents of the non-English-speaking variety moved in. Vanda Viti, one of these new migrants from Italy, noted that:

*The street where I lived was a multi-national village, and everyone got along beautifully. The women created their own language made up of Italian, English, German, Yugoslav, Polish, Greek, Maltese, and Ukrainian. It was funny to listen to them talk about children, husbands, sewing, cooking, and gossiping about others. Somehow they understood each other with a lot of laughter and mime and they were always prepared to improvise – like our neighbour who went to Mrs Wardle's general store to buy a colander and asked for a "water she go, spaghetti she stay." The Australian traders must have had a few laughs in those days.<sup>5</sup>*

In 1960 Wardle's General Store was at 346

<sup>3</sup> Argus 10 October 1938 p4

<sup>4</sup> Refer to chapter by John Perrett in *Stories about St Albans Celebrating 125 Years*, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Refer to chapter in *St Albans Secondary College Celebration 60 Years 1956 – 2016* (2016)

Main Road West, between the National Bank and Perrett's news agency. Two decades earlier this area had been the main shopping strip of the village. In the 1960s the business developments along Main Road East, East Esplanade, and Alfrieda Street meant that many customers were drawn to that side of town for their shopping experience. East of the railway line the food businesses now included Panayides Grocer, St Albans Fruit Supply, Shands Foodland, and Arcade Fruit Supply. Dudley Byron was the greengrocer in Alfrieda Street and Moffat's Fruit Shop was near Self & Goddard in East Esplanade. The competition was fierce.



Gavan Aitken recalled that the Wardles ran the store until the early 1960s. Mr Wardle ended up being in a wheelchair and died about 1962 or 1963 and the family left the area afterwards.

Frank Farrugia, another keen observer from the 1950s, recalled that:

*George Wardle died about 1962. People remember seeing him in the store in a wheelchair for a while so Mrs Wardle was mostly running the store. After Mr Wardle died Mrs Wardle kept the shop going but sold it after a few years and I don't recall what happened to them. When that shop and the neighbouring block were demolished and rebuilt they accommodated the National Bank and the little arcade and that's where Peter Bevez started his medical practice.<sup>1</sup>*

Mollie and George Wardle had four children: Geoffrey, Ian, Joan and Rodger. They all attended the St Albans Primary School, the first three having transferred from Ashburton primary.

Geoffrey Winston Wardle was born in December 1940 and enrolled at the St Albans primary school in September 1952. He was probably in the Sunshine Scout Group in the 1950s as his name is mentioned.<sup>2</sup> He married Frances Dawn. Geoffrey died in May 2002.

Ian Robert Wardle was born in April 1942 and enrolled in the primary school September 1952. Ian was in Form 1C in the first intake of students for St Albans High School in 1956,

when it started in Sunshine, so he was a pioneer in a way. He died in June 1966 at Beaconsfield, at age 24 years.

Joan Margaret Wardle was born in February 1946 and enrolled in the primary school in September 1952. She left in 1957 and also headed for the Sunshine Tech. Nothing else is known about her.

Rodger David Wardle was born in July 1947 and started at St Albans Primary in July 1953. He attended St Albans High School but left for Sunshine North. He died in July 1968 at Surrey Hills, so he must have been aged 21.



St Albans High School Form 1c, 1956

Eric Wardle's health declined and he was using a wheelchair. He died in St Albans in July 1962 and was buried at the Altona cemetery.

In 1963 Mollie Hazel Wardle was listed in the Electoral Roll at 346 Main Road West, St Albans. She must have sold up and left not long after this as in 1965 the old shop site was designated as "storage". In 1970 it was the office for the St Albans and Outer West Observer.

In 1968 Mollie Hazel Wardle was listed in the electoral roll at Warring Road Wattle Park, possibly staying with her son Geoffrey Winston Wardle. In 1980 Mollie Hazel Wardle was at Beaconsfield-Emerald Road, Berwick. (There were other Wardles listed in this electorate.)

Mollie Hazel Wardle died in March 1992 at age 80 years and was buried with her late son, Ian Robert Wardle, who had died at age 24.



<sup>1</sup> Recollections of Frank Farrugia, St Albans oral history discussions 2012, as yet unpublished.

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 3 December 1954 p7

## 1952 – Nell and Tony Mom

Pieterella “Nell” Mom and Antonius Engelbertus Wilhelmus Mom were Dutch immigrants who settled in St Albans in the 1950s. In 1963 Nell Mom was elected the first-ever female secretary of the St Albans Soccer Club, which was such an unusual event it made the local headlines.<sup>1</sup>

Antonius “Tony” traces his family heritage back to 1766 and Willem Momm in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. He and his wife Catharina Melgers moved to Utrecht, Netherlands, in the 1840s. Nell’s family heritage is not known.

Nell and Tony had a couple of children: Miekka “Micki” Paulina was born in 1944 and Bert was born about 1946.

The family came to Australia in 1950 and at first were living in East Bentleigh where Micki started her primary schooling. They moved to St Albans in 1952 where they lived in George Street before moving to Alfrieda Street on the corner of Winifred Street in the 1960s (opposite The Nuts Reception Centre).

Tony Mom was an electrical contractor and it was his trade that brought the family to St Albans. He had trained as a telephone mechanic in Holland and upgraded his qualifications after arrival in Australia to work as an electrician. With many hundreds of migrants settling in St Albans, there was a growing demand for house builders and electricians. Alie Missen recalls:

*With so many bungalows being built in St. Albans and living on the other side of town, he used to call in at my parents' place in East Esplanade for a morning cup of coffee and cake. Tony Mom decided that he would have to move to St Albans for this is where his work was, but alas availability of accommodation was non-existent. So my parents offered Tony, his wife Nell and their two children accommodation, the front section of the house my father had built with the help of Kees Kropman and Anton Correlje.<sup>2</sup>*

As the children settled in with their schooling, Nell became a committee member of the North Sunshine Technical School Parents and Friends Association, no doubt because her daughter started there in 1957. She was also a member of the St Albans Benevolent Society,<sup>3</sup> so she must have been involved in local charitable work.

She became a supporter of local sport. She had started following South Melbourne in the Aussie Rules league and was also a vocal soccer supporter. As a young girl in Amsterdam she had watched her father play soccer, and there was an increasing interest in St Albans for this form of international football. This long-manifested interest was heightened by the 1956

Olympic Games that were held in Melbourne. Soccer was being played in the western region since the 1920s and the very cosmopolitan St Albans Soccer Club was active in the early 1950s. Peter Ermstrang (q.v.) came to Australia as a chef for the Dutch Olympics team. He established a pastry shop in St Albans and became President of the St Albans Soccer Club, so there was a real interest within the local community.

Nell Mom’s unique feature in local soccer history is that she was elected the first-ever female Secretary of the St Albans Soccer Club in 1963.<sup>4</sup> She also wanted to form a women’s auxiliary to give more public recognition of the behind-the-scenes work that many women did in all district sports clubs.



With regard to Tony and Nell’s children, Micki was born in June 1944 and transferred from East Bentleigh state school to the old St Albans state school in March 1953. She left after 1956 for the Sunshine Technical School.

It is not known which of the St Albans primary schools Bert Mom attended, but he probably ended up at the Sunshine Technical School because, like his father, Bert worked as an electrician and electrical mechanic.

Bert married Jennifer Anne who was a nurse. At first they were living in Footscray before relocating to Maple Crescent in St Albans in the late 1970s. In the 1980s they moved to the new housing development in Taylors Lakes.

Antonius “Tony” Engelbertus Wilhelmus Mom died in October 1994. Pieterella “Nell” Mom died in September 1995. Another couple of constructive St Albans migrants of the 1950s.



Women playing soccer, St Albans 1960s © Trzaskoma

<sup>1</sup> St Albans Deer Park Observer 11 July 1963

<sup>2</sup> Alie Missen *People of 1950s' St Albans*, 2019, p67

<sup>3</sup> Agnes Stevens (1882-1968) was the leader of the St Albans Benevolent Society for many years.

<sup>4</sup> St Albans Deer Park Observer 11 July 1963

## 1952 – Magdalena and Jacob Krois

Magdalena and Jacob Krois came to Australia in 1950 classified as Yugoslavian nationals. They were WW2 displaced persons who moved to St Albans in the early 1950s and Jacob found employment as a boilermaker.

Jacob Krois was born in December 1923 in Bresternica, Slovenia, in the former Yugoslavia. Magdalena Johanna Krois nee Schulz-Wunder was born in December 1919 in Koenigsberg, East Prussia, Germany. They met in the mid 1940s in Lower Saxony, Germany, where Jacob was known to be in 1947. They migrated with their son Leonhard Krois born in 1947. Their second son Ronald Krois was born in Australia. Magdalena applied for and obtained her naturalisation papers in 1954.

The Krois family settled into their new home in Adelaide Street, not far from Jones Creek and the area later known as Jamieson Street Reserve. Jones Creek was an intermittent stream in the summertime often reduced to a series of ponds where children liked to play and collect tadpoles, but they could be dangerous. In October 1954 Magdalena went to the rescue of a young boy playing in the water:

*A sad tragedy occurred here last week when an eight-year old lad, Henrick Gonera, was drowned in a small dam. A plucky effort to rescue the lad was made by Mrs Krois who dived in the dam fully clothed but Henrick was dead on arrival at the hospital.<sup>1</sup>*

Magdalena and Jacob became known as Lena and Jack. They appear to have engaged with the community relatively quickly, making connections with the St Albans Youth Club and the St Albans Scouts on Errington Reserve. With two sons in the family, they became involved with the local scouting movement from its establishment in the mid 1950s.<sup>2</sup>

Magdalena started with the Cubs about 1955 and stayed for 25 years until her retirement in 1981. She served for four years as treasurer and as Lady Cub Master, and later as a district area worker. Jack Krois served as Group Scout Master from 1960 to 1971, and as district worker from 1971 to 1980. They gave decades of commitment to their adopted community.

In 1980, Jack and Lena were still listed in the electoral roll as living in St Albans.

The Slovenian community of St Albans was one of the earliest of the ethnic groups to form an association, which occurred in 1954, but it is not known if Jack Krois joined the group:

*On Sunday 19 December 1954 at 3.30 pm, 52 people attended the inaugural general meeting,*

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 8 October 1954 p10

<sup>2</sup> Refer to *St Albans : The First Hundred Years 1887-1987*, (St Albans Railway Centenary Committee, 1986, pp50-51) for a summary history of the local Guiding and Scouting clubs in the 1950s.

*which was held in the Catholic church hall at Theodore Street, St Albans. Slovenians at the meeting were enthused at the prospect of developing closer ties and a committee was formed to organise the next dance. This humble beginning laid the groundwork for the establishment of the first Slovenian organisation in Melbourne, Victoria.<sup>3</sup>*



Slovenian community meeting in St Albans, 1954

Leonhard Krois attended the St Albans Primary School from 1953 to 1959 and then in 1960 started at St Albans High School in Form 1C. He eventually moved to Melton.



St Albans High School Form 1C, 1960

Ronald Krois also attended St Albans High School and was in Form 6B in 1969.

Lena Krois died in April 2010 in Footscray at age 90 years and was buried at the Taradale public cemetery.

Jakob Krois died in Sydenham in July 2014 at age 91 years and was buried at the Taradale public cemetery.



<sup>3</sup> Victoria State Library Trove archives



## 1952 – Henricus and Maria van der Kruys



Henricus Gerardus Jozefus van der Kruys and Maria nee Meuwissen were Dutch immigrants who arrived in May 1951 on the “Sibajak” and moved to the Bathurst Migrant Centre in New South Wales. Henricus was an ex-serviceman as he had served in the war in Holland, and the family were migrating on an assisted passage from the Netherlands.

The family moved to St Albans in June 1952 and were living in Scott Avenue, St Albans. It was a modest three-roomed house built of wood and cement sheet. There were eight children aged under the age of 14, and four of them started together at the St Albans Primary School in 1952: Odilia (born 1942), Helena (1943), Petronella (1944) and Henrietta (1945). Maria (1947) started at the school in 1953.

At this stage Henricus van der Kruys was working in a glass factory, but later he was working at Wiltshire Files in Tottenham. By all accounts both Mr and Mrs Van der Kruys were hard workers, and they had to be because they had a large family to support. Their oldest daughter, Odilia, said that her father gave up smoking to buy a piano accordion so that three daughters could learn to play the accordion. Maria van der Kruys said she used to work up to 12 hours a day to help support the family.

St Albans in 1952 was a small village that was starting to grow, as migrants who were brought to Australia finished their compulsory two-year work contracts and started leaving the migrant hostels for independent living in the suburbs. St Albans attracted many of them because land salesmen went to the hostels and extolled the virtues of the district’s wide-open spaces, cheap housing blocks, and proximity to transport and work opportunities in the industrial west. Many migrants took up these opportunities and soon the population increased five-fold to 5,000 people.

There were few recreation opportunities for young children except for the swings near the Presbyterian church. Errington Reserve was an empty paddock, the Pinnacle Estate children’s playground was an empty paddock, and children were discouraged from using schoolyards after hours. A popular place to gather was the swimming

hole on the Maribyrnong River at the end of Stensons Lane – it was the only swimming spot available in the neighbourhood.

The family moved to Clarke Street on the eastern side of town not far from the river swimming hole, where sometimes Henricus would take his children. It was to be his downfall. Late in August 1955 Henricus came to the river with a friend and some of their children. The friend’s daughter Claudine got into difficulties so Henricus jumped into the water to save her. He was able to push her to safety but was himself swept away by the strong current and not seen again.<sup>1</sup> The horror for his children who were there must have been great as apparently they saw him disappear under the water.

The police came and dragged the river for two hours but found no trace of him. They couldn’t do much because of the turbulence of the water and nothing could be done until the river subsided. They found his body two weeks later near the quarter mile bridge.<sup>2</sup>

The disaster was compounded because Mrs Van der Kruys was expecting another baby.

The community immediately rallied to provide support. The Shire President of Keilor, Cr James Eddie, started a general relief fund:

*I did not know Mr. Van der Kruys personally, but people who did know him have told me that he was a good husband and father, and an excellent citizen ... He was a hero, too, a Keilor resident of whom we should be proud.<sup>3</sup>*

Mrs Van der Kruys was visited by the Dutch Consul General, local priest Fr Reis, and Fr Maas who the Chaplain to Dutch migrants.



Maria van der Kruys with children c.1956

Harold Holt was the Immigration Minister and he arranged for a social worker to assess their circumstances and offer support.<sup>4</sup> Inter-department cooperation was assured to provide some immediate aid. The family was allocated a Housing Commission place in Braybrook.

<sup>1</sup> Argus 29 August 1955 p1

<sup>2</sup> Recollections of Steven Kozlowski.

<sup>3</sup> Argus 30 August 1955 p5

<sup>4</sup> Argus 30 August 1955 p5



By far the biggest financial support was arranged through a Sun-Herald appeal fund that raised more than £13,000 for the family.<sup>1</sup>



Lord Mayor Sir Frank Selleck & Van der Kruys family

In June 1956 Maria van der Kruys and six of her children were naturalised at the Melbourne Town Hall. Town Hall officials had tears in their eyes as “the plucky little Dutch widow and her bright-eyed children” received their certificates. Mrs. van der Kruys wept when Sir Frank Selleck, Lord Mayor, with tears in his eyes, said:

*The hearts of the citizens of this city, and this State, go out to you. You have a great responsibility, and we will honor the memory of your husband and your courage, always.*<sup>2</sup>

In 1968 the Prime Minister, Mr Robert Menzies, presented the first Gertrude Kumm Award for Citizenship to Odilia van der Kruys.<sup>3</sup>



Odilia van der Kruys & Mr Robert Menzies 1968

<sup>1</sup> Canberra Times 22 January 1958 p9

<sup>2</sup> Argus 29 June 1965 p5

<sup>3</sup> Photographic image – Trove Work ID 161424270 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/161424270>. Frances Gertrude Kumm (1886-1966) was a churchwoman, philanthropist, and community leader in the 1950s. Her greatest service was to postwar refugees and immigrants as a member of the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council.

## 1952 – Henrik Bazec

Henrik Bazec was of Yugoslavian nationality, born in May 1922, who arrived in Melbourne on the Fairsea in May 1950. That is the limit of the personal information known about him and his arrival in Australia. He would have come as a WW2 Refugee or Displaced Person, and most probably was sponsored by the International Refugee Organisation.

He may have come to St Albans in the early to mid 1950s as at first he would have been sent to a migrant hostel and sent to work at the discretion of the Immigration Department for at least a couple of years.

Broderick Smith remembers that Bazec was working in the ammunitions factory in the 1960s. In 1970 Bazec was living at 28 Avondale Avenue, St Albans.<sup>4</sup> He moved to Sussex Street, Moonee Ponds West by 1979 from where he applied for and obtained his Australian citizenship.<sup>5</sup> Henrik Bazec died in 1987. At least two people from St Albans remembered him as deserving empathy.

Broderick Smith recalls:

*A lot of damaged people lived among us. One man [Bazec] would come walking down Main Road East in a tweed coat, carrying a Gladstone bag. ... He always looked sweaty with his Joe Stalin moustache and his greasy black hair and he looked scared, as though someone might whip him at any moment. The man lived in a half house with crude, red crosses painted on the front fibro panels. You'd see him at night staring out of his window at you. Some kids I knew lived next door to him and told me about the trench he'd dug in his backyard. Every time planes came over he'd jump in the trench and point a stick at them, making machine gun sounds. I saw him one night kneeling on his roof and praying to a terrifying moon.*<sup>6</sup>

Phillip Cini<sup>7</sup> recalls:

What touched me most though is your [Jeff Maynard's] inclusion of a poor wretched soul you refer to as Bazek. My guess is that he was of Eastern European extraction from either Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, or at best Hungary, who somehow with others, escaped to Austria, where with the aid of the Red Cross was able to secure passage to Australia.

<sup>4</sup> Sands & McDougall's *Directory of Victoria*, 1970. In this listing, Bazec's name is recorded as “Bazek”.

<sup>5</sup> *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* 31 August 1979 Issue No. P9, p34.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Jeff Maynard's *Frontier Suburb : A Short History of St Albans*, St Albans History Society, 2014 pp95-96. Broderick Smith came to St Albans in 1960; refer to chapter in *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years*; 2016. A musician of note.

<sup>7</sup> Phillip Cini was born in Melbourne to Maltese parents who came to St Albans in 1953. Refer to chapter in *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years* (J Ribarow & N Szved (eds), 2016).

I remember him in my pre-teens in the late sixties and quite vividly in the way you described him. You couldn't miss him even in a crowd as his sad, pathetic figure was unforgettably recognizable. If my memory serves me well he lived in solitude in a bungalow somewhere in Leonard Avenue.

Of a somewhat stocky build, average height with thick, unkempt black hair and just as thick black moustache, his face unshaven with a persona shrouded in mystery, he cut a melancholy figure. He'd be seen at the shops on Main Road East between MacArthur and Leonard avenues wearing his trademark unwashed long brown grey tweed coat over a thick jumper and baggy unkempt trousers, down to a pair of tatty shoes that looked like they carried him to the ends of the earth. Most striking of all he wore a large crucifix which was suspended from around his neck with coarse twine.

Once, while on a shopping errand, I saw him standing outside "Kurt's" butcher shop (we lived across the road in Main Road East) in his usual garb with a cardboard piece suspended with twine which he wore around his neck. On that piece was written in discernable red writing "THE SINS" simply written in capital letters.

Two teenage girls who were approaching caught his notice and having acquired their brief attention he held the placard up so they could read it which they did but were left puzzled at its message and walked away. The year was 1969.

I recall my Dad telling me how Bazek [sic] had once attended early morning mass at the Sacred Heart church on Sunday. His face was covered in blood as he clawed at his face as if in an act of self-mortification. The then Parish priest, Fr. Con Reis, was informed by members of the congregation, who promptly summoned Dr. O'Brien who lived around the corner in Victoria Crescent. The doctor promptly administered an injected sedative and having calmed Bazek asked that someone take him home.

Yes, he portrayed an abject and lonely figure whom no-one could understand, whose only company he kept were the demons of a tragic past that plagued him and at large, an insensitive world that shrugged him off, left him to the immature devices of the youngsters that taunted him.

Like the legend of "Kaspar Hauser", he cut a tragic mysterious portrayal and what became of him intensifies the mystery.

Having included him in your book gives me re-assurance that he will not be forgotten and that he will be immortalized in the town's folklore with the status of a harmless human being who tried to express his pain but did not know how.

I hope he is at peace.

(Phillip Cini, written in 2015 but not previously published.)

## 1953 – Angela and Joe Loccisano

I was born Angela Maria Taverna in 1938 in the Bushhouse Hospital in the little place of Moulamein<sup>1</sup> in New South Wales near the Murray River. My cousins from the Pellegrino family (my mother's side) were also living around there and in Echuca. My father and some other Italian men came to Australia in 1927 and went to work on farms in the Riverina area of New South Wales. They were sent to about 6 families who had different farms in the area. One of the farms was a sheep farm and these Italian men were mainly market gardeners and knew nothing about grazing sheep so they couldn't care for them properly. They were much better at working in the orchards, which is what happened with my father.

My parents were Domenic and Maria Taverna who were from in Calabria, Italy. My father Domenic Antonio Taverna was born in 1904 in the village of Varapodio. His family were already in the village from the 1850s. My mother Maria Guiseppina Pellegrino was born in 1907 in Varapodio, and her family was also in the village from the 1850s. It happened that two brothers married two sisters. One couple ended up in America and the other couple, my parents, ended up in Australia.



Maria and Domenic Taverna

When my father came to Australia in 1927 my mother stayed behind in the village with her yet-to-be-born first child. She came to Australia a decade later, in 1936, with my brother Carmello (Charlie), who by then was aged 10 years and had not yet met his father. I was born in Australia in 1938 and my five younger brothers were also born in Australia. In 1946, two decades after arriving in Australia, my father bought fifty acres of farmland from fellow Varapodio émigré Rossano Marsolino, who had migrated in 1929 and settled at Moulamein. Maybe he was our original connection to the district as a sort of

<sup>1</sup> Moulamien is the oldest town in the Riverina. The school was built in 1866 when the town had a population of 100 people. In 2011 the town had 330 people. Wikipedia.

chain migration.

We moved across the Murray River to Swan Hill when I was about 6 or 7 years old and then I went to a little school in Castle Donnington near Lake Boga. We were living about 3 miles south of Swan Hill. (I have a brother who still lives there.) In Moulamein we had lived in a little shack. They just picked it up with a truck and brought it to Swan Hill, because the farm we'd bought did not have a house, it was only the land. The government built an irrigation channel right through the property and dad built near the channel – that way my Mum could wash the clothes in the channel. Then they built the laundry. The dunny was a hole in the ground and they built a little shed around it.

It was very hard out in the country. We were isolated out on the farm and seldom spoke to outside people except when you went into town for some shopping. There was a fear that something might happen.

I went to the Castle Donnington school, which included one teacher and about 20 students. Many of the students were from dairy farms, whereas the Italians were from tomato farms. We were about half-half – half Italians and half Australians. It was the 1940s and there were some tensions because it was wartime and the Italians had to register as civil aliens, which my father did, even though he had been living in Australia for many years and applied for naturalisation in 1939 at the start of the war. Most of us Italian children were born in Australia anyway.

The school was very small. We had one room with a little cloakroom. When the government gave them some more money they built the bike shed. With a bit more money they built a little kitchenette where we could boil some water. At school we would get some milk and the teacher told us to buy Milo to give the milk a chocolate flavour. We didn't know what it was so he brought some and showed to it us. We wrote it down and took it to dad and said the next time you buy groceries you have to buy some.

I only went to grade 6 at school. It was a difficult time and my father pulled me and my brothers out of school after grade 6 because we needed people to work on the farm. I asked my mother if I could go on to higher education. She said "What for? Us women are made to work." We had to work hard because we had no electrical appliances to ease the household chores. I was about 12 or 13 when they brought the electricity to our part of Swan Hill, about 1950.

We used to grow tomatoes. We had contracts with a factory, which were called "cons", to supply tomatoes for making tomato sauce; that was in the summer. In winter we used to grow peas, broad beans, and late season tomatoes as well. Then the fruit trees

started to come in. We had 50 acres and dad proportioned the farm for different produce hoping to provide for a better life. They planted apricot and peach trees.

Charlie was my oldest brother. He was born in Italy in 1927 and was nine or ten when he came out to Australia with Mum. That type of family separation happened often enough with the early Italian migration, with husbands coming out first to establish a home base and the rest of the family joining them later. My in-laws did the same. Rocco Loccisano, the father, came out first in 1938 and other members of the family followed about a decade later.

In 1959 my dad got a place in Woorinen<sup>1</sup> to the west of Swan Hill; it was growing table grapes. I had 6 brothers and my parents were keen to start them off to be independent in their adulthood, so they would buy a little place for them when it became available. My brother Charlie started like that growing tomatoes, but he hated working on the farm. He asked dad to buy him a truck, but dad said no because you could kill yourself driving a truck. After about eight years when Charlie saved enough money, he bought himself a semi trailer. He'd take fruit to Melbourne and try to get a load coming back, such as delivering furniture.



Taverna family at Swan Hill

Farm work was very, very hard and no wonder people were looking for other livelihoods. We had our tomatoes growing on the ground so it was back-breaking work bending over to do the picking. With the newer varieties people were using stakes and the tomato plant grew up and that wasn't too bad. But we were still growing peas. Frosts were a problem because they could ruin the crop. Where we were in Keilor it was a bit protected along there in Green Gully so the frost never got in. That's where Joe's family made a few thousand dollars. That is why they could look for something else to do and started their fruit and veggie shops. Joe said to his father don't come here to St Albans, go to Sunshine. They bought places in Hertford Street, Sunshine, and Main Road East, St Albans.

When I was working on the farm the

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<sup>1</sup> Woorinen developed as a soldier settlement irrigation area after WW1. In 2011 it had a population of 311.

routine in the mornings was to get up and fix your bed, have breakfast, and go and work on the farm. Everything was done by hand. You would get blood and bone and mix it in a bucket and spread it by hand. Dad would cultivate the soil with a horse and plow to prepare the rows and we would make holes in the mound to plant the tomatoes. The horse would pull a big tank of water along the row and from the tap we would gently water the plants. We would cover the seedlings with a timber cover to protect the plants from the frost. That was heavy work for 12 and 15 year olds. As soon as us kids finished grade 6 we were on the farm. That was at Castle Donnington, where we would ride our bikes to and from when we were on the farm. About a year after I completed school they started a bus service that would come along and stop in front of the house and the kids would get on for the schools at Swan Hill.

Picking the peas and the broad beans was hard work, especially in the winter. There were no gloves or anything for protection. Our hands used to get so frost bitten that we used to come home crying. We used to put our feet and our hands in hot water to warm ourselves. Now the cropping is all done by machines.

The only entertainment we had at home was playing cards with dad. The girls used to play hop scotch and that's about it. We used to play a bit of cricket when visitors came. We'd put up some empty bottles for stumps, but that was a bit dangerous because if you hit them they could break. So then we used the cans from corned beef and such. Those were our games. When I left was when the football started coming, so the younger boys could start on that as the football clubs started to form in the district.

My father would go to the Swan Hill shopping centre to buy the groceries. It was about 3 miles from our farm and I walked that distance a few times. We'd also go to church there.

Sunday was a rest day and visiting day but that was seasonal, because when you started harvesting the tomatoes you worked through the weekend packing and loading the truck for dad to drive down to Melbourne. The drive down to Victoria Market was at least 6 hours. He had to leave about 4 o'clock in the afternoon to get to Melbourne before the market opened in the early morning. He would have a half-hour nap in the truck and people would be knocking on his door saying let's see what fruit you've got.

Dad was the first one in our little district who bought a truck. He would pick up boxes of produce from his cousins and take them with his own to Melbourne. Three men could fit in the cabin. They would head off and would be running out of petrol so would stop at Four Post outside Stawell. It was a little shop selling petrol on the Murray Valley Highway. They would pull up there and the proprietor would get out of bed and fill up

the tank. The men would have a drink and off they'd go. I remember when I was there occasionally that he would give us young children some lollies. They were all sheep farmers around there and he didn't mind getting up in the night to help his customers.

Slowly, slowly, people started making some money and started buying their own second-hand trucks. Dad had bought a second-hand truck, and when he made a bit more money he bought a new one. The trucks took a lot of beating on the rough terrain of the farm so after a while this needing fixing and that needed fixing. A few times the truck was left on the side of the road while dad went looking for a mechanic. It was all bush around there so where would you find one? Lucky the man at the petrol place knew about mechanics.

One time I got into an argument about what I was going to do in life. This was when the war had started and we used to see these soldiers coming round.<sup>1</sup> I told Mum that I wanted to join the army. She looked at me with such a look that I still remember it. She took to me with the broom and said I'll give you the army!

Girls weren't allowed to do anything; we were housebound. You weren't allowed to go into town by yourself; you had to go with your father and your mother. If you wanted to go to the pictures, you had to be escorted by your brother. You couldn't be on your own. That was still happening when I was 18. Things started to change with the new generation when other things started to change. The parents would go into town to do the shopping and the men wanted to do their own things so the shopping was done by someone else. The son or the daughter would come along to take care of the shopping and was told where and when to meet up with dad to go back home. Slowly, slowly, it changed. The Aussie women were becoming more emancipated because they had worked in lots of jobs with more responsibility when the men were away at war, and many kept that independence after the war.

From my group I was the first one to learn to drive a car, but this was after I got married. I used to drive the tractor of the farm but before then we had the horse. My brother made a sledge that was pulled by the horse. We would sit on this sledge that we called the lorry and hang on for our lives and the horse would trot down to wherever we were working. Then the Ferguson tractor came out and I asked dad if it was hard to drive. Dad said no and I want you to drive, because Mum was starting to get very bad arthritis by then, so dad made her a little trolley that she could sit on the back.

Dad started to teach me how to drive the

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<sup>1</sup> There was a military presence in the district during WW2. The RAAF had a flying boat base at Lake Boga.

tractor. There were only two gears, one and two, for going backwards and forwards, but there was a handle on the steering wheel and if you adjusted that you could go a bit faster. I hardly used that because of Mum being on the back trolley. I used to drive that tractor to and from where we were working, but if I had to go back during the day to do a bit of cooking I would ride my bike. At night I would bring the tractor back home. I had a fair idea about driving and when dad bought the car – we used to have a ute – I said to dad can I drive the car. He said yes and showed me what to do. I had fights with my bigger brother who would say “Hah, you went all over the road.” My father would say what are you talking about, because my brothers and I would always speak English. I would say he said I was all over the road and my mum would say what are you talking about, we have fifty acres to drive in so don't worry about it.

1956 was a turning point for me because I was matchmade to a distant cousin when I was 18. He was Joe Loccisano. Matchmaking was an old Italian family custom but the girl still had the final say in whether the marriage went ahead. I didn't think I was ready to get married at age 18 and said I was happy working on the farm and didn't want to get married until I was 21.

Joe Loccisano was 27 at that time and had a fruit shop in St Albans in Melbourne which he had established a few years earlier. My brother pointed out that working on the farm was hard work and that I would have a better life in town with a shop keeper. I spoke with my mother and she said it was up to me, but I was unsure about leaving the family behind. Joe and I met and talked and we soon became attracted to each other, so we agreed to marry.



I married Joe Loccisano in Swan Hill in 1956. Swan Hill was the main town in the district, and the custom was that you married in the bride's home town.



Angela Taverna and Joe Loccisano

Giuseppe “Joe” Loccisano was born in 1929 at Reggio Calabria, Italy. His parents were Rocco Loccisano and Marianna Schirripa from Calabria, Italy. Rocco came to Australia in 1938. Joe came to Australia on his own as a single man in 1948. His father had come out earlier and had been working in different parts of Victoria, wherever the government sent him. His brother brought him out on proxy and he was out in Mildura. They sold the business and Rocco couldn't get any more jobs so he went to Shepparton looking for work and ended up picking tomatoes. This bloke, Mr Fox, who was leasing the farm leased another property at Horseshoe Bend in Keilor. Mr Fox asked Rocco to work on that property growing cauliflowers, but prices were not good at the time and wages were low, so the family was not sure what to do. However, there was a cousin selling real estate with some business developers. Joe and his family borrowed the money and bought some farmland and they all worked there growing caulies and tomatoes. They had a good year and repaid the loan as soon as they could.

Joe had come to the Keilor district in 1948 with other family members. They leased a farm property from Mr Fox down at the Keilor Village where the bridge is; they've now turned that land into a park. That's where the Loccisano men were farming. Rocco was the father and the sons were Joe (Giuseppe), Sam (Salvatore – deceased 10 September 2020), Vince (Vincenzo), and Don (Domenic). Marianna was the mother and the daughters were Rose, Janette, Nancy and Catherine (Catarina).

About 1953, Joe had built a shop in St Albans near where the Commonwealth Bank was later built, but at the time it was an empty block.

At the back of his shop he built a one-bedroom unit with kitchen, lounge and laundry, which was our first home.

Joe and I ended up buying some of the land there but the government took the farm from us when they needed the land to build a road through there. That's when we were back in St Albans. We also had a block of land in Collins Street behind the shops on the Unger's corner and that's where we eventually built our house. We probably would have still been there if Kentucky Fried Chicken hadn't built their shop there next to Unger's and backing onto our property.

1956 was a memorable year because, apart from my marriage, the Olympic Games came to Melbourne and television came to St Albans. From that time of coming to St Albans I remember that the Knowles family and Mr West were in Main Road East. Mr Gross and his pharmacy was on the other side in Alfreda Street. The Knowles were originally in Alfreda Street but then moved around the corner to Main Road East. May Knowles had two shops there selling clothing near Mr Potts' store which they also might have built. Her brother Bill Knowles was active with the scouts and started the St Albans St Johns Ambulance first aid group; they would attend the football matches. My son Ron was involved with that for a while and loved seeing how the first aid people worked. His most dramatic observation was when an ambulance was called urgently to help a pregnant lady having difficulty.

When I first came to St Albans there were not many people around compared to now.<sup>1</sup> When I was on the farm it was isolated but my brothers were around and there were cousins not far away. In St Albans I felt more isolated at first because I didn't know anyone. St Albans was starting to build up with migrants and their bungalows but there were still lots of empty house blocks. People used to walk from across the paddocks in the east and cut through to Collins Street between the houses to catch the train. Around us it was still paddocks and paddocks.

There were no buildings on the Collins Street corner but Martello's Continental Grocery store was a bit further along; they installed a television set in the front and customers could watch the novelty of local news and American cartoons. Unger's shop was built in the late 1950s by some people who were selling confectionery and I think Mr Unger moved in there about 1960.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The population of St Albans grew rapidly in the 1950s. In 1950 it was about 900 people and increased to 7,000 by 1960, and 20,000 by 1970.

<sup>2</sup> The "Summer and Unger" store was at 304 Main Road East by 1960. It was near the Collins Street intersection which became known as "Unger's Corner"



St Albans Fruit Supply aka Joe's Fruit Supply



Joe Loccisano at St Albans Fruit Supply



St Albans Fruit Supply truck in street parade

The Arcade was built in the late 1950s opposite our shop and that was the first arcade in the district with a dozen small businesses. There was a TAB shop in there that was managed by a brother of Mr Victor Gross the chemist. One year the brother went away on holidays and the shop lease came up for renewal when he was overseas. Because of an oversight, the lease was not renewed and when the brother came back he had to relocate the business to the other side of town. There were male and female hair

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because it was a popular meeting spot. Harry Unger was of Jewish faith and fled to England to escape racist oppression in Germany. He ended up being imprisoned and sent to Australia for internment. He was one of the Dunera boys. Harry and Edith Unger had children Geoffrey and Susan. The family moved to Caulfield in the 1970s and Harry died in 2017.

dressers in the arcade so it was easy for Joe and me to pop across. At one stage my hairdresser was a trainee in Marta's Beauty Salon and I could get my hair done for \$1 so I went there every week.

Coles was built in the early 1960s; it was a variety store selling lots of goods and knick knacks but not food. Prior to them building there that was an empty block and sometimes there was a carnival held there. St Albans would also hold a street parade and Joe would decorate his truck and join the other business trucks and groups such as the scouts in their march along Main Road.

Mr George Eisner in Collins Street was one of the men who was building bungalows and I think he might have been one of the first builders in the district.<sup>1</sup> His home was at 5 Collins Street and my daughter eventually built her child care centre next door to him.

When I came here, Mrs Kepalas was at number 3 Collins Street, Mr Eisner at number 5, and Mr Long at number 7, and that's where the child centre went. My daughter Jessica would have been in her twenties when she established the childcare centre.<sup>2</sup> My daughter used to work with us in the fruit shop and at that time the next generation of girls wanted to become hair dressers, but she said she wanted to look after children. She looked at that option with a friend and they worked out where to go to get the training. In the meantime my brother-in-law was living in Glenroy. We heard that Mr Long was interested in selling his house because they were moving to Glen Waverley, so we told my brother-in-law, Sam, who had a fruit shop on the other side of St Albans, so he bought that. Later he bought some land in Rowan Street, Kealba, and suggested that Jessica could use the Collins Street property as a child care centre, which is what she did. My husband wasn't that happy because he wanted her to become a hair dresser. She's still there running the child care centre.

At first we were living at the back of the shop but had to move into something bigger because as the kids came we needed more space. The kids were running in and out of the shop as it was extended but the living space was getting crowded. Joe said we could build upstairs but we had that block of land at number 2 Collins Street and I said I wanted to build there.

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<sup>1</sup> George and Vlasta Eisner were of Czechoslovakian background. They migrated in 1950 and came to St Albans in 1951. Refer to article in *Bungalows of St Albans*, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Agitation to start a free kindergarten in St Albans started in 1948. A child minding centre known as the Happy Kiddies Kindergarten was established at the St Albans Youth Club in the late 1950s. The first official kindergarten was started by St Alban The Martyr Anglican Church in 1960.

The Gross family were living in Main Road East opposite Ungers and between the Hounslows and the Goddards, where Woolworths is now located. They were Victor Gross and his wife Veronica.<sup>3</sup> He was the chemist and she worked with cosmetics. Later they had some friends arrive from overseas and settled in Caulfield. Mrs Gross wanted to join them because it was a better area with better schools, so that's where they ended up going. Their son ended up becoming a doctor. However, Mr Gross found the daily travel to St Albans a bit of a chore. When they left we wanted to buy their house but the rains came and we saw their block was easily flooded, so we didn't buy it.

At the end of Main Road East near the railway line was there were three railway houses. St Albans was starting to go ahead by then and people were buying land and building homes. We made friends with some Germans two doors from the railway houses when our kids were about 10 and 11. They were buying the house and had two little girls so my kids would go over there after school until 6 o'clock, which is when I finished working at the shop.

In the 1960s there were more fruit and vegetable shops being established. There was one near the chemist in Main Road West run by an Australian but he wasn't there for long. It was later taken over by another Italian family. Beryl and Bert Moffat<sup>4</sup> were in East Esplanade near the Self Brothers. Bert had the fruit shop and Beryl had the pet shop next door. I think that was the old Self's store before they built the big Self Brothers and Goddard supermarket on the corner.<sup>5</sup>

Mr Jim West was also there and he had a type of \$2 shop with clothes and everything. He owned the properties in Main Road East that were later occupied by the butcher (next to Elsa's Fashion House), Mr Gross (St Albans Pharmacy), and the liquor shop (Shand's Foodland). One day Mr West came to Joe and said, "If you want to buy my two shops I'll sell them to you" and Joe agreed to buy them. A week later Mr West was driving home through Maidstone and had a heart attack. The grandson took over and wanted to sell the shops. Joe went across to Mr Gross and said there are two blocks there and that he should buy them. People thought that Alfrieda Street was going to be the main shopping centre but Main Road East was

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<sup>3</sup> Viktor Gross was a pharmacist born in the 1922 in the Czech Republic, married to Veronika Vera Grescheit who was from Slovakia. They were registered as Jewish displaced persons/refugees who arrived in Australia in October 1950.

<sup>4</sup> Refer to article in "St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years 1956-2016."

<sup>5</sup> Lewis and Marion Self came to St Albans in 1922 and over time the family built the biggest supermarket in the district. Refer to chapter in "Stories about St Albans Celebrating 125 Years", 2012.



developing quite fast. Mr Gross bought the two properties near us and moved his chemist shop there. Later Mr Gross's brother took over one of the properties and made it into a licensed liquor shop. (A Sparta Licensed Grocery was at 318 Main Road East and St Albans Pharmacy was at 320 in 1970.)

Mr Murray had the shoe shop next to our fruit shop and that was a couple of years after Joe started. That was called the Smart Shoe Store. Rex Webb used to work there for Mr Murray who also had a shop in Footscray. Rex took over the St Albans shop and opened another one with Mr Murray in Niddrie. We bought a block of land in Alfrieda Street and Joe built a shop and Rex moved in there and ran his own business for years and years until he retired. He ended up being Mayor of Keilor Council in the 1960s.

Eric Alan was a Polish immigrant who built his shop in Alfrieda Street.<sup>1</sup> He came after Joe, about 1954, and had his bicycle and electrical appliances shop with Mr Kuc who had the watch and jewellery business. There were a lot of people from Poland, Germany and Yugoslavia who settled in St Albans in the 1950s. They often had long surnames that were hard to pronounce and even harder to spell, so we knew many only by their first name. The Greeks came a bit later. Mr Alan was another of the local business who stood for Keilor Council in the later 1960s and was elected mayor.

The Commonwealth Bank on the corner of Collins Street and Main Road East was built after 1956 because it was vacant land when I moved here. Mr Len Matthews was the manager that I remember. They put a little shack on the corner and wanted to buy our place but we said no. Joe was encouraging the bank manager to build their own big office because the migrants were coming to the area and he could see that business would grow. The Italians would come to the fruit shop and Joe would tell them to see the bank manager if they needed some money because the manager would look after them. Joe even acted as interpreter when needed. He helped get a loan for a couple of bricklayers who paid off the loan after a few months because they needed a start but didn't want to be in debt. Many of the St Albans migrants were like that, not wanting to be in debt to anyone. Their first priority was paying the house off.

Mr Matthews was a lovely man but didn't stay very long. I think his wife got cancer and they moved out to Torquay. People move on.

In 1956 a Maltese man started a bakery. Two years later his wife died and he closed the shop. Two years later Mr Romeo opened a

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Roy Alan came to Australia in 1950 and married Helen Barbara Osterman. He established his St Albans Cycles shop in 1954. Refer to story in "People of 1950s' St Albans", 2019.

bakery in Charles Street, then he also leased a shop in Alfrieda Street so his children could work there; they did bread deliveries. He used to buy and sell land and built the first reception centre in St Albans (maybe in Charles Street).

Mrs Lorna Cameron was another business woman in the street. She and her husband had the Western Suburbs Sports Store near the Erica Street corner. They were very active with the youth club across the road on Errington Reserve. He died in a car accident in the 1960s and Lorna kept that store going until the 1970s. The Youth Club became known as the Tin Shed and Lorna did a lot of work there including activities for boys and girls. Later she introduced playgroups, recycling programs, and women's groups. She was the leader at the club for 50 years until she retired.<sup>2</sup>

Elsa Blahut was a Czech immigrant who had a store doing drapery and haberdashery and everything.<sup>3</sup> They came from the Somers migrant camp. She had two daughters and two sons. I never really knew her husband as he died after they came to St Albans. One of the girls, Toni, was a bit of a tomboy who enjoyed a lot of sports. Then one day we heard that she had died in a sky diving accident when her parachute didn't open and she got killed.

Mr Potts was also in Main Road East in one of the Knowles' shops they had built. He sold everything and was the local agent for the State Savings Bank. He was an older man and I think the travelling was a bit too much for him as I don't remember him being there too long. He also was from Somers and I think he and his wife went back to Tyabb. Mrs Blahut was working with him before she took over as the agent for the State Bank and then established her own drapery business near the Camerons' shop.

Joe Bartolo was running the Tye's furniture store near Ungers with a business partner, Lou Stafrace, who later had his own Lewmar RetraVision store in Main Road West. Mr Bartolo stayed in that store next to Ungers for many years before building a bigger furniture depot in McIntyre Road.<sup>4</sup>

Gilbertson the butcher was another one who moved to Main Road East not far from Mr Gross. The Gilbertsons were from Essendon and had shops in several suburbs.

Mr Scoble owned the petrol station on the corner of St Albans Road and Percy Street. (There's now a drive-in liquor shop there.) Scoble

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<sup>2</sup> Lorna Cameron's story is included in "St Albans Oral History from the Tin Shed Archives", 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Elsa Blahut's story as told by her children Peter and Olga, is included in "St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years 1956-2016"; St Albans Secondary College, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Bartolo was a Maltese migrant who came to Australia in 1951 and settled locally in 1953. Refer to article in "People of 1950s' St Albans", 2019.

was there when I came to St Albans. Joe would introduce me to the people he knew and I remember us having a talk about football. Apparently when Joe came to St Albans, Mr Scoble asked him if he was a member of any sports club, which Joe wasn't. "Well, we'll make you a member of Footscray," said Mr Scoble. His daughter, Val Scoble, married Ted Whitten who was the champion Footscray footballer. At first they were working in the same factory and later they had a grocery store in Sunshine.<sup>1</sup> I remember Val and her sister Irene – we would go out together sometimes. Irene married Ossie Opie who was a builder and built their home in Station Road, Deer Park. Val and I had boys and Irene had a girl. Irene would come round and we'd go up and down Main Road West to look at the shops. Pattersons the furniture shop had started up there and my eldest son was working there for a while. That side of Main Road had the first shops in St Albans in its earliest days and started building more in the 1950s. The postal service was run from Mr Perrett's store before the post office was built there on the McKechnie Street corner opposite the railway line.

Vince Stella was a young Italian man who used to work for us. He was only a lad of 15 or 16 and looking for a job. He worked for us until he was about 22 when there was another fruit shop started in Alfrieda Street. There was an Australia couple named Dockeary<sup>2</sup> running that for a while then decided to quit. Joe said that Vince should take over. Vince said he had no money to start a business but Joe said he would set him up by buying stock for the shop. Vince started going with Joe to Victoria Market to learn that end of the business – transport, pricing negotiations, packing. That's how Vince started in Alfrieda Street and he stayed there until he retired about 10 years ago. He's also in Keilor off the old Calder Highway. Vince was a member of the Rotary Club for many years and that was his extra contribution to community service.

Joe joined the Keilor Lions Club and was involved for years. They raised money for community purposes. They would set up a raffle wheel in front of the shop on Mondays and sell tickets for prizes. Whatever money they raised they would use for charitable causes. If a family fell on very hard times they would provide food and help with cleaning up after a disaster. They held their meetings on a Monday night at Westfield's Skyways pub in Airport West. Joe would get really tired driving out all that way, coming home late, and having to get up early to

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<sup>1</sup> Ted Whitten's Foodland store was at 72 Hampshire Road, Sunshine. Val and Ted's story was written by Jim Main and published as "EJ – Ted Whitten", Wilkinson Books, Melbourne, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas and Doreen Dockeary's shop was at 16 Alfrieda Street.

go to the Melbourne market, so he could not continue with them.

The Rotary Club and the Lions Club were good for business networks and people became good customers. They were supporters of good causes. There was a lady working for us who lived in Percy Street whose house caught fire and they lost pretty much everything. The Lions Club took that on and helped clear everything. The family had a couple of young kids so we helped out with groceries for some months. They were originally from Queensland and went back there when the husband found a job. The Lions Club did a lot of work like that in their area.

The Martellos had a grocery shop near Unger's. There was also Mr Silvagni who was another local grocer for a while. We would order our groceries from them and they would deliver to our shop. Then one day Mrs Silvagni said they were leaving to open a bigger store. I'm not sure where they moved to but it might have been Carlton. Their son used to play football and I believe he married an Australian girl and their son also became a footballer.<sup>3</sup>

People on the other side of Melbourne would look down on people who came from St Albans because of its low status and all the different people. People turned their nose up when you said you came from St Albans, because there was nothing here. They were obsessed with the dunnies of St Albans, ignoring the fact that most of Melbourne had been unsewered for a long time. I would say all those different people in St Albans may have started tough, but they now have a nice home and are working hard. I would tell my children that many migrants came out here with only a suitcase, and some without a suitcase, and they built a successful life.

Joe was 18 when he came to Australia and ended up in Shepparton doing the same thing as we were – market gardening. Or you would go to Gunbower where he was growing tobacco with his brother Vincent. They leased a property in Shepparton and then found this property in Keilor and leased that from Mr Fox. Mr Fox took in Joe and his family and gave them a horse and some land along the river at Green Gully. They started growing tomatoes and peas and that. Joe would cut across from his farm to St Albans. It was mostly empty paddocks and the land was covered in rocks and the poor little truck would be going up and down. Then one day he went

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<sup>3</sup> Sergio Silvagni was a grocer. His father Giacomo Silvagni came to Australia in 1924 and settled in Canning Street Carlton. Giacomo worked as a cement worker He married Antonia Valentina and their children were Milena (1935) and Sergio (1938). Serge Silvagni played for Carlton Football Club 1958–1971 and was coach in 1978. Serge married Rita Ida in 1963: he was a grocer, she was a hair dresser; their son Stephen played for Carlton 1985-2001.

home and said St Albans will end up a town. His father laughed at him. Joe said there were trains going through there so it had to be a place that would grow, and eventually it did. Out of empty paddocks a town was built. Joe would come back and say another shop is going up. Then one day he said I want to build a shop there. That's why he ended up buying the land where he built the fruit shop. £100 the land cost him, which he borrowed from his father. That was a fair bit of money at the time because the weekly wage was probably about £10. The family ended up building three shops: two in St Albans and one in Sunshine.

When Joe started establishing the fruit shops, his father said how are you going to do it. When Joe was taking the fruit to the market he met his bloke who said he would help set up the shop. When they started in Sunshine they wanted a woman to work there. First they had the younger sister Olive and then Doreen came. The father-in-law helped in building the shops because everyone had had enough of the farm. The work was too hard and you had no time for yourself. The shop became available and Joe told his father to buy it. Olive showed them how to run the shop, how to order things and things like that. They were there for quite a while in Sunshine and that was started by my father-in-law. Olive was an Australian woman who worked for Joe. When my father-in-law bought the Sunshine shop he said to Joe you made me buy the shop but I don't know how to run it. Joe said don't worry I've got that organized, and asked Olive to go over there. She showed my father-in-law how to do the buying and packing.

Joe had left the farm but his father was still there for at least two years after they bought the shops. When I married Joe his father was at the shop in Hertford Street Sunshine.

When I had my first son, Doreen who used to work for us, said you should learn to drive. I said what for, because when we go anywhere we go together. She said I had to plan forward, because if Joe was at the market and something happened I would have to get the baby to the hospital. The Melbourne hospital was in the city and Footscray hospital was also a fair distance away and the one at Sunshine was only a house. Joe at first wasn't happy with the idea of me getting a licence and asked who would teach me. There was a brother and sister in St Albans who were teaching people to drive and the sister came over to gave me a lesson. She made me so nervous with telling me that I was doing everything wrong that I decided to have a lesson with the brother. He was so good because he was so calm and placid. Reverse parking was a nightmare. For practice, Joe took me to one of the paddocks at Green Gully and put out a few stones as markers. My son was only two and was sitting on another rock saying "Are you

finished yet? I want to go home." Anyway, after half an hour I mastered reverse parking. My son was so happy that we were going home that he started clapping. I took five lessons with the driving instructor and then applied for my licence, which was done at Maidstone. I was nervous when I went for my test at Maidstone and apart from a few minor mistakes I passed. My driving instructor was as pleased as I was.

By that time my mother-in-law, Marianna, was unwell and had moved to Glenroy. We would catch a taxi to visit each other or go together to the city. The next time she came around I said I'll call a taxi to take us to town but she insisted I drive now that I had a licence. That's what we did. It meant I was able to help with the long drive to Swan Hill. Previously Joe drove all the way and that was a problem when he was tired. One time Joe was driving as usual and the rest of us had fallen asleep when we were pulled over by the police about Gisborne for his erratic driving. The police questioned him about drink driving then decided that he was overtired and warned him of the dangers of that. From then on he would drive up to Gisborne and then I would take over the driving.

Buying our first car was interesting. Joe was asked to take a truck up to Swan Hill but it broke down at Diggers Rest. Joe decided he was going to buy a car there and then. He was dressed in what I would call swagman's clothes, because that's what he looked like. They used to come down to ask for some food and boil the billy; in return they chopped wood for us while the billy boiled. Joe was dressed like them when he walked into a car yard unshaven with his shirt hanging out and in his broken English he said he wanted to buy a car. The salesman didn't believe him and ignored him. Next day Joe went to a car yard in Footscray and said he wanted to buy a Desotto, which was a heavy car. At first they treated him like the guys from Diggers Rest had. Joe said he wanted the Desotto and when could he get it and they said next week. They said it cost £1,000 and Joe said he would bring cash with him, which is what he did. After that they were very good to us and said they'd never judge anyone by their clothes again.

Living in the Collins Street house became unpleasant in the 1980s when the Kentucky Fried Chicken store opened up next to Ungers. Our bedrooms were on the laneway and the smell of the kitchen exhausts and the noise of truck deliveries at night became unbearable. That was a bit of a wonder how they could build there because there was no car parking on site. Then I heard there had been an arrangement made for their customers to use the Woolworths car opposite. We decided to sell the Collins Street house and build a new home in Keilor, where we have lived ever since.

Joe and I had three children: Ron, Jessica,

and Donald. Ron used to work for the Pattersons furniture store in Main Road West, and at night he was studying electrical and plumbing at RMIT in the city. He ended up installing computer cabling. He was with a group retrofitting cables into old buildings but the new buildings had that cabling installed up front so they lost some of that work. He then worked as a fruit agent for the Victoria Market based at Footscray. He got sick in his sixties and decided to retire.

Jessica started out working in the fruit shop but decided to go into business looking after children. She's a clever woman and worked out for herself where to get all the training. We bought a property in Collins Street from my brother-in-law and Jessica started one of the first private childcare centres in St Albans and is still running that. It is known as Bella Bambini Pre-School and Day Care.

Donald studied management and leased a pub in Preston. The pub was demolished to make way for a bigger shopping and entertainment complex. Then Donald worked with his sister in the child care industry. We had a block of land in Sydenham and Donald built there and expanded elsewhere with about five centres. He did that for 25 years and accepted an offer from a bigger business group to take over the centres. He retired and was doing some gardening for recreation but his health suddenly deteriorated. He ended up with serious heart problems and diagnosed with a blood clot. They operated and it was touch and go for a while but he's survived. That was two years ago.

Some years ago I went back to Moulamein and discovered that everything had shrunk. I remember the town hall as being enormous and when I saw it again I said they must have cut it down. It appeared to me that nothing had been done in the old town and everything was still the way it was many years ago. Although some things may have improved, the younger generation have moved on. Now there's nothing there for young people and its more of historical interest for the retired folk.

Angela Loccisano, August 2020



Joe and Angela Loccisano

## 1953 – Jack and Audrey Ginifer



Mr. John Joseph "Jack" Ginifer became the local Member of Parliament for the seat of Keilor during the 1970s, an electoral district that had included St Albans, but his connection with the district started in 1953 when he was promoted here as a teacher. Jack Ginifer was from Benalla,

which is out Wangaratta way; the township was originally known by its old Aboriginal name of Benalta, but the spelling changed when the township was surveyed in 1846.

Jack Ginifer was born in August 1927, so he was a pre-Depression baby. His parents were Joseph Ginifer and Flora Agnes "Aggie" Harper, and they were living in Benalla Street, Benalla.

Joseph Ginifer was originally from Worcester, England, and had about seven years of military experience with the British Imperial Forces. He served with the RAAF as a guard from 1941 to 1945 when he was discharged due to demobilization. He worked as a sale rep for Singer sewing machines.

Flora "Aggie" Ginifer nee Harper was from Pennyroyal, near Colac, Victoria. Her parents were Archibald Harper (from Beith, Scotland) and Jane Sara Milkins (family originally from Somerset, England). Flora married Joseph Ginifer in 1926 and they had five children.

"Jack" Ginifer was their first son, born in 1927. He attended the Benalla state and high schools before getting his BA at the Melbourne University and his teaching papers at the Melbourne Teachers College. He started teaching in 1945 and was on staff at the Shepparton State School as a junior teacher before getting transferred closer to home at the Benalla East School.<sup>1</sup> He then moved across to Kaniva near the Little Desert and then promoted to nearby Yearinga.

In 1951 Jack Ginifer took up his new position in Melbourne,<sup>2</sup> and in August 1953 was promoted to St Albans.

In December 1951 at the Holy Trinity Church in Benalla, Jack Ginifer, the son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Ginifer of Benalla, married Audrey Heaney, who was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. W. Heaney of Stewarton:

*A very pleasant evening was spent at the Stewarton Hall ... when a presentation evening was tendered to Miss Audrey Heaney, one of the district's most popular girls on the eve of her marriage to Mr Jack Ginifer. ... Mr Tom Ballintine who acted as chairman, referred to the good qualities of their guest, pointing out that he had*

<sup>1</sup> Benalla Ensign 25 January 1946

<sup>2</sup> Benalla Ensign 20 September 1951

watched her grow up, and further her duties in the school teaching profession. She returned to teach at her old school in Stewarton and the work of her pupils in the various avenues proved beyond doubt how capable she was. She was also a capable hostess and a great credit to her parents. Her intended husband, Mr Ginifer, had proved equally as popular with the parents and scholars.<sup>1</sup>

As well as being a teacher at the school Audrey supported the Mothers' Club for more than ten years of continuous service, for which she received some nice recognition.<sup>2</sup>

In 1953 Ginifer received a promotion to St Albans.<sup>3</sup> Presumably this meant he started at the old primary school in West Esplanade, as at that stage there only two schools in St Albans: St Albans State School and the Sacred Heart Catholic School. Jack and Audrey Ginifer were both teachers at St Albans North State School, but that did not open until 1959.



Ginifer was a councilor in Williamstown and Altona. He was the President for Altona Shire in 1964-5 before being elected to the Victorian state parliament as an MLA – a Member of the Legislative Assembly – for Grant in 1966. George

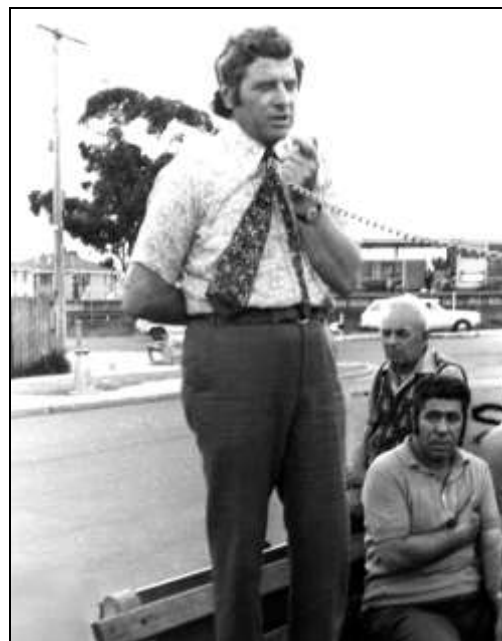
Roy Crick had been the former Labor MLA for Grant; after he died in 1966, Ginifer was elected as his replacement. In his maiden speech to the Parliament Ginifer mentioned the unmade roads and the lack of drainage and sewerage in the electorate, which had been outstanding issues for decades.

From 1967 to 1976 Ginifer was the MLA for Deer Park, and then he was elected as MLA for the seat of Keilor when it was created in 1976. He enjoyed a broad range of affiliations industrially and politically. He was a member of the Amalgamated Metal Workers and Shipwrights Union and Board of Works commissioner for 1963 to 1969. In June 1970 he was elected as the MP for the Deer Park Electoral District.<sup>4</sup>

Ginifer became a member of the Labor Party's Socialist Left and was popular as the local representative in a region with strong Labor supporters; in the Keilor electorate he polled about three-quarters of the total vote.

During the 1970s, Jack Ginifer had his electorate office in Alfrieda Street, St Albans, staffed by Mr Frank Donovan, initially based at the Community Centre building before moving to

bigger premises across the road.



Jack Ginifer addressing residents, Alfrieda St 1970s

The 1970s was a time of greater political interest in the western suburbs, especially as the children of the 1950s migrants finished their university studies and started their professional careers. There was an intellectual inquisitiveness about community and municipal structures that led to the Deprived West seminars and the formation of the Western Region Council for Social Development, and the Western Region Commission. The Australian Labor Party in the western region stoked this political vibrancy and gained lots of popular support through their "It's Time" campaign.

Locally, it meant that politicians like Jack Ginifer and Jim Cairns were addressing street rallies and community gatherings. Locals were delighted to see Dr Jim Cairns, as future Federal Treasurer, speaking at local rallies.

Jack Ginifer and Frank Donovan were always supportive of local initiatives, and the electorate office supported some new developments very directly, such as when the Adult Migrant English Classes were being held in their meeting room.

Evelyn Mullenger recalls:

*I went to lobby Jack Ginifer, our local member of the Legislative Assembly. His electorate secretary, Frank Donovan, suggested we share his office space because he had plenty of space and they had a big room which they used as a meeting room. We thought that was wonderful. It had one handicap, and that was that it was upstairs. We decided to take it because there were no other offers. Besides, it had a balcony, an area where we could care for the children.<sup>5</sup>*

In 1976 Jack Ginifer had accused the State

<sup>1</sup> Benalla Ensign 3 January 1952

<sup>2</sup> Benalla Ensign 9 December 1954

<sup>3</sup> Argus 20 December 1953

<sup>4</sup> Age 12 June 1970

<sup>5</sup> Refer to article in *St Albans Oral History from the Tin Shed Archives*, 2004, p103.

Government led by Rupert Hamer, of treating migrant groups with indifference and neglect and promised that the Labor Party would set up a Ministry for Ethnic Affairs if it was elected. Ginifer said that migrants in Australia had been exploited on a continuing basis.<sup>1</sup> At this time, over 80% of the St Albans populace were of “ethnic” background and interested in having their voices heard.

Jack Ginifer was a very hard working representative for his electorate and his broader community base. He was with the Meat Industry committee in 1967-1970 and 1973-1979, with the Public Works committee in 1970-1973, the Public Accounts committee in 1979-1980 and Public Accounts and Expenditure Review committee 1980-1981. He was on the ALP State Executive 1959-1966, and held the position of secretary of the Parliamentary Party 1980-1982.

When John Cain’s Labor government was elected in Victoria on 3 April 1982, Ginifer became the Minister for Consumer Affairs and Minister for Immigration and Ethnic affairs.<sup>2</sup> In May 1982 Ginifer, resigned from his positions due to being diagnosed with terminal cancer. He died two months later in July 1982 and was buried at the North Altona Memorial Park.



In 1966 Jack Ginifer had raised the question of building a railway station between Albion and St Albans. Nothing happened. He raised the issue again in 1977 as the population was increasing around Furlong Road with the development of the Sunshine Park, Nickson, and Sheffield estates. The name “Furlong” had been reserved for the future station.

In 1979 Ginifer tabled in parliament a petition of 1200 signatures that a station be built but in 1980 residents were told there were no funds to build a station. After more deputations, in January 1982 the Minister for Transport advised that funds would be allocated for the station. Work on the Furlong Road railway station commenced in March 1982.

Jack Ginifer died in July 1982, and later that month Tom Rigg, on behalf of the St Albans South Progress Association, wrote to Transport Minister Steve Crabb, asking that the name of the station be changed to “Ginifer” in recognition of his work hard work to get the station built and “it would be a suitable memorial to his untiring work”.

The opening of the railway station was performed by Mr Steve Crabb, Minister for Transport on Sunday 31 October 1982. Audrey Ginifer was present for the occasion. The Ginifer

Station is a permanent memorial to the hard work of John Joseph “Jack” Ginifer.<sup>3</sup>



Transport Minister Steve Crabb & Audrey Ginifer 1982

Ginifer’s broader affiliations included duties as Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works commissioner 1963-1969; member of the Victorian Apiarists Association, the Melbourne University Council 1977-1982, Sunshine Hospital planning committee, the Australia Poll Dorset Association, Australia-Soviet Friendship Society, Australia-Libya Friendship Society; and a trustee of the Western Suburbs Geriatric Hospital.

Two local residents who were influenced by the political developments of the 1970s are Robert Clark<sup>4</sup> and Alex Andrianopoulos. Clark was a follower of the Liberal Party and attended some of the local rallies held by Ginifer and Dr Jim Cairns, at a time when 70% of the area was voting Labor and 30% Liberal.

Alex Andrianopoulos, who became a Labor Party MLA, was taught by Audrey Ginifer:

*Mrs Audrey Ginifer was a teacher at the North Primary; she was the wife of Jack Ginifer who was a teacher before he went into parliament. I think Jack might have been going into politics during the time I was at the Primary School. I had no way of knowing that I would end up following in his footsteps. He passed away many years ago but I still see Mrs Ginifer occasionally and we always shake hands because she still recognizes me as being one of the kids at North Primary School.<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>3</sup> The struggle to build the station was documented by Tom Rigg in *The Genesis of a Railway Station : Ginifer Railway Station*, St Albans History Society, 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Clark was a member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly from 1988 to 2018. He served as Attorney-General and Minister for Finance from 2010 to 2014, and as Minister for Industrial Relations from 2013 to 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Alex Andrianopoulos in *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 years 1956-2016*. Alex was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1985 and held positions as Shadow Minister for Ethnic Affairs in 1993 and Secretary to Shadow Cabinet from 1993 until 1999. He is the first migrant from a non-English speaking background to be elected Speaker of the Victorian Parliament.

<sup>1</sup> Age 1 March 1976

<sup>2</sup> Age 8 September 1982

## 1953 – Robert Stanley Potts

Robert Stanley Potts (R. S. Potts) was born in 1896 in Hawthorn, Victoria. His parents were Louis Edwin Potts and Christine Roberts. Louis was from London and Christine was from Melbourne, though her family were also from London and came to Melbourne prior to 1849.

Robert Potts might be lucky to be alive as in 1916 a young man of that name from Tyabb was run down by a passenger train and dragged over 50 yards while driving over a level crossing. Potts was caught by the cow catcher and sustained a compound fracture of the skull.<sup>1</sup>

Robert Stanley Potts married Elsie Jane Prout of Melbourne in 1927. Her parents were Samuel Prout and Minnie Eliza Kent, but their backgrounds are not recorded.



Image by Leila Shaw - [www.anps.org.au/upload/March\\_2009.pdf](http://www.anps.org.au/upload/March_2009.pdf)

Potts established one of the classic, small, mixed-business stores where “you can buy everything”. He was selling groceries, ladies’ men’s and children’s apparel, shoes, gifts, and toys galore to amuse the children. You could buy a ladies’ striped fuji silk frock for 16/6 or a men’s 3-piece all wool suit for 42/-.

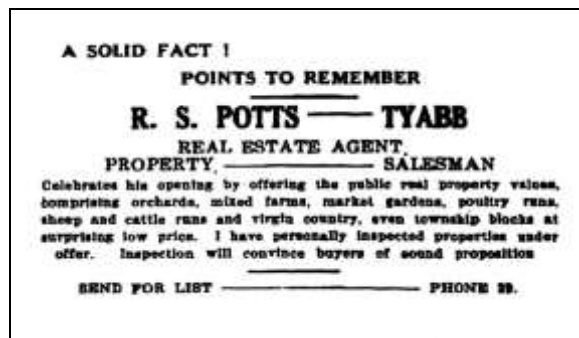


He was running his general store in Tyabb from 1926 and soon expanded to include ladies fashions at his new showroom. He proudly advertised that he had 17 departments. In 1928 he announced he was becoming a real estate and property salesman covering the districts of Tyabb, Somerville and Hastings:

*All classes of orchards, mixed farms, market gardens poultry runs, cheap township blocks*

<sup>1</sup> Clunes Guardian & Gazette 22 February 1916 p3

*etc., are already in Mr Potts' hands for disposal while he will be pleased to hear from property owners throughout the Peninsula who have a desire to sell.<sup>2</sup>*



In 1929 he was elected President of Tyabb Progress Association. He was also on the Public Hall committee and in 1930 was elected as a Vice President of the cricket club.

In 1931 he called for a meeting to protest against the drastic costs of electricity<sup>3</sup> and in 1932 he was arguing for a connecting link between South Gippsland and the Mornington Peninsula.<sup>4</sup>

In 1932 Potts sold his business in Tyabb and left for Ballarat; he had been in the area six years. It was reported that the genial “Bob” had taken up a leading position with a well-known city firm.<sup>5</sup> Tyabb put on a grand farewell presentation for the couple in March 1932.<sup>6</sup> Potts was a member of a variety of community groups in the district, including the Progress Association, the Hall Committee, tennis club, football club, boy scouts, and the Farewell & Welfare Committee, and they all came to bid the departing couple their well wishes.

In December 1932 Potts was residing at Armstrong Street, Ballarat, and his occupation once again was store keeper.<sup>7</sup> He must have honed his creative instincts as in 1936 he created “an improved mobile display case”, the design of which he registered with the United States Patents Office.<sup>8</sup>

After a six-year stint at Ballarat, Robert Potts returned to Tyabb in 1938 and became the Radiola distributor in the district; occasionally he would donate a radio to a local group. He also took action to reform the Tyabb Progress Association.

Potts might have experienced some health problems. Apart for his railway crossing near-death crash, he was involved in a motor vehicle crash in 1938. In 1941 he was admitted to the Hastings Bush Nursing Hospital for an operation

<sup>2</sup> Frankston & Somerville Standard 16 March 1928

<sup>3</sup> Frankston & Somerville Standard 29 August 1931 p2

<sup>4</sup> Frankston & Somerville Standard 30 January 1932 p6

<sup>5</sup> Frankston & Somerville Standard 29 March 1932 p4

<sup>6</sup> Frankston & Somerville Standard 26 March 1932 p2

<sup>7</sup> Frankston & Somerville Standard 24 December 1932 p8

<sup>8</sup> Official Gazette of the United States Patent Office Volume 513, 23 April 1940, p954.



for gastric problems.<sup>1</sup>

In 1943 Potts organized an entertainment for sixty Allied and Australian troops in the district. Their transports went around the district to pick up loads of young people to while away the time: table tennis, bowls, and a sing song were enjoyed by the boys. A splendid program was given by local performers and after a bumper supper, dancing was enjoyed until midnight to the music of Mrs. Cook's orchestra.<sup>2</sup>

In 1952 he was working as "Potts Stores P/L of Tyabb, established 1922" and he was promoting mail order specials.

During this time Potts met Elsa Blahut, one of the migrants housed at the army camp who would later move to St Albans:

*The Somers migrant hostel had previously been used by the scouting movement as a holiday camp and later as an RAAF training camp, then became a migrant hostel from 1949 until 1958. Families lived in corrugated iron quarters similar to the army Nissan huts. ... Elsa obtained a job almost immediately with the general store in Somers. Mr Robert Stanley Potts was the owner of the business and he quickly saw that having a multilingual assistant was a great asset to the business. The growing number of "foreign" customers from the migrant camp kept returning to the town store where they could be understood and where they could purchase the daily necessities in the comfort of their own language.<sup>3</sup>*



Potts General Store at Somers, possibly 1950s

In September 1953 Potts was selling his business again:

*Seaside Business, growing area. Big shop, suitable conversion to include cafe freehold and plant – £2250. Stock at valuation. Finance available. Potts Store. Somers 43.<sup>4</sup>*

It was being offered of sale again in 1955 so maybe some property sales had not been that successful. Could it have been another general store or another Potts businessman?

In 1953 Potts came to St Albans and set up his store in Main Road East, "R S Potts Pty Ltd",

which was near the intersection of Alfrieda Street and Main Road East which was later known as Coles' corner. Why did he choose to come to St Albans when the majority of his business and community endeavours had been around Tyabb and Somers? That is not known, but the Blahuts remember that a lot of Somers' migrants came to St Albans because salesmen from Bells Real Estate<sup>5</sup> came to the hostel and advertised the availability of cheap land in St Albans, which was an attractive enticement for people who had little money. Perhaps Potts saw it as another business opportunity, because he was also interested in real estate sales.

Potts employed Elsa Blahut as a shop assistant – they knew each other from Somers as she had worked at his Somers store. Her children later referred to Mr Potts as Elsa's business mentor.

In 1950 the St Albans population was about 1,000 but it was starting to increase as migrants were leaving the government hostels and establishing their own homes. Each week about five new families were settling into the district. By 1953, when Potts arrived, the population was over 4,000 and by 1956 there were about 20 shops.

Olga and Peter Blahut recall that Potts was known as the fellow with the big truck who sold all kinds of articles including food and clothing. He would extend credit to customers – if you didn't have the money to pay in full he would give you the merchandise you needed and allow you to pay the balance over time.<sup>6</sup>

Eric Perrett, who ran the old general store on the other side of the railway, had acted as agent for the Commonwealth bank, and Stanley Potts became the agent for the State Savings Bank.

It was 1956 when the youth club was being built and Lorna Cameron remembered it was a time when people pitched in willingly:

*Keef Kropman and Tom Corelje were hired to lay the floorboards assisted by Adrian van Kuyk. The floorboards were purchased from Hounslow's timber yard. Anton Kropman would help his father punch in all the nails. Tony Morn did the electrical wiring. Mr Setek loaned his concrete mixer and Harold Easton donated the cement. Mr Robert Potts donated a sound system for the building.*

Jimmy Knowles, whose family went into commercial property development in the local neighbourhood, remembers that:

*My mother and father bought the three blocks of land in Main Road East just along the corner from Alfrieda Street and built the next three*

<sup>1</sup> Frankston Standard 14 February 1941

<sup>2</sup> Frankston Standard 28 May 1943

<sup>3</sup> Peter Blahut in *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years 1956-2016*.

<sup>4</sup> Argus 21 September 1956 p15

<sup>5</sup> W J Bell Real Estate were in Sun Crescent, Sunshine, and were selling land in St Albans from the 1930s to the 1950s.

<sup>6</sup> Peter and Olga Blahut have discussed Elsa Blahut's work with Mr Potts in *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years 1956-2016*.

shops there. There was a Gilbertson butcher shop and then our milk bar ... They soon got out of that and Potts took over and he sold everything. Potts came from Tyabb and no matter what it was he would sell it: he was an agent for the bank, he was an agent for Malvern Star bicycles, he was an agent for everything.<sup>1</sup>

In retrospect, Stanley Potts' general store, like Eric Perrett's general store, was an older business model that had been successful in small villages with limited shopping facilities. When Potts arrived in St Albans, Perrett had already sold his old store to the Wardle family because he was getting out of that business.

From 8 shops in 1951 the business outlets had increased to 11, and by 1956 had reached 21. The competition was growing as quickly as the population. The small general store was now less competitive than the more specialized supermarket stores such as Self Bros & Goddard, Shand's, and Martello's. As soon as Eric Alan started up his bicycle shop in Alfrieda Street, Potts lost the agency for the cycles.

Robert Stanley Potts passed away in September 1957 at the age of 61, which was not particularly old. The circumstances of his death are unknown or at least not reported locally.

Potts General Store continued operating for a while in the care of Elsa Blahut, and while she was able to retain the banking agency the store soon focused on her particular interest, which was drapery. She later opened her own wool and accessories store, Elsa's Drapery, at 294 Main Road East. She retained the banking agency until the State Savings bank built premises in Alfrieda Street, and she later joined them as a member of staff.



State Savings Bank in Alfrieda Street 1958

The old Potts Store in Main Road East was taken over by Batterham Confectioners, who might have been from Corio, but nothing is remembered of them locally. By 1970 the store was once again under the management of May Stephens nee Knowles of St Albans.

<sup>1</sup> Jimmy Knowles in *Stories About St Albans : Celebrating 125 Years*, 2012.

## 1954 – Cliff and Emily McCulloch

Clifford and Emily McCulloch were St Albans residents who became involved in the formation of the Police Boys Club in the mid-1950s.

Clifford George McCulloch was born in July 1917 in Maldon, Victoria. He traces his father's heritage to Henry McCulloch circa 1750 in Kincardine, Perth, Scotland. The family came to Melbourne in December 1858 and settled at Carisbrook near Maryborough. Clifford's father was William Paul McCulloch and his mother was Ellen Rachel Woodman.

Emily Alice Goss was born in March 1917 in Bendigo. Her parents were Isabella Mary Milne and Arthur George Egbert Goss. The Goss family goes back the 1824 in Sidmouth, Devonshire, England, and came to Port Adelaide in 1849. The Milne family goes back to 1809 in Aberdeen, Scotland; they came to Tasmania in 1829.

Clifford George McCulloch married Emily Alice Goss in 1940 in Victoria. They were living in Footscray in 1942 before moving to Vincent Avenue in St Albans in 1954. They had three children (details not available).



Cliff and Em McCulloch are remembered for their role in establishing the St Albans Community Youth Club on Errington Reserve. Originally known as the Police Boys Club, it was started in 1954 by Sergeant McLeod of Sunshine and Constable Frank Miller who was based in a small shed opposite the old Mechanics Institute Hall in East Esplanade. He

was soon holding gymnasium classes for a membership of 60 boys. Lorna Cameron, who helped re-establish the club, recalled that:

*The reformed organisation captured the imagination of the town. Constable Miller quickly attracted a team of adult helpers as the number of youths increased and the range of activities expanded to include holiday entertainment, junior football and softball, athletics, and swimming at the Footscray baths. And girls were not left out. New members were recruited to the interim committee, and by December it was proposed to change the name from 'Boys Club' to 'Youth Club' so as to formally include the girls.<sup>2</sup>*

Clifford and Emily McCulloch became part of this renewal of recreational activities for the young people of the district. Cliff was working with Jack Cameron at Wiltshire Files. Jack and his wife

<sup>2</sup> *St Albans Oral History from the Tin Shed Archives*, St Albans Community Youth Club, 2004, p66.

Lorna had arrived a few years earlier; they also had young children and they were enthusiastic in establishing youth activities. Clem Buckingham, a neighbour, asked Jack Cameron to be president of the youth club and the McCullochs joined them on the committee and as activity leaders. Other members included Allen Patten, George Haynes, and George Power. The club became affiliated with the Victorian Association of Youth Clubs.

Emily and Cliff were described as a popular and talented couple who became very active during this time and held 50/50 dancing every Saturday night for many years. They introduced callisthenics, choir, softball, and concerts. Claude and Alice Coupe (q.v.) were active in supporting them. Claude and Cliff constructed a stage and bandstand so that performances could be held appropriately.

Emily supervised many debutante balls in the club's early years. The St Albans Little Theatre under the guidance of Dorothy Baulch delighted many audiences from that stage, as did George Attard's Maltese Players.

Cliff was also looking after the table tennis competition that was started at the club, probably about 1955, which meant opening the club on Sunday afternoons, setting up the tables, and collecting the admission money. Kon Haumann was one of their most enthusiastic members and took over the supervision of this activity in the late 1950s until he retired 60 years later.

Clifford and Emily McCulloch were made life members of the club because of their dedication to its establishment in the inaugural years.

Cliff and Emily were parishioners of the Presbyterian Church in Circus East, and Cliff became one of the Church Elders in the 1950s, along with John Stevens, Fonger Elzinga, and Clem Buckingham.

When the Stevens brothers<sup>1</sup> expanded their retail business in the 1960s, Cliff McCulloch took charge of the electrical section of their new store that was opened at 302 Main Road East.

Clifford George McCulloch died in April 1991. Emily McCulloch nee Goss died at Sunshine in September 2010.



<sup>1</sup> For a history of the Stevens family, refer to chapter in *St Albans Settlers from 1905, 2018*.

## 1954 – Thomas Albert Hampton



Thomas Albert Hampton was born in 1915 to Thomas Edward Hampton and Clara Hering. That was an interesting match from a St Albans point of view, because it is a blending of Anglo and German heritage depicted in some of the other St Albans pioneers from the early 1900s, such as the Schwarzte family.<sup>2</sup>

Thomas Hampton traces his father's family origins back to 1811 and James Hampton of Gwynear, Cornwall, England; Tobias Hampton of that family came to South Australia in 1855.

On his mother's side, Thomas traces the family back to 1813 to Ludwig Hering from Küstrin-Am-Oder, Neumark (Ost Brandenburg), Prußen, Deutschland; Friedrich Hering of that family arrived in South Australia in 1848.

The families blended when Thomas Edward Hampton married Clara Albertina Hering in 1907. They settled around Colac and Stawell and raised three daughters and three sons. Thomas Albert was born in Stawell in May 1920 and by 1936 he has living in Footscray North and working as a shipping clerk with Olympic Tyre and Rubber Company. He married Olive May Easton in February 1940 and their daughter Denise Lorna was born in October 1941.

Thomas Albert Hampton enlisted in the RAAF in 1942 with a reference from the local police stating he was known as being "honest, sober and respectable". His physical description was given as 5' 8" in height with fair hair and blue eyes. He worked as a fitter with the RAAF and worked his way up to Leading Aircraftman with 22nd squadron. He was discharged in 1946 due to the general demobilization. His awarded decorations include the Pacific Star, the 1939-45 Star, and the War Medal.

His involvement with St Albans may have started in 1954, because that's when he was backing his brother-in-law, Harold Edward Easton, as a candidate for the Keilor Council elections. Mrs Hampton was Olive May Easton and Harold Easton was her brother.

At this time the Hamptons were living in Kellaway Street, Maidstone, and most likely Thomas was working as a fruiterer.

The Hamptons and Eastons formed a business partnership named Hampton & Easton P/L mercers and hardware, and in 1960 they were based at property numbers 4-8 in East Esplanade, St Albans. In 1959-64 the store was known as Hampton's Men's Wear. Some high

<sup>2</sup> Refer to story about William Schwarze and Evelyn Fishley in *St Albans Settlers from 1905, 2018*.

school students believe that Hampton was on the Advisory Council; at least he was advertising his stock in the school magazine:

*Hampton's Men's Wear invite you to inspect their new range of roll-top skivvies Glo-weave shirts & new season's slacks.<sup>1</sup>*

Between 1965 and 1970 the drapery store was listed at numbers 2-4 in the name of Thomas and Olive Hampton, and Harold Easton had the hardware store at number 8.

People remember Hampton's store as one of the few drapery-mercery shops at the time. Thea Dukic remembers the shop because she worked there:

*Tom Hampton had a menswear shop. I worked there off and on throughout my life, I guess. That was my first good job. I couldn't speak much English, but he said, "It doesn't matter you will pick it up." They gave me a chance to work and learn English, but I didn't only learn English, I learnt German as well, because a lot of the migrants that were here passed through Germany and they couldn't speak English but they spoke German. So, I came to talk German, but it's easy for Dutch people, speaking German.<sup>2</sup>*

Gavan Aitken also remembered Thomas Hampton's menswear store:

*Hampton came after Clarke and the shop then changed from "Clarke's Corner Store" to "Hampton's Drapery and Men's Wear". ... I was only 16 when Hampton was there on the corner but I remember you would get things on appro. I was hard to fit because I was long and lanky; long arms and pretty skinny and tall. It was pretty hard getting anything that fit me let alone shoes. You could get it on appro, same as with the Knowles, and take it home to see if it fitted and if it didn't you brought it back.*

Lorna Cameron remembered that Hampton's store may have closed in 1989.

Olive May Hampton nee Easton died in Avondale Heights in 1995 at age 78 years.

Thomas Albert Hampton died in Avondale Heights in April 2002 at age 86 years.



Hampton's corner East Esplanade, Trove photo archives

## 1954 – Cuthbert Henry Trice



Cuthbert Henry 'Jackson' Trice was born at Rutherglen, Victoria, on the 31st October 1908. His father was John Trice (1877-1951) and his mother was Annie Houghton Davidson (1875-1939). John was born in Buninyong and Annie was born in Ballarat,

so the family were home-grown Australians. Annie's grandfather Jonathon Davidson was born in Ballarat in 1807, so he was an earlier pioneer.

C. H. Trice (his business name) provided an essential service to St Albans residents in the 1950s and 1960s because he was the contractor for the sanitary pan service. His occupation was usually listed as 'driver' and his sons' were listed as 'hygiene carter' or 'sanitary carter'.

Disposal of human waste became more of a problem in Melbourne suburbs after the 1850s' gold rush era, because the population had increased so much. Such waste, as was the discharge from slaughter yards, was either shallow-buried in paddocks or released directly into the rivers and the bay. In 1888, a Royal Commission proposed an underground system to carry sewage from homes and factories to a treatment farm. In 1892, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works bought land at Werribee and the Werribee Farm started in 1897. It is now known as the Western Treatment Plant.

In 1922 the Health Commission included Keilor Shire within the provisions of the Health Act for proper disposal of night soil. It was the council's responsibility to collect and dispose of waste in properly authorized pits, which they implemented by calling for tenders for sanitary and garbage contracts. Trice was obviously one of the approved contractors in the 1950s. His previous work history had nothing to do with sanitation services, because he had worked as a plaster manufacturer before joining the RAAF.

Jackson Trice married Rachel Margaret "Rae" Campbell in 1931 at Brunswick. She was born in Tasmania but details of her family are not known. Their children included Cuthbert John "Bert" (1932), William Henry (1934), Jackson Raymond (1936), David Thomas (1941), and Annette Myra (1947).

In 1940 Trice was working as a plaster manufacturer for Olva Plaster Mills in Bolton, Victoria. He enlisted in October 1940, stating that he had previously served with 6th Battalion for nine years. He enlisted with the RAAF for two years from June 1946. His role was armourer with the rank of Sergeant based at East Sale in June 1946. He was discharged in February 1948. At this time he was living in Sale.

<sup>1</sup> St Albans High School POE Gazette July 1964 Vol.3 No.3

<sup>2</sup> St Albans Oral History from the Tin Shed Archives, 2004, p212.

Between 1954 and 1963 he was living in Melbourne Avenue, Glenroy. He established a business known as C. H. Trice and Sons, where he was listed as a 'driver', his son Cuthbert John was a 'hygiene carter', and his son Davis Thomas was a 'sanitary carter'. Colloquially, each of them would have been known as the 'dunny man'.



Trice ran the sanitary service known as C. H. Trice & Sons, of Fox Road, St Albans. The Fox Road connection is probably the depot where the empty toilet pans were stored. After the pans were collected they were taken to the Werribee sewerage farm where they were emptied and sanitised. The clean pans were then stored at the Fox Road depot. Fox Road already included some "noxious trades" because several piggeries had been established in the area.

As St Albans grew the scale of the sanitary operations expanded. The dunny collection service in St Albans continued for decades and some of the neighbourhoods didn't get connected to the Melbourne sewerage system until the 1970s. As the area became more populated there were more complaints about the toilet pan depot being located on the road near the river.

Cuthbert Henry Trice died on 12 October 1966 at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital and was buried at the Fawcner Cemetery. He was aged 55 years. He had served his country during WW2 and that deserves respect.



His son Cuthbert John Trice appears to have taken over the sanitary business in 1967. He was living in McRae Avenue. The toilet pan service stopped in most parts of St Albans during the 1970s. Cuthbert John died in 1986.

## 1955 – Francis and Clarice Curtain

The first postmasters in St Albans were the railway station masters. In 1888 it was Cornelius O'Brien. In 1901 it was George Newstead and James Robinson took over in 1905. In 1905, the Closer Settlement Board had conducted the sale of the Overnewton Estate which brought in new settlers and new ideas. In 1908 John Stevens as the Secretary of the Overnewton and District Settlers Association sent a petition to the Railways Department asking that the post office be transferred from the railway station to the general store that was nearby in Main Road West. Thus the railways lost the post office contract and the proprietors of the village grocery store provided the postal service for almost 50 years. These storekeepers included Robert Aylmer (1908), Edward Mottram (1912), Harry Harrison (1912), James O'Callaghan (1922), John Perrett (1923), and the last and longest-serving one was Eric Perrett (1938-1955).

The question of improving mail delivery services was raised in 1950 by the St Albans Progress Association. They were told that the Postal Department was looking for land to build a local post office.<sup>1</sup> It didn't happen quickly.

There was a major drama with the local service in 1952, when Post Office investigators and the CIB were called in after £1500 in child endowment money went missing.<sup>2</sup> Detectives charged a recently-appointed mail contractor with larceny after finding the cash in a chimney at his St Albans home.<sup>3</sup> He was a young, married ex-serviceman who said that for some time he had wanted to move to Queensland but had not had enough money: "*I acted on the spur of the moment. I regret my stupid action.*"<sup>4</sup> He pleaded guilty and was sent to gaol for one year.

The cause for improved postal services was taken up by the St Albans branch of the ALP, who in 1954 claimed that it had been responsible for getting a full-time postman to be appointed, telephone boxes being erected, and post boxes installed.<sup>5</sup>



The new official post office was built in 1955 on the corner of Main Road West and McKechnie Street opposite the railway line; it was a small fibro cement building. Francis Curtain was appointed as the first official post master with a counter staff of three.

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 21 April 1950 p3

<sup>2</sup> Herald 9 September 1952 p1

<sup>3</sup> Argus 10 September 1952 p1

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 26 September 1952 p1

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 2 July 1954 p3

Frank and his wife Clarice had come to the district from Hawthorn and made their home in Sunshine. He had been appointed as acting postmaster at Sunshine after Mr Crook had retired. The post-war business and housing developments in Sunshine created an upsurge in mail and parcel deliveries. Frank Curtain was in charge of two office assistants and a regular delivery staff of 18 increasing to 30 when the business rush was on.<sup>1</sup>

Francis "Frank" Charles Curtain was born in April 1912 in Dunkeld, Victoria. His father was Edward Augustine Curtain who was born in Bendigo in 1865 and whose lineage goes back to 1810 in County Clare, Ireland. His mother was Mabel Tyrrell who was born in Whitfield, Victoria, in 1883 and whose lineage goes back to 1791 in Northamptonshire, England.

Frank's work history was pretty varied, especially given that the Depression made life difficult for everyone. His appointment as a telegraph messenger at Hawthorn was in 1927, which continued until his mid twenties. Jobs were hard to get during the depression. He moved to Sunshine in 1934 and worked as a cleaner at the Melbourne G.P.O. – it was the only job available. He took on some studies with the railways and graduated to Postal Assistant Grade 1 with a choice of jobs at Lilydale or Sunshine. He obtained the Sunshine position. He married in September 1939 to Clarice Campbell and moved to Sunshine where they lived until his death in 1992.

During the war he taught Morse Code to men in the Air Force. He passed his Third Division tests and was promoted to Postmaster Grade 2 at St Albans in 1955 when they opened the first official office in the area. It was a small room. St Albans was growing rapidly and Frank made friends with many of the New Australians who were settling in.



Clarice May Campbell was born in 1916 in Melbourne; her parents' backgrounds are not on record. Francis Charles Curtain and Clarice May Campbell married in 1939 and had at least two children: Helen Patricia born in 1949, and Brian born in 1950. They had

no need to move to St Albans and attend the local primary school even though their father worked in St Albans, because his work was just a short train trip from the family home.

Frank worked at St Albans for 11 years until 1966. Some of the mail deliverers at the start included John Doherty, Clarrie Battye and

Joan Young. Frank Curtain transferred to Collingwood in 1966 before coming back to Sunshine. Albert Tilton became the St Albans postmaster when Curtain left in 1966 and Clarrie Battye took over in 1968.

Frank Curtain was promoted to Postmaster Grade 3 at Sunshine. He was then promoted to Postmaster Grade 4 at Collingwood and was there about 5 years. He transferred back to Sunshine at Grade 4 until 1968. He was promoted to Postmaster Grade 5 at the G.P.O. Melbourne and was there from 1968 to 1976. He retired after 50 years of service. Frank and Clarice became members of the Sunshine Lions Club and enjoyed their social activities for many years. He was a good story teller.<sup>2</sup>

Francis Charles Curtain died of cancer in May 1992 at Sunshine, at age 80 years. Clarice May Curtain nee Campbell died at Melton in November 2011, at age 95.



St Albans Post Office c.1955 © Gwyneth Vyner

### **Eighty Years of Postal Service at St Albans**

At 3 p.m. on Tuesday, 11th June 1968, M. W. Lee, Esq., M.P., will officially open the new St. Albans Post Office.

The new building, erected at a cost of \$88,553, culminates 80 years of Post Office service in the area, and provides an attractive addition to the fast-growing township.

For many years, land in the St Albans area was used principally for grazing purposes, and the few homesteads belonged mostly to farmers. The opening of the railway line between Melbourne and Sunbury in 1859, gave promise of future development, but a further 28 years elapsed before the little community that constituted St Albans was provided with its own railway station.

The station opened in 1887, and with improved communication, the area began to develop. On 22nd October 1888, a post office opened at the railway station under the management of the stationmaster. During the remaining portion of that financial year, a total of 487 letters were handled at St. Albans, the stationmaster

<sup>1</sup> Sunshine Advocate 16 January 1953 p1

<sup>2</sup> Details of Frank Curtains' work history provided by Clarice Curtain in 1994.

receiving the sum of \$8 for his postal duties.

A mail service between Melbourne and St Albans was provided daily. Mail for St Albans closed at the G.P.O. at 5.45 a.m., and arrived at St Albans at 7.20 a.m. Mail for the City closed at St Albans at 9.45 a.m. and reached the G.P.O. at 11 a.m.

The allowance for that year amounted to \$16. A State school, (No. 2969), was erected in 1889, and provides further proof that the little community was growing steadily.

During 1891, 7,997 letters passed through the St Albans Post Office. A commercial directory of 1893 lists the business people at St Albans as two blacksmiths, a commission agent, a furniture manufacturer, and the Nico Explosive Company. It also records that the Stationmaster cum Postmaster was William McCallum, but adds that "As yet, St Albans is not a township".

The Australian Handbook for 1906 describes St Albans as "A railway station with a post office, 11 miles from Melbourne; fares 1/5½ and 1/1d. Has State school (No. 2969) and Anglican church. Agricultural and pastoral district. Population - 200."

Records concerning the early history of non-official post offices are often very scanty, and this is particularly so in the case of the St Albans office. It would appear that for some years before 1914, Mr. Robinson performed the dual duties of Postmaster and Stationmaster, but during that year, the management of the post office was transferred to Mr. H. Harrison, and the office was then operated at Harrison's general store. In December 1922,

Mr. Harrison was succeeded by Mr. J. O'Callaghan and two months later, in February 1923, both store and post office were transferred to Mr. John Perrett, with Elizabeth and Eric Perrett as assistants. It is believed that apart from a confectioner's shop, Perrett's store was the only one then operating in St Albans. There were no official mail deliveries at that time, but letters were delivered by the Perrett Family with the bread and groceries, three times a week.

Money Order facilities were provided from 17th January 1927.

On the 15th October 1938, Mr. E. Perrett took over the duties of Postmaster following the death of his father. The post office continued to operate at the general store in Main Road West.

Telephone facilities were provided late in 1951, with the installation of an automatic exchange. By the 30th June 1952, there were six subscribers.

The post office was raised to official status on the 1st September 1955. Mr. Frank Curtin was appointed Postmaster, and the post office was transferred to a small fibro cement building erected on the site now occupied by the new post office. The building measured approximately 24' x 10' and contained two rooms, one

used for the counter service, and the other for housing the telephone equipment and for sorting. Later, a second building of approximately the same size was provided for sorting purposes.

When Mr. Curtin took charge of the St Albans Post Office in 1955, the counter staff numbered only three. Letter deliveries were performed under contract by Mrs. Joan Young, and Mr. Battye. Incidentally, Mr. Battye is now chief postman at St. Albans.

On the 22nd July 1957, the post office was transferred to a larger fibro cement building, which measured about 48' x 20'. This was also located at 45 Main Road West, but it was moved clear of the actual building site when work on the new office began.

In March 1966, Mr. A. E. Tilton succeeded Mr. Curtin as Postmaster at St Albans. By this time the population was approaching 20,000, and there was an urgent need for a larger office. Tenders for a new, official building were therefore invited and the contract was finally awarded to R.J. Grills, of Surrey Hills. Work on the new building began on the 5th June 1967.

The Supervising Design Architect for the new building was Mr. J. Keane, of the Department of Works, and the Construction Architect was Mr. P. Incol, also of the Department of Works. An over-all area of approximately 48 squares is provided at the new post office, the ground floor area providing space for general counter business and for mail sorting, whilst an upper floor provides an amenities section for the staff.

Mr. Tilton, the current Postmaster at St Albans, now has a staff of thirteen to assist him, and during the last financial year a total of well over one and a half million postal items were handled at the office. Contrasted with the 4,000 letters handled in 1889, the development of St Albans, and of its post office, is well illustrated.

Prepared by Derek N. Baker,  
Post Office Historian, 1968.

(Reprint of document forwarded by John Waghorn of Lalor to Tom Rigg (q.v.) in 2009.)



St Albans Post Office 1968 © National Archives of Australia



**1956 – Ernst and Anni Endress**



Ernst and Anni Endress were German nationals who migrated to Australia in 1954. They came to St Albans by 1956, as their daughter Ursula was in Form 1A at St Albans High School in that year, which was when the school started in its temporary setting in Sunshine.

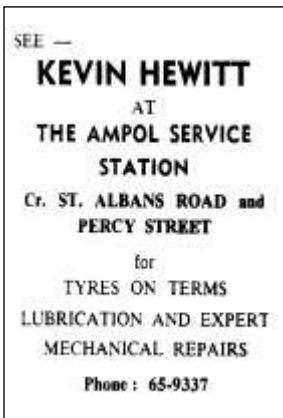
The family travelled per ship Skaubryn departing in 1954. They were Ernst Endress born November 1920, Anni (nee Waldbauer) born December 1921, Ursula born October 1943, Edeltraud born December 1946, and Hans Peter born September 1951.

Ernst, Anni, and Edda Endress were granted certificates of naturalization in December 1963, so they had made a commitment to stay.

They were living in Merton Street, near the high school that the daughters attended, and just around the corner from where Ernst established his Auto-Endress services station along St Albans Road.

In 1960 Henry Scoble had the auto service station at 29 St Albans Road on the Percy Street corner, and Aussie's Service Station was at 31 St Albans Road. In 1970 the Endress service station was at 29-31 St Albans Road and Kevin Hewitt's service station was at 27 St Albans Road, just north of the Percy Street intersection.

Frank Farrugia remembered that intersection because he used to cycle past there on his way to work:



*That corner was where Mr Hewitt had the Ampol Service Station for many years. At first he was a bit further along St Albans Road where Auto Endress is, but he shifted to the Percy Street corner. They had the first coin-operated Coke machine in the district and the boys would come on their bicycles just to experience the new invention.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Frank Farrugia, oral history discussions 2012.



Ursula Endress started at St Albans High School in 1956 and was in Form 1A, when the school had just opened and was based in the Presbyterian hall in Anderson Street, Sunshine, so the children had to catch the train at St Albans to get to Sunshine to attend the St Albans High School. The enrolment that year consisted of 126 students representing 27 nationalities; the 71 girls and 55 boys were segregated into gender-based classrooms, as was the practice in those days.<sup>2</sup>



St Albans High School Form 1A 1956



Edeltraub "Edda" Endress started at St Albans High School in 1959 and was in Form 1C. She married Robert Yeomans of St Albans and they became auto service station proprietors. They were in Percy Street and might have had two children,<sup>3</sup> but their specific histories are

not known. Edda married John Webster in the new millennium and they were living in Sunbury. They were active through the Rotary Club and Edda also volunteered as a support worker and advocate. Edda Webster nee Endress passed away in April 2018.



Hans Peter, like his father, trained as an automotive mechanic and that might have been through Sunshine Technical School. He wed Teresa Juliana (also known as Juliana Teresa) Witkowski and in the 1970s they were living in Ross Street, St Albans. Her parents were of Polish-

<sup>2</sup> For a history of the school refer to *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years 1956-2016* (J Ribarow & N Szwed, 2016).

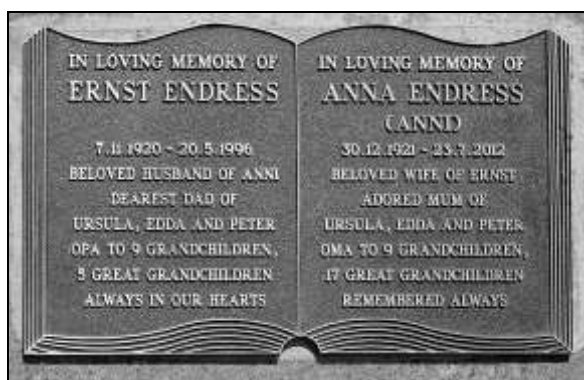
<sup>3</sup> Based on ancestry references.

German background and migrated in 1957, also settling in St Albans. In 1980 Hans and Julia were living in his parents' old home in Merton Street as his parents had moved to Gisborne. Hans and Julia appear to have had several children.<sup>1</sup>

In 1980 Ernst and Anna Endress moved to Outlook Drive in Gisborne where they were again managing a service station, so they were still actively working.

Ernst Endress passed away in May 1996 at Sunbury, at age 76 years, and was buried in the Sunbury cemetery.

Anna (Anni) Endress nee Waldbauer passed away at Woodend in June 2012, at age 90, and was buried in the Sunbury cemetery.



Grave marker at Sunbury cemetery



*Your Volkswagen can be old,  
Or it can be new,  
Our Authorized VW workshop  
is the place for you.*

**All Jobs and Inspections under Factory Warranty cared for, free of charge, if your Service Booklet is up to date.**

**WE ARE LICENSED VEHICLE TESTERS**  
*We have the latest Front-end Equipment to do all front-end work. Electronic Wheel-balancing.*

**WE STILL SPECIALIZE IN HOLDENS**  
**AND GIVE YOU THE BEST SERVICE ON ALL OTHER MAKES, FIRST-CLASS WORKMANSHIP, FULLY GUARANTEED.**

# Auto-Endress

**SHELL GARAGE**

# St. Albans

**RING FOR APPOINTMENT . . . 65-9352**  
**WE DO NOT DO PANEL BEATING OR SPRAY PAINTING**

<sup>1</sup> Based on ancestry references.

## 1959 – Stanislaus Kaska

Stanislaus Kaska was a Polish man who was born in February 1924. He migrated to Melbourne per Svalbard in December 1948 and settled in Selwyn Avenue, Albion. His connection with St Albans is that he was killed in November 1959 and his body was dumped in an old water well on vacant land near the railway station. The well had been concreted over many years earlier but there was a small opening at the top.

Beverly Smith recalled that in the late 1950s there were about three houses in Princes Street east of the railway station, one of these being occupied by the Cebisev family:

*One day his German Shepherd went missing and could be heard barking from the other side of the railway line where the pub is now. There was nothing there at the time, no made roads or anything, but there was an old well there, and that's where they found the body of Stanislaus Kaska who was a businessman from Sunshine. The dog could smell the body that has been dumped in the well. They never did convict anyone for Kaska's murder.<sup>2</sup>*

Of course at this stage the body was not yet identified, but as word spread someone made an anonymous phone call to the police roundsman at a Melbourne newspaper. The police were informed and Detective Jim Williams came to investigate because they were searching for Kaska.

Kaska had established a prosperous furniture and electrical retail business in McIntyre Road, Sunshine. He sold goods on hire purchase and collected the repayments himself, so he often carried large sums of money when doing his business rounds.

Stanislaus Kaska disappeared from his home on 1 November 1959. Inquiries into his whereabouts started next day after a night watchman noticed his mud-splattered and blood-stained utility parked near the Sunshine police station. He was known to carry large amounts of cash and police wondered if foul play had occurred while he was trying to repossess goods from someone who had defaulted in their payments. They started looking for his body in dams and swamps around the district and as the search intensified they even used a helicopter to scan the less accessible terrain along the waterways.

The police and fire brigade came to investigate the suspicions of a body in the well at St Albans. A pump was used to vacuum out the water and Kaska's corpse was there, weighted down with iron plates (used to connect railway tracks) tied to his feet. A mobile crane was used to lift tons of sludge from the well looking for the murder weapon and other clues. The police estimated there was about 18 tons of sludge in

<sup>2</sup> Refer to chapter by Beverly Smith nee Toogood in *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years 1956 to 2016* (J Ribarow & N Szwed 2016).

the well and several snakes in the well had to be shot before police could begin their work.<sup>1</sup> When they examined the body police found that Kaska had been shot in the chest and a .25 bullet was found in the body. Some empty cartridge shells were found along the railway tracks between Sunshine and Albion, raising questions if they were related to the killing.

In January 1960, a process worker from West Footscray, Oscar Mayr, was charged with Kaska's murder. Mr Frank Galbally represented Mayr through the legal processes and protested his innocence. Galbally introduced new circumstantial evidence with links to a site in Kinglake.<sup>2</sup> In their investigations, the police questioned a number of people but only Mayr was charged with murder.

After a two-day inquest, the city coroner found that the evidence was not strong enough to be considered true circumstantial evidence and that Kaska was "murdered by a person or person unknown". He refused to commit Oscar Mayr for trial:

*To be true circumstantial evidence the circumstances must be clear indications and not just arouse general suspicion. This does arouse some general suspicion, but from my point of view it does not indicate that the man charged has been one of the perpetrators of the crime.<sup>3</sup>*

On the advice of the Attorney-General, the police withdrew the charges against Mayr.

Kaska left an estate valued for probate at £24,000. This was a handsome sum that he had accumulated over the decade since his arrival. Kaska had left no will and had no next of kin in Australia, so his father in Poland was the only person entitled to inherit the estate under the law in Victoria.



Firemen pumping water from well, St Albans 1959

<sup>1</sup> Canberra Times 8 December 1959 p3

<sup>2</sup> Age 4 March 1960

<sup>3</sup> Age 4 March 1960

## 1961 – Peter and Johanna Ermstrang

Peter and Johanna Ermstrang came to Victoria as chefs for the Dutch team of athletes who were intending to take part in the 1956 Olympic Games. Then the Hungarian revolt occurred and the Dutch team decided not to come, which worked out well for St Albans, because the Ermstrangs came and baked a lot of wonderful goodies for the locals.

Pieter Ermstrang landed in Perth in October 1956 under the Netherlands Australian Migration Agreement with his wife Johanna nee Andernach and their children Cornelis Antonie, Catharina Johanna, Antoon Adrianus, and Pieter junior. They were destined for camp accommodation in Melbourne.



Peter Ermstrang was following family tradition in becoming a pastry cook.

His grandfather was a pastry cook and a baker, and so was his uncle. Peter's own father did not take on the trade because he said the work was too hard, that you had to work day and night and

even weekends because there was a lot of competition in being a pastry cook in Holland. Peter worked as a pastry cook in a bakery and as a chef in hotels and restaurants, so he had quite a lot of cooking and baking experience.

When the Dutch Olympic team cancelled their trip to Australia, the Ermstrangs stayed and established a pastry shop at Seymour. They were so determined to succeed they chose to advertise in the Dutch Australian Weekly, which was based in Sydney and circulated widely, though one wonders how many Dutch-speaking people there were in Seymour in 1957.

**Nederlanders in Seymour Vic.  
en omstreken!**

HOLLANDSE koekjes en fijne  
speculaas, borstplaat, beschuit  
(bolletjes) en dergelijken.

**PIET ERMSTRANG'S  
REGENT CAKE SHOP**

**33 Anzac Avenue - SEYMOUR - VIC.**

Plaats **NU** Uw bestellingen voor St. Nicolaas en  
Kerstmis voor **BOTERLETTERS, KERSTKRANSEN,  
SPECULAAS POPPEN**. Kortom, alles wat U in  
Nederland had kunt U bij ons krijgen. — Ook  
marsepein artikelen.

Advertisement in Dutch Australian Weekly 1957

The Ermstrangs' Regent Cake Shop went broke because the National Training program which was being held at the Puckapunyal Army Camp was cancelled, thereby reducing the

shop's customers.<sup>1</sup> That's when the family moved to St Albans.

In 1961 the Ermstrangs established their "Olympic 1956 Pastry Shop" also known as the "Olympic Cake Shop" at 8 East Esplanade, St Albans, opposite the railway station.

Peter was a resolute soccer follower and an innovative promoter. He was the founder of the Seymour Soccer Club and was with them for five years before he left the district. In St Albans he was President of the St Albans Soccer Club and was with them about eight years. He was interested in the development of the football game at the regional level, not just state and national competitions. He thought it important that teams from rural areas join in competition with Melbourne teams. (When he moved to St Kilda in the 1970s he was President of the third division Abel Tasman Club that later changed its name to Caulfield City. It was an era when teams based on ethnic or national identities were being encouraged to adopt regional-based names.)

In 1966 in St Albans Peter was elected unopposed as President of the soccer club at the AGM chaired by Cr Eric Alan. There had been some anticipation of problems, which manifested itself in Fritz Schwab,<sup>2</sup> former treasurer, walking out of the meeting due to misunderstandings over some social club expenditure.<sup>3</sup>

The office bearers elected in 1966 included Mrs Nell Mom (q.v.) as secretary, Arthur Wilson as vice-president, and Spiro Fragopoulos as treasurer. Other committee members were Messrs. Klaus, Svaganovic, Milenkovic, and Gangur.



Ermstrang (at rear left) with soccer team 1960s

The Ermstrangs' Olympic Cake Shop burnt down in October 1970, which was a major disaster for the family as their living quarters were above the shop. By that stage some of the children were living independently, so they were okay. Peter and Johanna relocated to St Kilda in

<sup>1</sup> Australian Women's Weekly 21 April 1971

<sup>2</sup> Fritz Schwab migrated from Germany in 1954; he wrote regularly for various newspapers in Germany as a sports journalist. His son Laurie Schwab Laurie also became a sports journalist, including soccer.

<sup>3</sup> The St Albans and Outer Western Observer 15 September 1966

1970 with two of their sons and established their Wilhelmina Cake Shop in Acland Street near Luna Park. It was and still is a very popular cosmopolitan boulevard of avant-garde intelligentsia; that strip of cafes, patisseries and delicatessens that enjoyed the nickname of Little Soho.



Advertisement in Dutch Australian Weekly 1971



Pieter and Johanna Ermstrang, St Kilda 1971

Late in 1975 the Ermstrangs left St Kilda, and the Wilhelmina Cake Shop was reopened at its new location at 354 Glenhuntly Road in Elsternwick. At this stage Peter would have been aged about 59 years and Johanna 61 years. It is not known when they retired.



Peter and Johanna Ermstrang

## 1971 – Thomas and Beryl Rigg



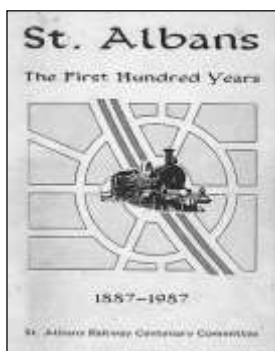
Thomas Adam Rigg was born in Brunswick in 1932 and attended St Ambrose's Boys Catholic school. Tom started with the railways as a porter and ended up as a station master at St Albans. He joined the Australian Railways Union and

the Australian Labor Party and acted through the ALP to combat communist infiltration of the union. After the ALP split of 1954/55 he joined the Democratic Labor Party.<sup>1</sup> Bob Santamaria had also attended St Ambrose's and was a major figure in the DLP, so maybe there was a common origin of socio-political inspiration in their Brunswick heritage.

By 1978 there was a move to close down the DLP and it was Tom Rigg as party president who presided over the state conference in which there was a majority vote to close the party. Tom continued to be active in the ARU of which he was made an honorary life member.<sup>1</sup>

Tom joined the railways and worked his way up to Station Master. He came from Morwell in 1971 when he got a promotion and became the new St Albans stationmaster. He observed that the district was concentrated in its old village boundaries with some new developments around Taylors Lakes and Kealba. The population had grown from about 1,000 in 1950 to about 20,000 in 1970 and still growing. The traffic congestion in the centre of town was exacerbated by the opening and closing of the railway gates to enable trains to pass through.

In 1984, Tom Rigg put forward a radical redevelopment proposal for St Albans: an underground rail station with a shopping precinct above. This proposal was rejected. In 1986 a slight improvement to traffic flow was made when boom barriers replaced the interlocking gates.



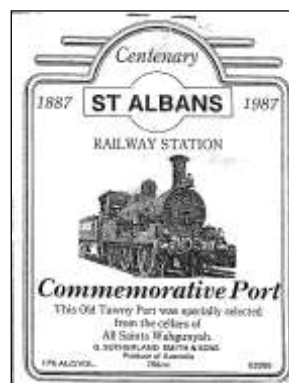
In 1986 students from the local schools were asked to write about the township's forthcoming centenary, as the naming of the St Albans railway station and the township had occurred during 1887. Some students came to speak with Tom Rigg, who contacted some

local residents and they established the St Albans Railway Centenary Committee, the forerunner to

the St Albans History Society.

The group prepared the first general history of the district and published the book "St Albans The First Hundred Years 1887-1987". The mainstay of this group was Tom Rigg as the president, Mary Smith and Emily Hall did much of the oral history, and Michael Guiney the railway history. Joan Carstairs did the editing and photography, and Chrissy Dennis the art work and design. The book was launched at the St Albans Library and the local MPs came for the occasion, including Dr. Jim Cairns, Barry Jones, councilor Alex Andrianopoulos and a number of others.

Other activities included a very well supported street parade, special steam trains, and a dinner dance at the public hall. It was the biggest celebration of the town's origins that was ever held. Tom Rigg later recalled that:



*We ran three special trains to Sunbury, steam trains on the Sunday. I always remember the second train, there were so many people it was like in Japan. It was a huge success. One of the ironies was steam trains can't run on total fire ban days. On the Saturday before, it was a total fire ban, and the following Monday. But the Sunday, there wasn't a ban and we ran the trains.<sup>2</sup>*

In the late 1980s Tom was involved with the St Albans South Progress Association, which resulted in the new station at Furlong Road being named Ginifer Station in honour of the late local M.P., Jack Ginifer. Rigg later wrote this history as "The Genesis of a Railway Station".

In 2010 Rigg tackled another centennial commemoration for St Albans – the Errington Reserve. Alice Errington had donated the land to the people of St Albans in 1910. Since then, generations of residents had benefited through the football, cricket and tennis clubs as well as the scouts and guides. However, the memorial plaque on the entrance gates had become indecipherable, and Rigg also discovered that Mrs Errington was buried in an unmarked grave at Footscray. He called a meeting of interested people and organized a new plaque on the entrance gates, plus a headstone for the grave where Mrs Errington and her son were buried. The new plaque was unveiled by Meredith Sussex, one of the Commissioners at Brimbank, and the memorial markers were funded by the St Albans Football Club, which had called Errington Reserve its home for many decades.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.socialactionaustralia.com/project/184-a-tribute-to-a-great-grouper.html>

<sup>2</sup> "Tom Rigg: a St Albans treasure" by Ben Cameron, Brimbank & North West, 22 November 2016.



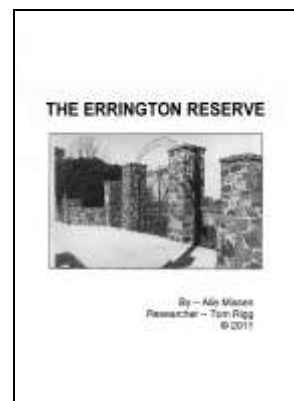
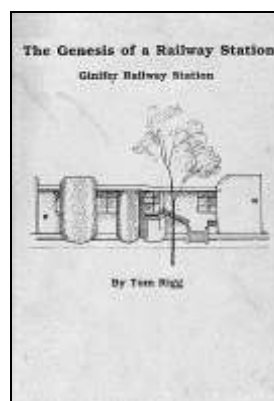
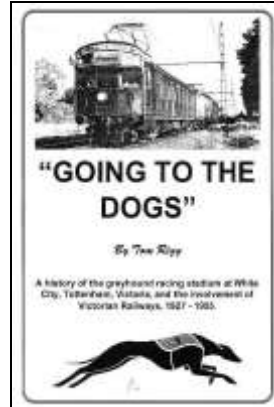


Tom had taken an active interest in local history and was a member of the St Albans Historical Society, which he founded. He also joined Friends of the Black Powder Mill, the

Sunshine and District Historical Society, the Brunswick Community History Group, and the Railways Historical Society. He helped with some background research regarding industrial issues, e.g. Gary Vines' book on the industrial heritage in the west, and had articles published in newsletters and journals. One of his excerpts about railway gatehouses was included in Alie Missen's book about Sydenham.<sup>1</sup>

Tom Rigg has written about ten books, mostly about the history of the railways and its people, including:

- "Going to the Dogs" : a History of the Greyhound Racing Stadium at White City, Tottenham, Victoria, and the Involvement of Victorian Railways, 1927-1955.
- John Joseph Brown: State Secretary, Victorian Branch, Australian Railways Union.
- The Genesis of a Railway Station : Ginnifer Railway Station.
- The History of Victorian Railways A.L.P. Industrial Group 1945 to 1975.
- Sunshine Railway Disaster 1908: a Railwayman's Perspective.
- Rigg of the Railways: Stationmasters of the Victorian Railways.
- Victoria's Most Disastrous Railway Strike : Sunday 15th October, 1950 – Friday 8th December, 1950, 55 days – 8 weeks.



<sup>1</sup> Alie Missen *Sydenham Memorial Moments: A Discovery Tour of Local Places and People*, Prahran Mechanics Institute Press, 2008, p65

For someone who has written a lot about history, Tom has published very little about his personal life. He mentioned in one newspaper interview that his paternal great-grandfather was Adam Joseph Rigg, a railways repairer at Sunbury, who told him about the Sunshine Railway Disaster of 1908<sup>1</sup> and inspired Tom to write more about that tragic event.

Tom also wrote that his paternal grandfather was James Rigg who was born in 1833 in Yorkshire, England, and came to Australia before 1871. He married Maria Hayes and they raised a family of eight boys and two girls. James started working with the railways and had an arm amputated at Benalla in 1878 during shunting operations. He was then put in charge of the gates at the Station Street crossing, Sunbury, where he operated the railway gates with one hand, a position he retained till his retirement in 1898:

*He took little or no interest in public affairs, but his cheerful, unassuming nature gained for him many friends.<sup>2</sup>*

At least nineteen of the Rigg family have worked in the railways since 1870. Tom Rigg was also part of this railway dynasty as he was a station master in the Victorian Railways for more than thirty years, and for twelve of those years he was secretary of the stationmasters' section of the railways.

Unfortunately Tom Rigg has not published any information about his parents or his early life in growing up around Brunswick. Some of the information now available on one ancestry web-site is not clear regarding his family links.

Thomas Adam Rigg married Beryl Jean Grover and they raised seven children.

Beryl Grover was born in 1935 and her parents were Charles Grover and Amy Irene Perkins. Charles was born in 1913 and his forebears go back to 1626 in Chesham, Buckinghamshire, England. The family came to Australia by 1844, so they were early arrivals. Amy's mother was born in 1915 but her family background is not stated. Beryl had a sister, Lorraine Willmar Grover, who was born in 1937.

Beryl Jean Rigg nee Grover died at the age of 82 in January 2017. A requiem mass was held for her at the Sacred Heart Church in St Albans. Her body was interred at Altona Memorial Park.

Thomas Adam Rigg died at the age of 85 in April 2017. A requiem mass was held for him at the Sacred Heart Church in St Albans. His body was interred at Altona Memorial Park.

Thomas Rigg has a permanent municipal memorial to his honor because there is a street named after him – Tom Rigg Street in Cairnlea – near the Cairnlea Park Primary School.



<sup>1</sup> "100-year-old crash remembered", The Star – Sunshine Ardeer Albion, 6 May 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Sunbury News 6 April 1907 p2