

ST ALBANS SETTLERS FROM 1905



Joseph Ribarow
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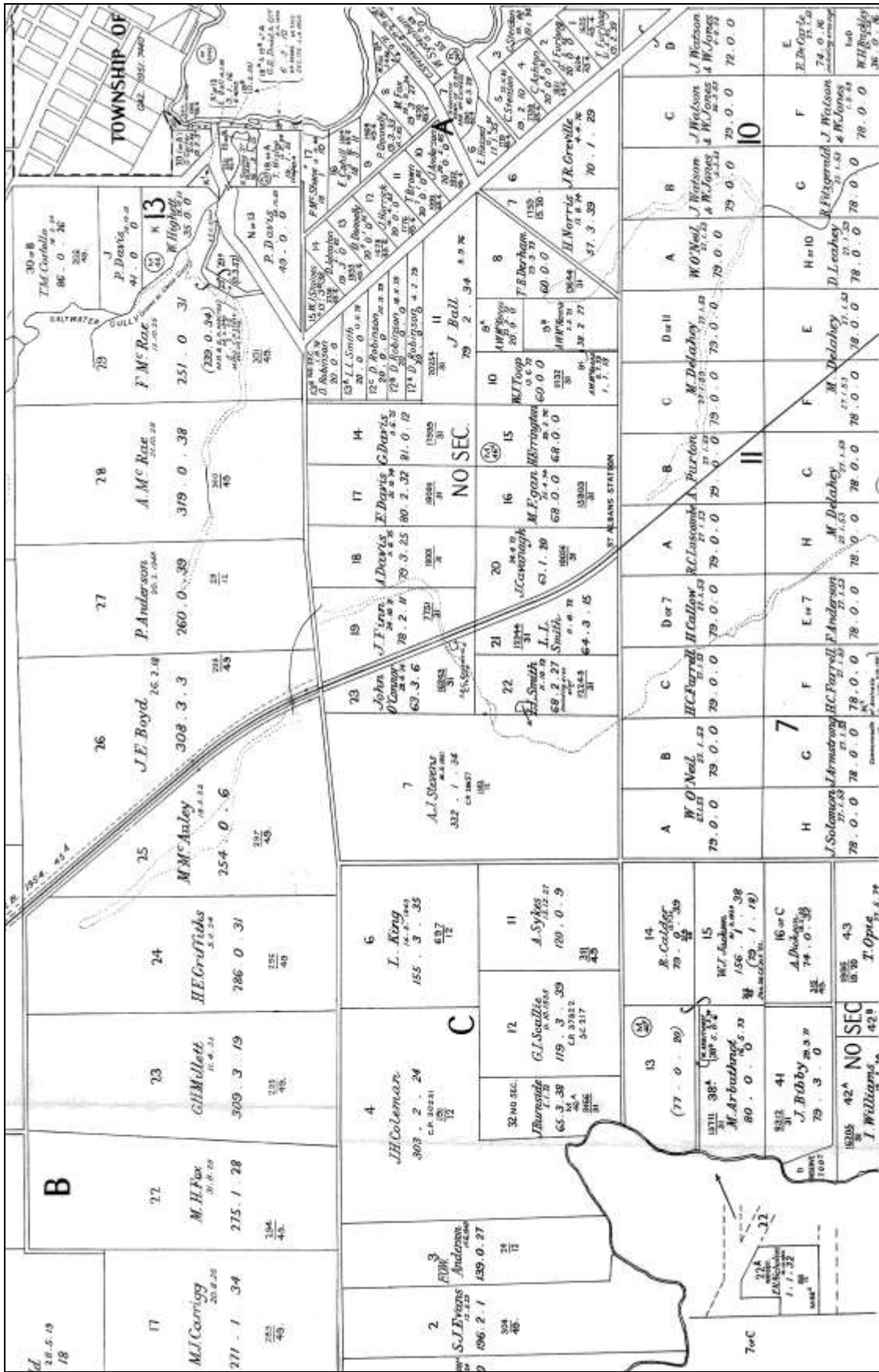
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Front cover

Parishioners attending Presbyterian Church, corner of Circus East and Elaine Street, St Albans. Photograph originally supplied by Emily Stenson Hall for the St Albans Railway Centenary Committee in 1986.

*The real life of Australia pulsates not in the big cities with
their hurrying throngs, but in the suburbs, country towns,
and hamlets such as St. Albans.*

C. G. Carlton
Sunshine Advocate 9 September 1932



Preface

This collection of stories is my second volume in response to the publication "St Albans The First Hundred Years 1887-1987" by the St Albans Railway Centenary Committee. My first volume was about the pioneers from 1868 who formed the basis of the St Albans district as a small farming community of about 200 residents, which declined during the economic recession of the 1890s. In 1905, the subdivision of the Overnewton Estate brought in a new wave of settlers who revitalised the St Albans community and provided leadership for the next fifty years. The population increased once again as commercial and civic developments were renewed.

These, some 50 stories of second-wave pioneers, were inspired by the Railway Centenary Committee's list of St Albans residents between 1902 and 1911. This publication includes almost half of the families mentioned in the list and thus is a good sample of the population at the time. Many of the names have been mentioned in local oral history, so readers now can better appreciate their backgrounds.

Families of particular leadership and longevity in the district include the Stenson, Stevens, Errington, Boyd and McRae families. I hope you enjoy the stories.

Joseph Ribarow
November 2018

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INTRODUCTION

St Albans in 1905 was a small, rural village along the Bendigo railway line, a minor part of the new federation of Australian states that was established in 1901. The village was part of the Keilor Plains that were part of the traditional home territory of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation who had lived in the area for about 50,000 years. Their total number in Victoria at the time of British colonisation is hard to determine; some of the early estimates are about 6,000 to 7,500 people.¹

The first British colonists who explored the area were Charles Grimes and James Flemming, which had happened in January 1803, when the Surveyor-General of New South Wales, Charles Grimes, explored Port Phillip Bay and around Braybrook and Keilor, declaring it to be unsuitable for agriculture as there was too much stone. The survey team consisted of Lieutenant Charles Robbins (ship's captain), Charles Grimes (surveyor-general), James Flemming (gardener), Doctor Daniel McCallum (surgeon) and James Meehan (surveyor). Flemming's job was to assess the soil and timbers etc. He thought that some of the land around the bay was quite good.

Grimes was reputedly the first European colonist to explore the Yarra River which he named the "Freshwater River" but it was James Flemming who declared it to be "*the most eligible place for a settlement that I have seen*" thus predating John Batman's similar observation by at least 30 years. In February 1803 Grimes and Flemming explored the Maribyrnong river as far as the Canning Street Ford and then walked about two miles further. James Flemming noted that the land north of the ford was open grassy plains without timber and the soil was stiff clay and very stony, while further to the north-west there were hills covered with timber. This was the area later known as the Keilor Plains.

Twenty years later, Hamilton Hume and William Hovell passed through the area on 15 December 1824. They crossed branches of the Maribyrnong River on their way from Sydney trying to reach Western Port Bay but they were off course and ended up at Corio Bay where Geelong was later established. On their way back they again passed the Maribyrnong River on 21 December 1824.² The stone memorial at the Keilor Plains railway station commemorates their visit. Hume and Hovell's reports highly praised the quality of the pastureland in Port Phillip, so that may have been an incentive for Hume's old school friend, John Batman, to come looking for new pastures when all the good land in Tasmania had been allocated.

On 2 June 1835 John Batman came across Bass Strait looking for grazing land, and his party boated up the Maribyrnong River and walked through the grasslands that would later become a core section of St Albans. He described the plains along the Maribyrnong River as beautiful sheep pasture, and grazing was one of the pursuits of the earliest European settlers to the area. The prognosis for the sheep industry was well judged, because in 1836 there were 200 Europeans and 27,000 sheep in the colony. In 1837 the number of colonists increased to 500 and the number of sheep to 100,000. By 1851 there were 77,000 people, 7,000,000 sheep and 400,000 cattle.

However, more pertinent to local historians should be the mapping of Batman's journey along the Saltwater River against present day landmarks. Hugh Anderson writes that the party:

*"... crossed Sunshine North to the vicinity of the junction of Furlong Road and the Bendigo railway [i.e. near Ginifer Station], and then curved away into St Albans proper and back towards Keilor, passing near or over the site of the St Albans East Primary School, and along approximately the line of Stenson Road to the Maribyrnong River again."*³

John Batman was one of the most well-known names of Melbourne settlement to be linked with St Albans and it's a wonder that his sojourn in our backyard has not been promoted as a historical fact to be commemorated in some way. William Barak was a young observer when Batman signed his dubious treaty with the Aborigines.⁴ Barak grew up on his Keilor plains tribal lands and saw the devastating effect of colonisation on his people.

These first settlers were seeking pasture to establish livestock herds; they quickly dispersed throughout the countryside looking for unoccupied grassland to call their own. It was the era when squatters took control of large tracts of land, so that before long there was little opportunity for newcomers to acquire 'unoccupied' land for farming purposes in the established central district; the new people always had to keep moving further inland. Much of the land around St Albans and Sydenham was taken up by the Taylors of Keilor.

Joseph Solomon the younger came to Braybrook in 1836 as one of the first pioneers in Port Phillip and part of John Batman's Port Phillip Association syndicate from Van Diemen's Land. Solomon acquired property along McIntyre Road and along Furlong Road in St Albans. Solomon's son Alfred had positive memories of the Aborigines and his brief observations are rare in recorded local history.⁵ About half of the local Aborigines died between 1835 and 1839 due to disease and

¹ Historical Records of Port Phillip: The First Annals of the Colony of Victoria; John J Shillinglaw (ed), 1878. The Voyage of His Majesty's Colonial Schooner "Cumberland" from Sydney to King Island and Port Phillip in 1802-3. Kept by James Flemming. p31
² Cannon, Michael *The Exploration of Australia*; Readers Digest, Sydney, 1987 p128

³ Hugh Anderson *Saltwater River History Trails: Sunbury to the Sea*; Red Rooster Press, Ascot Vale, 1984, p31.

⁴ H. G Turner, *A History of the Colony of Victoria, Vol 1, 1797-1854*, Longmans Green & Co. London 1904, p107: "... it is evident that neither the [Batman] journal nor the subsequent report can be regarded as reliable."

⁵ Thomas Flynn *A History of Braybrook District*.

dislocations when the district was being colonized. The indigenous people who survived in the district were probably moved to the Coranderrk Mission in Healesville by the 1860s. Their presence in the Keilor and St Albans districts was rarely reported in the local newspapers.¹ One claim is that 80% of the regional Aboriginal population had died:

*“Not thirty years after the founding of Melbourne, only about two hundred people remained from all five of the clans that made up the once populous Kulin nation, and the population decline across Victoria as a whole was at least 80 per cent.”*²

William Henry Taylor was one of the earliest Keilor pioneers from Scotland who in 1849 bought 13,000 acres and named it Overnewton. The property stretched from Keilor to Melton, taking up much of St Albans west of the railway line to the Kororoit Creek and Deer Park. He served for 40 years on Keilor council and was dubbed “the father of Keilor”. After Taylor died, the land was sold to the Closer Settlement Board, which led to the 1905 selection of properties on the “Overnewton Estate” that form the basis for this collection of stories.

The genesis of St Albans occurred in 1868 when the Keilor-Braybrook Farmers’ Common was subdivided by the Closer Settlement Board. The gold rushes of the 1850s had enticed half a million people to Victoria and they were hungry for land. In the 1850s there were about 650 people in the Parish of Maribyrnong (Keilor district) and 98% of them were British subjects; mostly from England (28%) Ireland (27%), Scotland (23%) and one-fifth were Australian-born (18%). The biggest of the non-British groups were seven Germans (1%). The number of Aborigines in Keilor is unknown but their total number in Victoria had declined to 1,900 and of the local Woiwuring tribe there were only 22.

On 2 November 1868 about 300 persons came to Keilor village to select land on the common that had been available to farmers around Keilor, Maribyrnong, Kororoit, and Derrimut. It had been surveyed into 68 allotments of an average of 80 acres. By this stage Keilor was a small village that was growing in influence; it comprised of about 60 houses and 250 residents. Braybrook was a broader shire and had about 1,100 residents.

The Closer Settlement allotments defined the new neighbourhood’s boundaries because they mapped its physical dimensions – Taylors Road, Boundary Road, Biggs Street, Sunshine Avenue, McIntyre Road, Stenson Road, Errington Road, Alfrieda Street, Kings Road, and Station Road. In a broad sense, the neighbourhood of St Albans was considered to be from the Saltwater (Maribyrnong) River to the Kororoit Creek (east-west) and from

Taylors Road through to Furlong Road (north-south). Early maps of the area show that these boundaries existed from the earliest times.

The selections were taken up by people from all parts of the state – former gold diggers, industrial and agricultural workers, and new settlers looking for an independent life as crop farmers or livestock graziers. The dream of a free and independent life is quite understandable, but the viability of the small allotments was questionable. Once the selectors moved in the population of the new district was estimated to be about 200 and the area was referred to as being part of the Keilor Plains.

On reflection, the 1868 land selection was not as successful as hoped for in attracting the genuine “small farmer” who would settle down to a self-sustaining life based on animal husbandry and crop cultivation. Some of this did occur but there was also a large proportion of investors and speculators who were looking for a relatively quick profit and had no intention of settling permanently.³

The next stage of development was in the 1880s, the land boom era, when Alfred Padley and the Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company bought many of these small farms and subdivided them for suburban allotments. Padley was a land speculator with a group of investors backing him in two major land speculations, at Langwarrin and on the Keilor Plains, where their interests extended to Keilor, Braybrook and Derrimut. Padley bought up old farms around the railway line and paid to have a station built, naming it St Albans. The “new suburb of St Albans” became the name for the village that was planned around the railway station that was officially opened on 1 April 1887. Some argue that this was the start of St Albans but in truth people had been living there for 20 years. Despite the hype of the real estate agents the new suburb did not flourish. That dream of a little utopia collapsed with the land-boom crash of the 1890s and the population declined. Padley’s company went into liquidation and he left the district. For some observers this reality had been foreseen:

*“St. Albans and Sydenham are instances of the extensive operations of land syndicates. Immense boards are erected at each place, with the name in large capitals, and, also the advantages most surely existing and likely to result, should the investor decide to make it his place of residence. Judging from present appearances, it is no hazard of prediction to say that some years must elapse before places at such a distance from the Metropolis, and void of resources, will be populated, or entitled to rank as townships. While there are to be found residential sites, within five miles of the city, readily accessible and bestowed with advantages as yet uncreated in localities twelve miles out, the public will prefer to settle there, though they have to pay a higher price for the land.”*⁴

¹ The district has a rich Aboriginal cultural heritage. In 1997 there were 184 Aboriginal archaeological and cultural sites documented within Brimbank, including Organ Pipes National Park, Jacksons Creek, Green Gully, Kororoit Creek at St Albans and Deer Park.

² James Boyce, *1835 : The Founding of Melbourne & the Conquest of Australia*, Black Inc, Collingwood, 2013; p192.

³ Refer to *St Albans Pioneers : Settlers and Speculators from the 1860s*.

⁴ Mercury and Weekly Courier 9 May 1889 p3

In retrospect Padley's speculations did not produce major changes to the St Albans population, except that the railway station was a beneficial asset and the speculative land purchases enabled some owners to dispose of marginal farming land.

A reprieve occurred in 1905 when the Land Purchase Board bought the Taylors' Overnewton Estate that was being sold by his executors. It consisted of about 13,000 acres and the purchase price was about £65,000.¹

Thus it was that in November 1905 the Closer Settlement Board offered 53 blocks for selection. There were 46 applicants for these and 31 blocks were quickly taken up in November 1905.² The importance of the sale was highlighted when the Premier and the Minister for Lands came out to inspect the estate and vouch for its viability as farmland.³ When asked to clarify the allocations policy, the secretary of the Closer Settlement Board said those selectors likely to make the best use of the land were given on the evidence supplied, and points were given for experience in the various branches of farming, financial means to tide over the first twelve or thirteen months, local knowledge of the district, and family aids, such as sons who could assist in the work, or parents who were near enough to lend plant.⁴

Sixteen of these selectors' background stories are included in this collection, so they are a good sample of the new pioneers that were attracted to the region. For St Albans it meant a new lease of life as new families settled into the district and helped convert it into a close knit community.

An event that probably went unnoticed locally was the loss of the most tangible link with Aboriginal people when William Barak died at Coranderrk in August 1903, the last survivor of his tribe.

The community's physical and social infrastructure started growing along the railway line: the new primary school (1900), Aylmer's general store (1903), the Mechanics Institute Hall (1906), St Alban the Martyr Anglican Church (1910), and the Presbyterian Church (1912). These institutions were the core of the community infrastructure. The churches drew people together who formed a wider association to develop their mutual interests and the hall provided space for public action and recreation. The St Albans Progress Association was formed in 1908 and met at the hall. Civic life was mostly connected with Keilor because most of the population was in that municipality and local councillors sat on the Keilor board. Business life was often directed to Sunshine and Footscray because the road and rail connections provided easy access to work and commerce. Social and recreational life developed around the churches and hall, as did an emerging political awareness and enfranchisement.

¹ Bendigo Independent 27 May 1905 p4

² Bacchus Marsh Express 11 November 1905 p3

³ Age 3 July 1905 p4

⁴ Age 16 November 1905 p6

The following profiles of 48 families are a cross-section of society at the time. Some families came and left relatively quickly, such as the railway workers whose jobs meant being on the move. A few selectors left because the crops and their financial resources failed; e.g. Murrowood. Others settled in for the longer term, such as crop and stock farmers. With a few families, some of the third or fourth generation are still living locally so they were permanent settlers.

Who were these people? Where did they come from? What happened to them? These are the questions for local historians. These stories are arranged alphabetically purely for convenience but there are experiences and interests that link the stories in various ways. The development of community identity arose from people working together to establish the amenities and facilities of the district. Over the next 40 years the St Albans Progress Association lobbied for improvements to water supply, roads, electricity, and business and housing construction. Edward Luxford led the Progress Association for 30 years.

Overnewton Estate selectors who were elected to Keilor Council include Henry Coleman, James Stevens, and Samuel Evans. Alexander Dickson nominated for Braybrook council and was then elected for Keilor. Frederick Stenson was the longest serving councillor in St Albans, from 1907 until his retirement in 1947. He was an earlier pioneer in the district and provided a transition role in the district as he arrived in 1888 during the Padley era before standing for council in 1907 in the Overnewton era. If William Taylor was "the father of Keilor" then Frederick Stenson deserves to be remembered as "the father of St Albans" because he gave equally of his time and energy to municipal affairs. Taylor retired from council in 1902. His son William Henry Taylor took over the councillor role in 1904 before being beaten at the 1911 elections by one of the Overnewton Estate newcomers, Henry Coleman of Taylors Road, St Albans. Samuel Evans was also in Taylors Road and stood for council after Coleman retired but died unexpectedly in 1927. James Henry Stevens was the second-longest serving councillor from that era. He arrived about 1908 and replaced Evans as council representative in 1927 before retiring in 1939 for health reasons. Stenson retired in 1947 also for health reasons after his wife died. Agnes Stevens was encouraged to stand but declined. These stories of local councillors cover half a century so provide a summary of the scope of municipal politics at the neighbourhood level.

The railway stories include Errington, Healey, Mancy, McElwee, Robinson, Grimmet, and Trevena. Though railway history was acknowledged in the St Albans Railway Centenary Committee's history of St Albans, these are the first group of stories about some of the families who operated the system. Victoria Railways was probably the biggest employer of workers in the district but that might not have

been obvious as many work gangs were itinerant.¹ James Robinson was the longest serving station master from that era having served from 1905 to 1926. Station masters were respected members of society. However, some transgressed. Robert Surridge was the station master operating at St Albans in 1900 and was demoted to clerk when caught on duty under the influence of drink. There were serious disaster stories associated with trains, the biggest event being the great train collision at Sunshine in 1908 with 44 dead and 250 injured. More personally traumatic were of the type when Henry and Susanna Mancy's toddler was crawling across the rails and was decapitated by a train. Esmond Healey's first-hand account of life along the St Albans rail line illustrates a much calmer experience of locomotive fascination.

The farm sizes varied significantly, from 54 acres (Murrowood) to some over 300 acres (Boyd, Coleman, McRae). The politicians argued that 100 acres would be sufficient for a holding. Practical experience proved otherwise and a few families survived by buying neighbouring properties. These were still quite small farms compared to some of the bigger grazing properties that had over 20,000 acres. Particular problems confronted by these novice farmers were too many rocks and not enough water. One critic referred to the "thirty acre quarry" and that "out of 10,000 acres only 2,000 are fit for cultivation".² Some locals were more optimistic with one congratulating the government:

*"... there are plenty of young men in the district waiting for land, and if the Government gives them the land it need not bother about the stones, as they will clear them off and 'transform the land into a paradise'."*³

The allotment boundaries were drawn up so that stony ground was spread across selections so that each block had a proportionate area fit for cultivation. Farmers used the stones to build their boundary fences. To deal with the water problem the government decided to sink twelve bores on the estate. Transport was another problem as the main road through Green Gully to Keilor had a gradient of 1 in 8. The solution proposed by the government surveyor was to deviate the road "at a comparatively small expenditure" to achieve a gradient of 1 in 20 – that's why the old Green Gully Road had such a long and winding trajectory across the creek and up the valley slopes. The water problem was much tougher to solve because the bores tapped into water that was much too mineralized to be used for domestic purposes, livestock, or agriculture.⁴ Farmers built ponds and dams along shallow gullies where they could and

some of the bigger farms built big brick water tanks into the ground. Every household had rainwater tanks for domestic use but there was always a water shortage in the summertime and Finlay McCauley was one of the locals who established a water delivery service.

But these problems didn't discourage the optimists and the population increased from about 120 in 1900 to about 280 in 1910. As some locals would later recall, by 1910 there at least 28 working farms in St Albans, which was progress indeed. There were a variety of farms. The bigger graziers include Ritchie, Griffiths, and McRae. The crop farmers include Anderson, Boyd, Calder, and Millett. The dairy farmers included Griffith, King, and Sykes. The smaller, mixed purpose farmers included McAuley, Millet, and Coleman. Poultry farmers include Lewis, Hester, Shortell, and Luxford. The area was still classified as rural and pastoral. Apart from farming, there were no major business enterprises in St Albans at the time as the area had been designated as free of noxious industries. This started to change in the 1900s. The only factory in the area prior to 1900 was the Nico explosives factory near the railway station. It was built by Henry Bastings in 1891 and closed in 1894 after an explosion killed a worker. The quarry came later and that wasn't until 1912.

The first shopkeepers were Robert and Elizabeth Aylmer from 1902 who had a grocery store near the railway station. Poultry farms started to increase which started to impinge on the noxious-free planning guidelines and led to greater regulation especially when the number and size of piggeries were increased. Pig and poultry farms were viable as small business enterprises because they enabled a family to start with an affordable financial outlay.

Alexander Dickson was a builder and worked on houses and shops and the Anglican vicarage. Luxford and the Calder boys were also builders. The Stevens brothers expanded their parents' farming interests into hardware sales and housing construction during the 1950s. The somewhat cosmopolitan nature of early St Albans was sometimes noticed: Pfannenstiel who designed the Presbyterian Church was Swedish and the Brown brothers were also part-Swedish, Menesdorffer was Hungarian, and people of German heritage include Heinrich Grabasch, Alexander, Wilhelm Schwarze, Hanne Anderson and others not so obvious. The presence of German nationals in the pioneering years of St Albans was noted by the St Albans history project in 1986:

*"Speaking of names, some of the people mentioned in the book 'St Albans: The First Hundred Years' have wonderfully long and grand names. Other names indicate that quite a few of the early buyers of subdivided land were Germans – this was in the 1880s and 1890s."*⁵

¹ The report *Employés in Railway Department* has a list of over 7,000 persons employed in the railway service in 1884. Second Supplement to the Victorian Government Gazette, No 64, 28 May 1884.

² Age 3 July 1905 p4

³ Age 4 July 1905 p6

⁴ Age 3 October 1908 p5

⁵ Christopher Evans, St Albans Community Committee for the Centenary of St Albans Railway Station 19.1.1987

It's interesting that Alexander Menesdorffer, of Hungarian heritage, is the only WW1 serviceman who is remembered as being included in the St Albans Avenue of Honour. Other war veterans include Grace Turnley, George Makin, Richard Porteous, and Robert Sykes. Porteous wrote about his war experiences and became an internationally published author. The war diaries of James and Les Makin have also been published.

There was one teacher of particular note in that era and that was Mr. Benjamin Balmer, who provided a decade of service from 1901 to 1912.

Women's stories have been harder to trace because their activities were less often recorded in the local press, even in a byline. Joyce Clarke was a St Albans reporter for the Sunshine Advocate in the 1930s but was usually referred to as "our correspondent". Men received attention because of their roles as land owners and developers, religious ministers, municipal councillors, sports players and club officials, progress association members, etc. Women might get a mention in fund-raising bazaars, weddings, mothers' clubs and the like. Strong women, and women with property or money might have got some respect from men, otherwise they didn't. Women volunteered for the mothers' clubs, organized children's celebrations and donated the prizes. They were pianists who performed in the churches and at community celebrations. They formed charitable groups, organised fundraising and commemorative events and provided the catering and entertainment as well. Often they were good singers and musicians. They were expected to be conscientious and frugal family managers.

Agnes Stevens and Alice Errington were strong community leaders and well respected because they were a formidable duo in promoting charitable interests through church circles. Ada and Susanna Beck set up Sunday school classes for children of Catholic belief. Grace Evelyn Turnley also was a war veteran. The Presbyterians named their tennis club after Jane Linton. The Stenson sisters worked on their father's orchard as hard as any man. Isabella Worthington, Emma Turnley, Catherine Belsey and Catherine Kellaway were widows who survived independently. Ellen May Knowles, a Boyd granddaughter, became a property developer.

These stories include women in leadership and in the businesses of poultry farming and dress-making. Their work in the dairy business as milk maids and butter churners are known but don't get any special mention, neither is their contribution as farm managers. Anne Woolfe is a good example of invisibility. Her name appears as a poultry farmer in 1905 so she was an early pioneer but we know nothing about her because she didn't get into the local papers. We can trace her footprints briefly through time via the electoral rolls but that tells us nothing about her life experience. There are many more whose family histories deserve to be told.

These are real life stories of Australia in 1905. #

ANDERSON, Peter and Hannah

Peter Anderson was born in Woodstock, Victoria, in 1868, the son of David Yoolow Anderson (1821-1907) of Angus, Scotland, and Margaret Beattie of Perthshire, Scotland – they had arrived in Australia in June 1849.

Anna Eliza "Hanne" Hill was born in 1874 in Campbellfield, Victoria, the daughter of Joseph Stringer Hill (1843-1901) from Campbellfield and Dora Hanna Winter (1849-1925) from the Grand Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Germany.

Peter Anderson and Hanne Hill married in 1895 at Woodstock, Campbellfield, and came to St Albans in 1910. The family's history in the district starts with the Overnewton Estate sale in 1905 when Peter bought the block adjoining Annie and Farquhar McRae's selections in Taylors Road.¹ The rest of the family came to St Albans about 1910 from Campbellfield, judging by the primary school enrollment records.

Most of the people in the district were living on small farms, and indeed it was the possibility of selecting a small farm that was the attraction for new settlers but the size of the farms varied from 54 acres (selected by George Murrowood) to 319 acres (selected by Annie McRae). The Anderson family settled on their 260 acres in Taylors Road between the Boyd and McRae selections. They built their weatherboard house close to Taylors Road and planted Cypress trees around it as wind breaks. They took up the farming life by cultivating crops, particularly hay and wheat, and they also bred draught horses and show ponies for at least 30 years. Occasionally, Peter would also tender for construction work through the council.²

Peter Anderson and his wife Hannah had eight children though two did not survive:

- Frederick "Friedrich" Osmond (1896-1979)
- Ethel Maude (1898)
- Myrtle Agnes (1899)
- Peter David Joseph (1901-1901)
- Peter Carl (1903-1903)
- Evelyn May (1904-1973)
- Horace Lionel (1907)
- Keith Alexander (1912)

Most of the children were born in Campbellfield and the youngest, Keith, was born in Footscray as the whole family had relocated to St Albans.

Frederick William Osmond known as "Friedrich" was born on 18 February 1896 and enrolled at St Albans primary school in April 1910 from Campbellfield and left in December 1910. On 18 April 1923 at St Albans Church of England he married Alice Eva Stenson. Her parents were Frederick and Eva Stenson whose home was the grand Keighlo from 1888 and which now is the Sacred Heart Catholic

¹ The McRae selections were Blocks 35 and 36 of the 1905 Overnewton Estate, on Taylors Road adjoining Saltwater Gully or Green Gully (Taylors Creek).

² Flemington Spectator 12 August 1915 p4

presbytery. Alice's father was Frederick Charles Stenson who migrated from England in 1888 and was effectively the mayor of St Albans for 40 years from 1907 to 1947.

Fred Anderson and Alice Stenson bought the 140-acre farm between the S. J. Evans and J. H. Coleman properties in Taylors Road and continued the family tradition of crop farming. They called their farm "Burn Brae" which seems to be a traditional Scottish appellation.

Ethel Maude was born on 18 December 1897. She enrolled at the primary school in May 1910 and left in November 1911. She married Leslie Lennard King in 1920 and they established a dairy in the area now known as Kings Park; they raised three daughters (a son did not survive). Les died on 17 December 1980. Ethel died on 30 May 1987 at the Queenscliff nursing home.

Myrtle Agnes was born on 12 October 1899 and enrolled at the primary school in April 1910 and left in December 1913. In 1921 she married Clyde Stewart Gillespie from Melton, who was the licensee for the Golden Fleece Hotel in Melton in 1939. They had two daughters: Lila Gillespie (1925-2008) and Margaret Myrtle (1931-2014). Clyde died in 1978 at Bacchus Marsh, and Myrtle died in 1993 at Melton.

Evelyn May was born on 7 April 1904 and started at St Albans primary in April 1910 and left in December 1913. In 1928 she married George Alfred Smith who was from Essendon. Evelyn died in Parkville in 1973 at age 68 years.

Horace Lionel was born on 28 June 1907 enrolled in the primary school in February 1913 and left December 1919 for Sunshine Tech. He married Barbara "Babs" Wilson, who was born 4 January 1909, the daughter of Joseph John Wilson. In 1934 she was a munitions worker living in Ruth Street. The wedding was on Saturday 4th August 1934 at the Presbyterian Church, and there was a nice social evening on the Mechanics Hall in anticipation of that.¹ Peter Joseph was born on 5 June 1938 and went to Sunshine Technical School. Their son Horace was born on 17 September 1943 and was one of the first intakes at St Albans High School in 1956. Horace snr died on 1 January 1996 and was buried at Keilor. Barbara Anderson née Wilson died on 25 December 1995; she was also buried at Keilor.

Keith Alexander was born on 24 November 1911, enrolled in St Albans state school in February 1918 and left in April 1923 for Essendon state school. He married Margaret Edna Griffiths of a neighbouring farm – her family had 286 acres on Taylors Road, west of the McAuley's farm – it was Lot #31 from the sale of the Overnewton Estate. Their son Henry Keith was born on 11 April 1942 and went to Sunshine Technical School.

When Margaret Griffiths married Keith Anderson she became related to the King family when

Ethel Anderson married Leslie King. Mavis King would later recall that:

*"The Griffith girls, Margaret and Marjory, took us to the Sunday school at the Church of England. Margaret took us to school for a few years driving a pony and jinker, which she tied to the fence in the Church of England grounds until it was time to go home again. Margaret later married Mum's brother, Keith Anderson, and became our Auntie Margaret."*²

The children of Frederick William Anderson and Alice Stenson include:

- Arthur Frederick Anderson was born on 11 February 1927 and enrolled at the St Albans primary school in September 1932. He left in December 1940 and took up farming on his parents' property. He later became a share farmer and also worked at the Sydenham chaff mills. He married Betty Irene Powell of Newport in February 1952 and they established their home in Biggs Street.³ He died on 17 September 1993 and is buried at Keilor.

- Jean Stenson Anderson was born 12 May 1931. She enrolled at the St Albans primary school in July 1937 and left in December 1945. In 1952 she married David Alexander Chandler who was the youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. Vern Chandler, of Hyde Street, Deer Park.⁴

According to the late John Stevens of St Albans, the Andersons were probably one of the greatest hay-growing families in the district, and both father (Peter) and son (Fred) grew it. Most of the Overnewton Estate farms were fairly small and this limited the economic viability of many of the ventures. The Andersons' sons solved the problem by buying two extra farms on the western side of Taylors Road and they also leased a property from H.V. McKay between Albion and St Albans. John Stevens recalled that:

"The Anderson family always seemed to be a little more comfortable than the rest. The eldest boy Fred Anderson eventually bought 140 acres up in Taylors Road, and his son, Arthur Fred, was share farming about 200 acres next door. Fred loved to do things right and straight. He used to drive four horses in a two-furrow plough from Taylors Road right down to the Kororoit Creek. ... You could go past there when the paddock was half-ploughed and look down there and the furrow was straight as a rule, round after round. When he built a haystack it was square and the walls were straight and he was one of the few farmers who could thatch a haystack roof properly. The samples he used to cut for chaff ... you couldn't compete with them. Because the son was working at the mill in Sydenham, he knew all the tricks of how to get the best sampling, how to treat your hay. Farmers used to work with steamers and things like that; they would have to water down the layers to get the hay soft and leave it to steam for a few days, but it was

¹ Sunshine Advocate 10 August 1934 p2

² Mavis Hunter nee King in *Stories About St Albans: Celebrating 125 years*; 2012.

³ Sunshine Advocate 7 March 1952 p3

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 27 February 1953

a harder way of doing it. No one could match Fred Anderson for the quality of his work.”¹

Though they are remembered mostly for their crop cultivation, the Andersons were also quite successful as specialist horse breeders. Peter won prizes at the Royal Melbourne Agricultural Show for their produce and horses. In 1927 Peter won six first prizes, one champion, and several seconds with his team of ponies.² In 1931 “P. Anderson & Son” had success with five first prizes and a second for their single and tandem teams, and a second for a pony mare.³ In 1937 Peter earned a place in the “Sun’s Show Personalities” after taking three ponies to the show and they all had gained first prizes and also winning first prize for a pair of buggy ponies:

“Mr. Anderson has been exhibiting for 30 years, and has never returned home without a win. Mr. Anderson is still a lover of horses, and so far has not been coaxed into the advantages, if any, of mechanical traction. He grows cereals for hay on his square mile of country, and has two sturdy sons to help him. In addition he breeds draught horses and ponies.”⁴

In 1940, Peter donated a pony that had won over 20 first prizes at the Royal Show, to help raise money for the Soldiers’ Cigarettes Fund,⁵ which was often referred to as the “Fags for Fighters Fund”. In this case the raffle raised £15 which was considered to be a good result and even got a mention in the Sporting Globe.⁶

The oldest daughter, Ethel Maude Anderson married Leslie Lennard King on the 28th April 1920 at the St Albans Presbyterian Church, which was the first wedding to be held at the church, now known as the Uniting Church. They became dairy farming people when Les started a milk round in Sunshine and St Albans and he was the iconic local milkman in the early decades. Les’s parents were Malcolm and Lucie King who had moved from Deer Park to St Albans in 1902, and in fact it was Malcolm Jacob King who bought Block 43 of the Overnewton Estate where Les and Ethel later established their Plainfields Dairy. It was on the corner of Taylors Road and Kings Road – of course that extension of Taylors Road was named after the family and when they donated land for a sports ground it became known as the Kings Park Reserve.

In 1945 Peter and Hannah celebrated their 50th anniversary:

“a very pleasant evening and “wedding breakfast” was given at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Anderson to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their wedding, which took place in the Presbyterian Church, Campbellfield, Victoria, on April 30, 1895. All the family

were present, except the youngest daughter, who was unavoidably absent through sickness in her family. A notable guest and very old friend of the family was Mr. Everard, M.L.A., who acted as chairman. In his usual jocular manner, he told many interesting stories both past and present, much to the amusement of the grandchildren. Each gentleman present, from the oldest to the youngest, was called on to say a few words about the host and hostess, whose health was toasted in the usual way.”⁷

Peter and Hannah Anderson moved to 4 Arthur Street St Albans in their retirement; their new home was close to the Anglican church and the shopping strip along East Esplanade. Peter died in hospital on 30 September 1954, at the age of 86 years, a St Albans pioneer for 50 years. The Sunshine Advocate reported his passing:

“An old and well-known identity of St. Albans in Mr. Peter Anderson, passed away on the last day of September at the age of 86 years. Much sympathy is expressed throughout the district for Mrs. Anderson and family. Mr. Anderson was for many years a successful farmer on the outskirts of St. Albans and always took a keen interest in the welfare and progress of the district, which included church work.”⁸

Eliza Hannah Anderson née Hill passed away in Essendon in 1961 at the age of 87 years. She had been a St Albans pioneer of 55 years. It’s been said that the family supported the work of the Anglican Church but Hanna’s role in this has not been recorded in the public domain.

In 2000 as part of its Post-contact Cultural Heritage Study, the Brimbank City Council identified the old Anderson farmhouse at 100 Taylors Road as being:

“... of local architectural, historical and social significance as one of the last farm houses in the St. Albans - Keilor area, as one of the few surviving farms which were created in the break up of the Taylor Estate ... The house is also associated with one of the leading farming families in the district for many years, the Andersons, and represents a major change in land use from the sparsely settled and extensive pastoral estate of William Taylor to the mixed farms that were developed as a result of Government policy in the early years of the 20th century. In its simple timber Federation form, the main building reflects both the typical architectural style of the period, and the modest means of the farmers who took up blocks under the Closer Settlement Scheme.”⁹

Peter and Hannah Anderson took 40 years to finalise their farm payments before they obtained their title in 1948. That was not unusual for the Overnewton pioneers from 1905, many of whom came without much capital reserves, but the Andersons and their descendants became quite successful. #

¹ John Stevens in Stories About St Albans; 2012.

² The Bacchus Marsh Express 2 December 1905

³ Sunshine Advocate 25 September 1931

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 1 October 1937

⁵ Sunshine Advocate 21 June 1940

⁶ Sporting Globe 17 August 1940 p2

⁷ Sunshine Advocate 18 May 1945

⁸ Sunshine Advocate 8 October 1954 p10

⁹ Brimbank City Council Post-contact Cultural Heritage Study; print version 23-Jan-09 Page 134 of 385.

ANSTIS, William Henry

In the Overnewton Estate sale of 1905, Block 32 with 254 acres was acquired by W. Anstis of Tallygaroopna. This is the block that is north-west of Taylors Road and the railway crossing that James McAuley acquired about 1906, so the Anstis family could not have had it for long.

W. Anstis of Tallygaroopna was probably Mr. William Henry Anstis, but the question is which one, because there were two of them, being father and son. William senior was born about 1849 and William junior about 1878.

William Anstis senior was a dairy farmer from Congupna near Shepparton. He was born in May 1849 in Cornwall, England and married Mary Wills from Kenwyn, Cornwall, in September 1874. He was 25 and she was 24. They came to Australia in 1877 or 1878 and settled around Clunes, which is near Avoca and was the site of Victoria's first gold strike in 1851. They probably moved to the town of Tallygaroopna about 1888.

In 1893 Anstis was President of the Congupna Farmers' Club at a meeting of dairy farmers in Shepparton to discuss the price paid for milk by the Melbourne Chilled Butter Company – the farmers' opinions were divided about the payment formulae and Anstis advocated for payment by results because the herds would be so much better selected as to give a more profitable result. The milk suppliers generally believed that tests applied in Melbourne, which they could not check, were unsatisfactory.¹

In 1899 William snr was elected President of the Congupna Farmers' Co-operative Society. The society was an offshoot of the Congupna Farmers' Club and its object was to secure direct trading for the farmers with the manufacturers, and also to procure agencies.² In 1901 he was the President of the Victorian Farmers' Co-operative Association. In 1902 he was attending a meeting of the local branch of the Citizens' Reform League and moved that the rules of the League be adopted.³

He was 'murdered' at the Victoria hotel at Tallygaroopna on Saturday evening 3rd January 1914, because he was found dead outside the premises some hours after drinking with friends and being involved in a scuffle. He was aged 65 years and described as being in good health except for occasional pains in the back and sometimes he got under the influence of liquor, but was not quarrelsome.⁴ The alleged murderer was Orville Byron Randall, an ex-American sailor. He was a tall, powerfully-built man who was well known to many people in Shepparton and had been with the American fleet that had arrived in Australia some years earlier. At the initial coroner's hearing Randal was charged with manslaughter.

After hearing all the evidence at the Shepparton Court, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty and the accused was discharged.⁵

William snr was buried at Shepparton, leaving behind a widow with seven daughters and four sons. It seems unlikely that William snr would have contemplated leaving his family and his extensive community responsibilities around Shepparton for the St Albans backwater.

William Henry Anstis junior was born on 19 October 1878 at Clunes, Victoria, and became a fitter by trade. He married Olive Selina Cameron in 1914. William enlisted in December 1916 and at that stage he and his wife were living in Boulder city in Western Australia. He served overseas and was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victoria Medal. He returned to Australia in July 1919. In the 1930s he was at the Kalgoorlie goldfields looking for work. He came to the attention of the Kalgoorlie press in 1933 when he was reported missing. He was described as being:

*"... 5 ft. 6 in. in height, partially bald, with thick eyebrows. He is thin featured and dark complexioned, and of a quiet disposition. He was last seen dressed in shabby working clothes, and had been residing in a camp near the High School at the Half Way, but since Wednesday he has not been seen. It is stated that the missing man has been resident on the goldfields for 18 months, and has been continually in search of work."*⁶

He was 'found' the next day when he reported to the police after seeing the missing notice in the paper. His interest in gold mining included being a shareholder of the Goldfields Co-Operative Society Limited. Unfortunately it went into liquidation in 1935.

William and Olive's daughter, Mary Elizabeth, was born in 1 November 1914. She was living with her parents at Cottesloe when she enlisted in 1941 at age 27 years. She served in Singapore as a Lieutenant in the Australian Army Nursing Services. There is a photograph of her at the Australian War Memorial with colleagues at the Changi Prison Camp, Singapore, in 1945:

*"Nurses and sergeants from the old home town meet up in Changi prisoner of war (POW) camp. Pictured: Sergeant John Murray Cheyne of Cottesloe; Sister Mary Elizabeth Anstis of Cottesloe; Sister Emmie Spiller of Melbourne; Sergeant Bruce Fell of Melbourne."*⁷

In 1958 Mary Elizabeth was a registered nurse living in Mosman Park.

William Henry Anstis junior died on 16 August 1963 at Nedlands, Western Australia. He is the more likely candidate for the St Albans selection in 1905, but it is not known whether he was later disqualified or just surrendered the site. #

¹ The Australasian 2 December 1893 p7

² Argus 4 April 1899 p6

³ Numurkah Leader 23 May 1902 p7

⁴ Shepparton Advertiser 5 January 1914 p3

⁵ Nathalia Herald 17 February 1914 p2

⁶ Kalgoorlie Miner 21 Jul 1933 p5

⁷ <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/019323>

AYLMER, Robert and Elizabeth

Robert and Elizabeth Aylmer were definitely of the Overnewton Estate era because they probably came to St Albans about 1900. In the oral history tradition of the district they are remembered for being the first village storekeepers. Their shop and produce yard was in Boundary Road (Main Road) a few hundred yards west of the railway station. It became the iconic small-village general store and community hub for the next fifty years.

Robert Aylmer was born in 1844 in Whimburgh, Norfolk, England. His father was Robert Boughen Aylmer (1816–1875) who was born in Cambridgeshire, England, and his mother was Elizabeth Crafer (1821–1873) who was born in Norfolk, England. Robert (the son) was the eldest boy of eight children born between 1842 and 1856.

Robert Aylmer married Elizabeth Hoare who was born in 1852 in Norfolk, England. They married in July 1877 at King's Lynn, Norfolk. Their early life together is not documented but it appears that they did not have children. They emigrated from Plymouth for Melbourne, Australia, on 23 May 1891 on the SS Orient – Robert was aged 46 and Elizabeth was aged 40 and they were on their own because there were no children or other apparent relatives included on the ship's passenger list.

It is not known where the Aylmers first settled in Melbourne, but they were in St Albans at the turn of the century. Robert Aylmer was listed in the 1902 Melbourne directory and the electoral roll listing for St Albans. He was listed in the 1903 Electoral Roll as a storekeeper in Main Street, so most probably the store was already built by then. Then in 1906 Robert and Elizabeth Aylmer were both listed in the St Albans electoral roll, he as a "storekeeper" and she in the ubiquitous role of "home duties". This is no record of any Aylmer children attending the local primary school.

The Aylmers' weatherboard store was built in Boundary Road. It is not known precisely when it started but it was definitely there in 1903. It was the first general store in the neighbourhood and had followed the construction of the new state school in 1900. The Mechanics Institute Hall was not built until 1906 and St Alban the Martyr Anglican Church in 1910, so Aylmer's store must have been a sign of optimism and development. It must have been good enough that the post office agency was transferred there in 1908. Till that time the local railway station master had acted as postmaster for the district until, in May 1905, James Stevens as the Secretary of the Overnewton and District Progress Association petitioned the Postmaster General's Department for the postal service to be transferred to Aylmer's store. Robert Aylmer thus became the village postmaster and storekeeper.

How did the people of St Albans get their groceries prior to this? Many people had a milking cow or two and grew vegetables, and some people sold a few groceries from their home. In the early

days a baker and a butcher brought their goods by cart twice a week from Braybrook¹ and some of that continued for years on the outskirts of the village. Marion McAuley recalls that Gerhard or Gottfried Jongebloed from Melton would come with his baker's cart selling bread along Taylors Road; later that run was taken on by Albert Tong of St Albans with the Doherty's bread van. Also, the McGraths who had the grocery store in Sunshine came with their horse and cart and exchanged groceries for cream and butter. Mervyn Missen remembers Indian hawkers with their horse-drawn covered vans would come once or twice a year and stay overnight or several days. They carried items such as Manchester, trousers, shirts and other clothing as well as boots, shoes and sundries.

Little is remembered of the Aylmers' personal history in St Albans. They lived in Adelaide Street, which was a couple of streets behind their store, and Robert was keen that Keilor Council should make improvements:

*"Mr. Robert Aylmer, of Adelaide-street, St. Albans, wrote requesting that the street drains might be attended to as the water was flowing over the footpath. The Secretary reported that the nuisance was mainly caused through cattle sheltering there and trampling in the drain, the run of water being sluggish. With money available, the Engineer recommended the construction of a crossing in the hollow of the road at a cost of about £10, instead of making one at the next street, where the ground is higher and excavation would be wanted."*²

Robert Aylmer became ill in 1912 and he and his wife decided to sell the shop and retire:

*"Mr. Alymer [sic], who has been the local storekeeper for many years past, has retired from the business, and intends living privately in one of the suburbs. Bad health has forced Mr. Aylmer to retire, which everybody who know him regrets. Messrs Mottram Bros. have take over his business, which includes the post office."*³

The Mottram brothers took over the store in 1912. They were Edward and George who were the sons of Edward Mottram (1861-1920) and Maria Bingham (1859-1942) who were from Lancashire, England, and had emigrated and settled in Brunswick in the late 1890s. The Mottrams ran the store for a couple of years and then it was taken over by Harry and Louisa Harrison. At this stage the store had an attached homestead and was multi-functional, selling groceries, general produce including wood and coal, and they were agents for the post office and the Commonwealth Bank.

Elizabeth Aylmer née Hoare died in Coburg in 1918 and Robert Aylmer died in Coburg in 1922. Though they were St Albans pioneers from about 1900 and remembered in oral history for starting the first general store, surprisingly little is known about their personal lives in the district. #

¹ St Albans The First Hundred Years p37

² Footscray Independent 8 February 1908 p3

³ Footscray Independent 11 May 1912 p3

BALMER, Benjamin and Clara

The Melbourne Directory listings of St Albans' residents in 1903 include Benjamin Balmer, so he fits in with the arrival of new settlers in the sell-off of the Overnewton Estate. He was the head teacher of the St Albans Primary School #2969 when it relocated from the small, rented cottage in Adelaide Street to the new, purpose-built school house in West Esplanade. He held that position from 1901 until 1912.

Benjamin "Ben" Hicks Balmer was born in Sandhurst in 1865 to Robert Sarjeant Balmer and Elizabeth Raeburn Hicks. Robert S. Balmer was born in Limerick, Ireland, in 1829, the son of Richard Balmer (who was a Brevet-Major in the Royal Irish Constabulary) and Charlotte Sarjeant. Robert S. Balmer migrated to South Australia and then settled in Bendigo in 1852. He started a private school at Golden Gully before the State schools system was initiated.¹ After the denominational schools merged with the State school system, he accepted a position in the State system and taught at different times at Diamond Hill, Mandurang, Myerstown and Leichardt.²

The 1860s was not a good decade for Robert Balmer, financially speaking. He was declared insolvent in 1862 with debts of £187 and assets of £19 and he did not obtain his discharge certificate until 1864. In 1867 he was again declared insolvent with debts of £113 and assets of £23.³ This proved to be a complicated case with money owed to various creditors including a nephew, and a sister-in-law who had been declared insane. Consequently, his dwelling-house, school-house and household furniture were sold at a public auction in April 1867 and bought by his nephew. Robert Balmer continued to run the school and was now paying his nephew £10 per year rental for the premises.

Evidently running a private school was not a very profitable business. During the 1867 insolvency examination hearings, Balmer mentioned that he had been struggling financially since 1863. He had spent £400 on the Golden Gully schoolhouse, some of which sum he had borrowed from relatives and other creditors. As income he received from the Government £75 per year and payment by results of examinations came to about £30 per year, and about £10 per year from scholars.⁴ This time the discharge certificate was granted in November 1870.⁵

Robert Sarjent Balmer married Elizabeth Hicks at Sandhurst, Victoria, in 1864. She was born in Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland, in 1841, the daughter of Elizabeth Raeburn and John Hicks. It

is not known when she migrated to Australia.

Robert Balmer and Elizabeth Hicks must have settled around Sandhurst as most of their children were born in the region. Elizabeth gave birth to ten children between 1865 and 1880, and her first child was Benjamin.

Benjamin Hicks Balmer was born in 1865. He followed in his father's footsteps as in 1885 he was promoted as a pupil teacher⁶ and in 1886 he passed the Matriculation Examination through Melbourne University.⁷

Benjamin Balmer married Clara Hands on 14 January 1890, at Forest Street, Bendigo.⁸ He may have continued teaching at Sandhurst High School for a while but by 1895 he had moved to South Gippsland and had also been appointed as the Deputy Electoral Registrar for the Welshpool Division.⁹ Both his children were born in Welshpool – Edward Norman in 1890 and Florence Gertrude in 1893.

Ben Balmer was appointed head teacher at the St Albans State School in 1901 and was probably the longest-serving headmaster at the school. The school's eightieth anniversary history publication¹⁰ notes that:

- St Albans State School 2969 opened in August 1889 as an unclassified school with an enrollment was 26 pupils – 14 boys and 12 girls.
- The school opened on a temporary basis in a cottage in Adelaide Street at a rental of a shilling a week until a proper school could be built. This state of affairs continued until 1900.
- The school cottage also became a meeting place for social occasions and dances, and was used as a place of worship on Sundays.
- In 1901 Balmer reported that several birds had made the ceiling of the school their home – they soiled the desks and floor and to make matters worse, soiled the water tanks and made the water unfit for drinking purposes.
- In 1902 Balmer again complained about the water supply at the school because of pollution by birds and rust. He stopped using the tank water and bought water from a neighbour.
- Written requests were made in 1905 and 1907 to erect a residence at the school for the teacher "*who has to travel 16 miles per day for want of nearer accommodation,*" but that never eventuated.
- In 1907 there were 60 students enrolled with another 12 on a waiting list because there was not enough room to accommodate them, so the suggested solution was to hire a room at the Mechanics Institute hall. (This same solution was in place in the 1950s when post-WW2 migration dramatically swelled enrollments.)

¹ Balmer was Head Teacher at Golden Gully in 1864 with an average number of 112 students attending.

² Bendigo Advertiser 9 May 1901 p2

³ Age 11 April 1867 p3

⁴ Bendigo Advertiser 20 May 1867 p3

⁵ Age 19 November 1870 p3

⁶ Bendigo Advertiser 17 August 1885 p3

⁷ The Age 23 June 1886 p5

⁸ Argus 16 January 1915

⁹ Victorian Gov. Gazette No.17, 17 May 1895 p1798

¹⁰ G D Lambert *Back to St Albans: 80th Anniversary 1969*, St Albans State School, 1969

- In 1908 Balmer suggested that the school could be extended to accommodate 75 pupils and that a £90 extension could add 12 feet to the building.

- Mr. Balmer left St Albans State School in 1912, and from his record one can conclude that he fought for better accommodation and education for the children of St Albans.

The teacher's residence at the school had not been built and Balmer travelled daily by train from his Footscray home, initially in Whitehall Street and later in Bunbury Street. After leaving St Albans Balmer most probably transferred to teaching at Heathcote, because in 1919 he was listed as the Assistant Returning Officer for the district.¹

The family must have returned to Melbourne in their approaching retirement because in 1922 they were living with their daughter at Ascot Vale in Myrnong Crescent. At this stage Benjamin Balmer was aged 59 years and his spouse Clara was aged 61 years. In 1931 they were living in their final home in North Street, Ascot Vale.

In October 1932, Balmer attended a large gathering of people in St Albans to honour the achievements of Councillor Frederick Charles Stenson during his 25 years' work on behalf of the public.² Balmer had obviously retained a connection with the district, as by this stage his appointment to the St Albans State school had occurred some 23 years earlier.

Benjamin Hicks Balmer died on 27 April 1933 at his home in North Street, Ascot Vale; he was 69 years of age. (His father had died at St Kilda in 1901 at age 73, and his mother died at Carlton North in 1921 aged 79 years.)

Benjamin's wife, Clara Balmer née Hands, died on 9 May 1943 at her home in North Street, Ascot Vale; she was 79 years of age.

Their son Edward Norman Balmer was born on 14 October 1891 at Binginwarre, Welshpool, South Gippsland. He was admitted to St Albans state school in 1902 after transferring from Myrtleford and he stayed until 1904. After completing his education he worked as a clerk. In December 1915 he enlisted in the A.I.F. but was referred to the Expert Medical Board and declared to be unfit for military service. He moved to Trainga in Queensland where he joined the Freemasons as a member of the Lamington Lodge of the United Grand Lodge of Queensland. He and his wife Margaret raised at least one daughter, Norma. Edward Norman Balmer died in October 1954, at the age of 63 years.

The daughter Florence Gertrude Balmer was born in 1893 and died on 16 June 1965 at Moonee Ponds, at the age of 72 years. She had never married and appears to have lived with her parents for much of her life. #

¹ Commonwealth of Australia Gazette No.130, 27 November 1919 p1760

² Sunshine Advocate 28 October 1932

BASTINGS, Edwin and Mary



Edwin Bastings and Mary Bastings née Lester came to St Albans in 1891 and did not stay very long. However, the family's role in St Albans was significant for a brief time because Edwin helped establish the first factory in the area and that was the Nico Explosives Factory.

Edwin Bastings was born in 1860 in Brunswick, Victoria. His father was Horace Bastings who was born on 1 June 1832 in Islington, London, and his mother was Emma Aldredge who was born on 6 March 1828 in Bungay, Suffolk, England. They married in 1850 in Victoria and Emma gave birth to five children. Horace was an astute businessman and politician. He had arrived in Victoria about 1849 with his brother Edwin and went to the gold-fields before settling in Northcote. They must have struck gold because Horace built the Peacock Inn hotel and Edwin built the general store, both being substantial structures built in the permanency of bluestone. Edwin became the mayor of Northcote and Horace became the mayor of Brunswick.



Edwin Bastings served as municipal councillor for 45 years, serving three terms as the Shire President of Jika Jika, and two terms as Mayor of Northcote.³ Horace Bastings moved to New Zealand in 1862 and took over Cobb and Co's coaches on the South Island. He also became involved in political representation over two decades before returning to Melbourne in 1882.

³ City of Northcote (1933). Northcote Jubilee celebrations 1883 – 1933 : souvenir and official program.

Mary Susannah Lester (1859-1947) was born in Peg Leg, Bendigo, the daughter of James Steel Lester (1823-1893) and Mary Wood (1830-1899). James Lester was from Chatham England and came to Victoria before 1854. Mary Wood was from Brigham, Cumberland, England. She married James Lester in 1854 and gave birth to eleven children between 1854 and 1874, though some did not survive their infancy. The children were born around Ballarat and Bendigo at Eaglehawk, Peg Leg and Nerring. Mary Susannah was their fourth child and their first daughter.

Mary Susannah Lester married Edwin Bastings the younger in 1881. Their children included Myra Blanche (1883), Hilda (1885-1887), Horace James (1888-1888), Mary Lester (1889-1890), and Edwin junior (1892-1955).

The Bastings family name is not uncommon and the St Albans' family was related to some well-known figures in Brunswick, Northcote and New Zealand, where several of the brothers had settled. It was the father and son team of Horace and Edwin who established the Nico factory in St Albans. In Brunswick, Horace had had connections with Edward De Carle who had bought land in St Albans in the 1870s¹ so he already had a tenuous link with the district. Horace went to New Zealand in the 1860s and was elected to the House of Representatives there. He came back to Australia in 1882 and became a railway contractor, working on the first cable tramway in Sydney, and in Victoria on the Bacchus Marsh to Ballan railway. A portion of this line was said to be the most expensive railway in the colony because:

*"... the line passes over a series of hills, and embraces a number of steep cuttings and heavy embankments. For a few miles after leaving Ballan the train runs through fairly level country, but the difficulties commence when the Pentium Hills are encountered. Messrs H. Bastings and Cos. were the contractors for this section of the line, and well have they carried out their work. The gradients provided on the original plans were so heavy that it would have been impracticable to run trains on the line at other than a very slow rate. ... these plans were altered, and now, though the gradients are still steep, they are not too severe to admit of the Adelaide express travelling on the line."*²

Bastings contemplated starting an explosive factory in Bacchus Marsh if he could find a suitable site.³ He obviously didn't find it there.

Horace and Edwin Bastings must have been looking to establish an explosive manufacturing factory during 1890 as they both became involved in that venture. Horace Bastings became Chairman of the company and Edwin Bastings was to become the factory manager. The Liardet's Patent Safety Blasting Compound Co. Ltd. was registered with

the Registrar General's Office in January 1891. At this stage Horace was referred to as being a "gentleman" of Grey Street, St Kilda. In February 1891 they applied to the Department of Trade and Customs for a licence for their factory at St Albans. The Commissioner of Customs decided "*in view of objections taken by residents of the locality*" not to do anything definite in the matter until both sides of the question have been heard.⁴ In April, the Shire of Keilor objected to the site chosen, arguing that the factory should be built at Sydenham.⁵

In May 1891, George Errington⁶ sold some his land to Liardet's, who established their factory near the St Albans railway station. The company drew up plans and specifications for the construction of a water tank at St Albans, which must have been a substantial task as it was put out for tender.⁷ St Albans was always short of a water supply and the factory would have needed a reliable source. The buildings were due to be completed by the end of August.⁸ The factory was on the Braybrook side of the municipal boundary so Keilor Shire Council's location preferences did not apply.

The company was established to manufacture a new safety explosive registered as "Nico" and the company intended to produce it on a large scale:

*"This compound is as strong as dynamite, it will not explode either by friction or concussion, and it has no noxious fumes. Considering that scores of miners die annually in Australia through slow poisoning from the fumes of explosions, this latter quality should cause Nico to be universally used. In fact it should be made compulsory by law to use it in mines and tunnels. It would not only be a boon to the miners and their families, but also save the owners the time now lost in waiting for dynamite fumes to clear away. ... Nico is much cheaper than any other blasting compounds and must supercede them."*⁹

Edwin and Mary Bastings moved to St Albans about October 1891. Their daughter Myra started at the primary school in October 1891 and left at the end of 1892. Edwin and Mary also were the guardians of Claude Booth and Allan Booth, who were the sons of Mary's sister Annie Elizabeth Booth née Lester.¹⁰ The two boys attended St Albans primary school during 1891-92.

The Nico company seems to have experienced problems relatively early in their existence. In June 1892 a meeting of the shareholders was held to discuss a proposal to wind up the company. By November the company was in liquidation and

¹ Refer to chapter in *St Albans Pioneers Settlers and Speculators from the 1860s*.

² Ballarat Star 5 December 1889 p4

³ Bacchus Marsh Express 9 May 1891 p2

⁴ Age 19 February 1891 p4

⁵ Bacchus Marsh Express 11 April 1891

⁶ George and Hannah Errington were pioneers from the 1850s. Refer to chapter in *St Albans Pioneers Settlers and Speculators from the 1860s*.

⁷ Age 10 June 1891 p3

⁸ Argus 30 July 1891 p8

⁹ Warragul Guardian 14 October 1892 p1

¹⁰ Annie Elizabeth Lester married William Deans Booth and had two sons. Annie and William divorced in 1892 and William died about 1894.

trying to sell the land that George Errington had sold them.¹ Some resolution of the finances must have occurred because the factory was still operating in early 1894.

On 13 February 1894 an explosion occurred at the factory in which two workers were seriously injured. They were William Ross and John Clarke, who were brothers-in-law from Braybrook Junction, as John Clarke had married William's sister Annie Ross. They were the only two men working in the factory at the time and were scraping the rollers used to compress the compound when flames erupted and ignited a box containing sixty pounds of the explosive material. Both men suffered severe injuries and were rushed to the Melbourne Hospital where William Ross died.² He was a single man aged 23 years. John Clarke survived; he was married with two children. The inquest into the accident concluded that the men had been using metal tools to remove encrustation rather than the stipulated wooden scraper, and the metal chisel had struck a spark that caused the fire. The jury returned a verdict of accidental death.³

George Errington initiated legal proceedings against the Nico company to obtain possession of the land and premises because:

*"... the purchasers made default in payment of the final installment of £1,678, whereupon he rescinded the contract of sale. In view of the recent accident ... the plaintiff now asked for an order restraining the defendants from using the premises for the manufacture or storage of explosives, pending the hearing of the action, or until further order."*⁴

The order was granted and the factory was liquidated in November 1894.⁵ An auction was held on 26 November at St Albans to sell off all the remaining equipment "without reserve".⁶

It appears that Edwin and Mary Bastings left St Albans some time before the factory was liquidated. Their children are recorded as having left the primary school in December 1892. Moreover, when the explosion occurred at the factory in 1894, the managing director of Nico was John Oldfield M'Ardell, though this does not preclude Edwin from having stayed on with the company. Edwin Bastings died on 13 November 1906 in London, at age 46 years.

Horace Bastings had returned to New Zealand where he died on 27 June 1909 at the age of 79 years. Apparently he had returned because of failing health. His death notice reports that he had been a member of the Dunedin Town Board and the Otago Provincial Council, and had represented Waikaia in the House of Representatives.⁷

¹ Argus 17 November 1892

² Argus 14 February 1894 p6

³ Age 16 February 1894 p5

⁴ Argus 21 February 1894

⁵ Age 16 November 1894 p2

⁶ Age 22 November 1894 p2

⁷ Bacchus Marsh Express 17 July 1909 p2 quoting excerpt from the Auckland Herald.

Mary Susannah Bastings née Lester died in Glen Iris on 16 November 1947, at the age of 87. The circumstances of her passing are not known but she had lived to a good age.

With regard to the children who had attended the St Alban primary school, they were there only during 1891 and 1892, which suggests that the family may have left the district before the accident occurred.



Myra Blanche Bastings was born on 17th July 1883 in New Zealand. She started at the St Albans state school in October 1891 having transferred from North Melbourne; she left in December 1892. She wed Daniel Kingsland in March 1903 in New Zealand. They divorced and in 1919 Myra then married Harold Hoffman

Cook in Victoria.

Edwin Bastings jnr was born in St Albans in 1892. He became an architect draughtsman and worked in the office of Gibbs, Finlay and Morsby in Collins Street. He enlisted in July 1915 at age 23 years and served as a Sergeant with the 21st Battalion 6th Brigade 2nd Division Field Ambulance in France. He was awarded the Military Medal for action at Bullecourt: *"His Majesty The King has been graciously pleased to award the Military Medal for bravery in the Field."* The City of Melbourne forwarded him an honorarium of 25 guineas on account of the award. Bastings also received the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal. He was discharged in July 1919 after the war and he continued working as an architect. He married Agnes Alison Brumby in 1919 and they were living in Mont Albert; she died in 1939. He married Olive Maud McGregor in 1941 and during the 1950s they were living in Glenferrie Road, Malvern. Edwin Bastings died in 1955 at Kooyong, at age 62 years.

Claude Deans Booth was born on 16 June 1885, was admitted to St Albans primary school in October 1891 and left in December 1892. Claude married Irene Henrietta Osborne (1889-1976) on 25 May 1920. They had two daughters, Ada Phyllis (1921) and Irene (1924). Claude died in 1962 at Caulfield aged 76 years.

Allan Booth was born 3 May 1887, went to St Albans primary school in October 1891 and left in December 1892. He married Ewlla Elizabeth Nicholson in 1911. They had two daughters and a son. Allan died a Kew in 1949 at age 62.

The Bastings family did not stay long in St Albans, and the few oral history recollections about them are because of the explosion, which was a fore-runner to later explosions in Deer Park when the munitions factories were established there. #

BECK, Henry and Margaret

Henry Hatton Beck was born on 13 May 1836 in Pictou, Pictou County, Nova Scotia, Canada. He was the son of Nicholas Beck and Susannah Woodworth, who were possibly of Scottish background. Henry Beck migrated to Australia and by 1861 was working as a gold digger at Chiltern, which is in northeast Victoria between Wangaratta and Wodonga. It became part of the Victorian Gold Rush in 1858-59 when alluvial gold was found near Indigo, Black Dog Creek and Chiltern, and attracted a population boom of 20,000 people. Gold mining had its hazards and Beck was a witness when a miner was crushed to death in the collapse of a mine shaft.¹ Beck's less hazardous pastime was in poultry breeding where he won prizes for best pair pigeons in the Chiltern Agricultural Show over several years.²

Margaret Mary Thomson Connolly was born in 1840 in Cork City, Ireland. She was the daughter of Daniel Connolly and Johannah Thompson. It is not known when she migrated to Victoria but she married Henry Hatton Beck in Victoria in 1861, so they were both pioneers of the gold rush era. Their children were born between 1862 and 1872 in the gold mining towns of northeastern Victoria:

- William Henry born at Chiltern in 1862.
- Thomas Walter born at Indigo in 1865.
- Susannah Hannah born at Chiltern in 1867.
- Ada Mary born in Chiltern in 1869.
- Henry Nicholas born at Eldorado 1872.

Henry Beck snr became involved in electoral affairs through supporting the candidature of John Orr for the Legislative Assembly and becoming part of Orr's Indigo Committee.³ Beck also became involved in the Indigo Township Gold Mining Company and that was problematic because in 1867 he was declared insolvent with the causes of insolvency being listed as:

*"The Indigo Township Gold Mining Company not being a profitable undertaking, and losing all insolvent's capital therein, and being consequently reduced to work for wages, which are not more than sufficient to support insolvent's wife and family."*⁴

His debts were £547 and his assets were £16, so the family was in considerable financial distress. Henry Beck continued working as a miner and labourer and it took him at least five years to pay off his debts, because he applied for a certificate of discharge in January 1872.⁵ Life must have improved because at least three of the children continued their education and became

school teachers. Unfortunately the second son, Thomas Walter, died in 1876 at the age of 11 years (details are not available).

Henry and Margaret Beck became St Albans pioneers of the 1890s when Margaret bought property from Alfred Padley's Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company.⁶ Their reason for moving to St Albans is not stated, but one could assume the decline in gold mining and the general financial recession meant that miners were looking for other work opportunities. St Albans did not have many opportunities but it had relatively cheap land being used for small farming purposes. A commercial directory of the time lists the local businesses as comprising two blacksmiths, a furniture manufacturer, a commission agent, and the Nico Explosive Company which was established in 1891 but closed in 1894.

Henry and Margaret's block was on the corner of Fox and Alfrida streets and was part of Arthur Davis's selection from 1868 before he sold it to Ferdinand Hahn who then on-sold to the Cosmopolitan company. The Becks called their new home "Lota More" which was probably named after the place in County Cork. At this stage Henry would have been aged about 54 years and Margaret 50 years, so they were too young to contemplate retirement though how they made a living is not recorded – perhaps they also became poultry breeders which was a popular activity in the district at that time and fitted Henry's interests.⁷ They lived in St Albans with their two daughters and occasionally, it would seem, one of the sons would join them.

Little is known about the family's presence locally though there were other families in the district with the Beck family name. The St Albans Primary School register indicates that Cyril and Ivy Beck were admitted in September 1895 and left in February 1897 – their father was Louis A Beck who was a traveler by occupation but it is not known if he was related to Henry and Margaret Beck. There was also a Beck family in Sunshine with no known connection to the St Albans' Becks.

Henry Hatton Beck died on 17 May 1901 at St Albans at the age of 65 years and his remains were buried at the Keilor cemetery. His life in St Albans is not documented; even though he lived in the district for at least a decade we know nothing of his local activities.

The Becks' eldest son, William Henry, was born in Chiltern in 1862 and became a teacher. In 1885 he married Martha Arnold whose family had migrated from England to Geelong in 1856.

¹ Argus 2 July 1861 p7

² Ovens and Murray Advertiser 5 March 1864 p2

³ Ovens and Murray Advertiser 11 January 1864 p4. John Orr represented the electorate of Moira in north-eastern Victoria for periods between 1862 and 1880.

⁴ Age 12 November 1867 p5

⁵ Argus 5 January 1872 p3

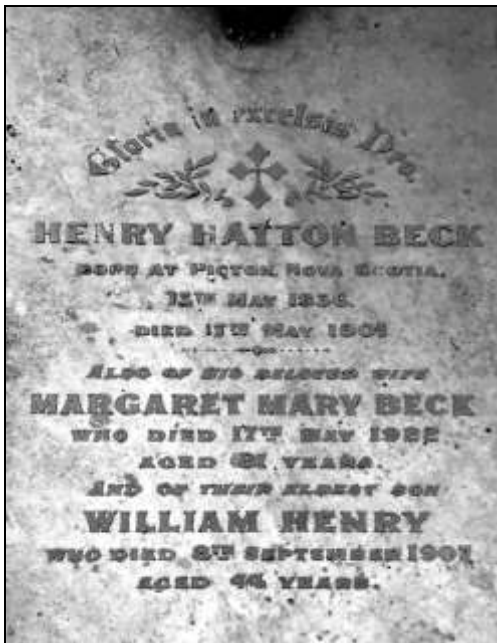
⁶ *St Albans the First Hundred Years*, St Albans Railway Centenary Committee 1986 p3

⁷ Stephen Lewis established one of the larger poultry farms about 1893; he was on the corner of Walter and Biggs streets. Charles Hester was another former gold prospector who settled in St Albans in the 1890s and established a poultry farm in Helen Street not far from the Beck property.

William and Martha's children included Vera (1886), Myra (1888), Stanley (1890), Rupert (1891), and Eileen (1894).

William Henry Beck died at St Albans on 9 September 1907 at age 44 after years of suffering from an accident; he was buried in the family grave at Keilor. Martha Beck née Arnold died at Hawthorn on 23 July 1949 at the age of 89 years.

After her husband died in 1901, Margaret Beck continued to live in St Albans with her daughters, but by 1912 had moved to Dawson Park in Oakleigh. Margaret Mary Thomson Beck née Connolly died at her home 'Altamira' in Oakleigh on 17 May 1922 at age 81 years and her remains were buried with her late husband at the Keilor cemetery.



Beck family grave at Keilor cemetery

The family's presence in St Albans is mostly remembered through the daughters, Ada and Susannah. Ada worked as a teacher and Susannah as a dressmaker, and they are remembered mostly for their connection with the local Catholic population in the late 1920s. By this stage they were aged in their sixties and possibly on the verge of retiring. As recalled by Mary Smith:

"... there were two elderly ladies, Margaret and Susannah Beck, living in a big house on the corner of Alfrieda and Fox streets. They must have arrived in the district quite early as they were on the 1903 electoral roll. They were or had been teachers and their brother was an inspector. They started Sunday School lessons for the Catholic children. My sister and I were friendly with them and went to help them on a Sunday for all the Catholic children of St Albans. That was held just before mum started the services at the hall. Miss Beck had a little place out the back and there were about a dozen of us who would come: Pat Douglas, Edna Power, Phil Rohan, the Salibas, Elsa and I, my bother, the first of the Farrugia children ... and probably some others. I don't remember doing too much though my name has been recorded as a helper; I must have

*lined the kids up or something like that. This was in the 1930s."*¹

A 2004 history publication of the Sacred Heart Parish at St Albans notes that:

*"By 1928, a Sunday school for Catholic youngsters was conducted in a back room of a house near the corner of Fox and Alfrieda Streets – then just a mud track. Visiting Sisters of St Joseph, Miss Beck and her brother, with the help of Catholic adults, ran classes. Mary and Elsa Stein helped encourage local children to be part of the classes. Records show some of the children involved were: Fevel Stein, Edna Power, Jack and Pat Douglas, Joe and Charlie Farrugia, Des and Phil Rowan."*²

Ada Mary Beck was born in Chiltern near Wangaratta in 1869. She never married and worked as a teacher though her work history is unknown. She moved with her mother and sister to Oakleigh in 1912 but was back in the Fox Street home in 1917. In 1925 Ada wrote to Keilor council stating that:

*"... her property at the corner of Alfrieda and Fox Streets, St. Albans, was vacant, but was informed that it could have been let if the adjoining footpath was not in such a bad state."*³

The sisters must have returned in the late 1920s because that's when they started the Sunday school classes. Ada Mary Beck died on 11 September 1932 at St Margaret's Hospital in Sunshine after a period of illness and was buried at Keilor; she was aged 63 years. Although she was a teacher and lived through four decades in St Albans, it is not known if she ever taught at the local primary school and she is not mentioned in the school's early history publication.⁴

Susannah Hannah "Hattie" Beck was born at Chiltern in 1867. She never married. Her occupation in the electoral rolls has been listed as either dressmaker or home duties. She died at Caulfield in 1941 at the age of 74 years.

The youngest son of the family, Henry Nicholas Beck, was born in Eldorado⁵ in 1872 and became a schoolmaster at various country towns in regional Victoria, including Cassilis and Mollongghip. He married Alice Anne Corker in 1897 and their children included Phillip Oswald (1898), Thomas Walter (1899), Henry Hatton (1901), Margaret Agnes (1905), Kenneth Paul (1908) and Joseph Cunard (1910). The family had at least some brief sojourns in St Albans in 1906 and 1911 because Phillip Oswald and Thomas Walter are recorded as attending the primary school for short periods during these years.

The young Henry Hatton Beck – or Hatton Beck as he was sometimes known in later life –

¹ Recollections of Mary Smith 2004

² Kevin Baker, *A Miracle of Faith and Work*, Catholic Parish of Sacred Heart, 2004, p3

³ Sunshine Advocate 12 September 1925

⁴ G. D. Lambert, school historian, St Albans State School; *Back to St Albans 80th Anniversary 1969*.

⁵ A small town near Wangaratta in north-east Victoria.

was born on 18 May 1901 at Cassilis, the day after his grandfather's death at St Albans.



<http://members.optushome.com.au/jssp/hattonbeck/index>

He became inspired by the artistic pursuits of his father, sang in a local choir, drew and painted birds for the Gould League of Bird Lovers, and became a celebrated ceramics artist. In 1939 he



married Lucy Evelyn Gough Boyd, the daughter of artists Merric Boyd and Doris Gough. Beck joined the air force and was discharged at the end of the war. Beck and Boyd became well known ceramic artists having worked and taught around Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, and the National Gallery of London in the 1960s. They returned to settle and work in Beau-

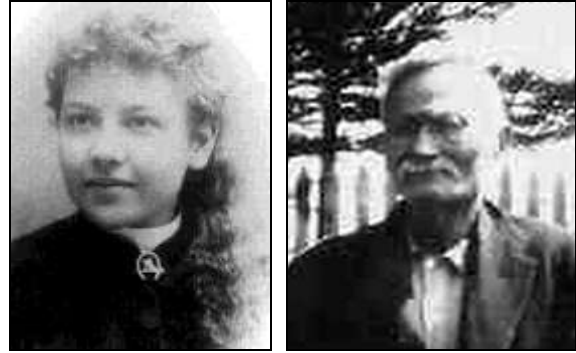
maris and Bayswater. Their work is represented in many public collections. Henry Hatton Beck died on 24 November 1994.

We may not know much about the original Henry Hatton Beck of St Albans from the 1890s, but these days his grandson's accomplishments are available online 24/7. #



Hatton Beck and Lucy Boyd Beck c.1985
<http://members.optushome.com.au/tohalu.3/>

BELSAR, Richard and Mary



Block #52 (79 acres) of the Overnewton Estate was allocated to R. H. Belsar of Colac. The selection was south of Richard Calder's farm which was on the south-west corner of Boundary Road and Station Road. That area was still open land in the late nineteen-sixties and was then redeveloped for residential and commercial purposes in the early seventies. Belsar's old farm selection is now filled with suburban housing near the Brimbank Central Shopping Centre.

Richard Henry Belsar was born on 27 March 1859 at St Arnaud though the family later settled around Colac. He was a farmer and carpenter, the son of Richard Belsar of Liverpool (1821-1898) and Elizabeth Carter of Hobart (1835-1891). In 1881 at Balranald, New South Wales, he married Ellen Nelly Winafred Glynn, the daughter of Mary Fitzgerald and Timothy Francis Glynn. Ellen was born in Australia in 1862 and died in 1882 at Boundary Bend, Victoria, at the age of 20. She had given birth to two children: James (1881-1941) and Herbert Richard (1882-1928). Ellen was an epileptic and died in childbirth while delivering her second son.

A couple of years later on 13 February 1884, Richard Belsar wed Mary Jane Bickerton (known as Jane) in Balranald, New South Wales. Her parents were Mary Ockleshaw (1834-1906) and Edward Bickerton (1837-1877) who were from Lancashire, England. Mary Jane had been born in Avoca on 16 October 1863 and by 1881 was working as a domestic servant at Kilmore.

Richard and Mary Belsar had seven children: Annie Elizabeth (1885-1893), Edward James (1887-1972), Walter George (1889-1955), Violet Rose (1891-1964), Martha Ruby (1893-1975), Mary Ruth (1900-1981), and Jessie Alice (born at Maidstone in 1906).¹ They were a mobile family in that the children were born as far apart as Balranald, Mildura, Swan Hill and Maidstone.

Richard Henry Belsar appears to have tried a variety of ways to make a living around Mildura. In 1888 "Richard Belsar" of Mildura applied for a billiard table licence² and in 1889 "R. H. Belsar"

¹ The sons may have been born in New South Wales, the surviving daughters were born in Victoria.

² Kerang Times 20 November 1888 p3

had established a boarding house in Seventh-street, Mildura.¹ By the 1890s he was working as a contractor with Mildura Council:

*"For fencing the town common, providing swing gates and removing the shire pound to the common, the tender of R. H. Belsar was the lowest, the amounts for each item being - Fencing, £23 per mile; swing gates, £2 10s. each; and shifting pound yard, £9 10s. Belsar's tender was accepted."*²

Richard Henry Belsar's father must also have settled in Mildura and fallen on hard times because in 1891 the community rallied to his cause:

*"The local amateurs are arranging a Charity concert for Saturday evening, in aid of Mr. Richard Belsar, sen.; who is totally blind, and who lately had the misfortune to lose his helpmate. The old man is in very reduced circumstances, and sorely in need of assistance. The people of Mildura can, we hope, be trusted to assist this deserving case."*³

Richard Henry also tendered for work with the Swan Hill Council who, apparently, was not the best of employers, because in 1893 Belsar wrote to Council complaining that £2 per week for three weeks was being stopped from his contract and other matters relating thereto.⁴ In 1896 Belsar's solicitor wrote to Council:

*"... threatening legal proceedings on behalf of R. H. Belsar, of Swan Hill, in relation to a certain contract which he had from the shire in 1893 for grubbing and clearing on mallee block 22a and 22b, Tatchera, and stating that if a cheque for £17 3s 10d was not at once forwarded together with 10s 6d, his costs, immediate action would be taken."*⁵

To add insult to injury during his time in Swan Hill, someone had broken into his house and stolen a new suit valued at £1 7s 6d.

In April 1902, at the age of 35 years, Richard Belsar enlisted with the 6th Battalion Australian Commonwealth Horse (ACH) for service in South Africa but did not see action. In May 1902 he was one of 27 men in C Squadron, 2nd Troop, at the Battalion Camp in Langwarrin.⁶ He spent 85 days with the 6th Contingent and 82 days with the 21st Depot at Royal Park.

We know that some of the Belsar folk arrived in St Albans in 1906 because Martha was enrolled at the primary school in June 1906 having transferred from Barongarook (Colac). She left the school in December 1907. Her father was listed as a farmer and was included in the ratepayer roll for St Albans in the Shire of Braybrook.

Things had not gone well financially for the family during the decade because Belsar was declared to be insolvent in December 1907:

"Richard Henry Belsar, of St. Albans, formerly of Colac, carpenter. Causes of insolvency: lack of employment,

*sickness of and accident to self, losses through bush fire, and death of stock. Liabilities, £110 14/7; assets, £8; deficiency, £102 14/7."*⁷

Most likely the family returned to Barongarook south of Colac.

Richard Henry Belsar must have applied for several land selections around Victoria because in 1906 he had also been approved for 69 acres in Colac in the parish of Barongarook, where he established a dairy farm.⁸

Things did not improve. In 1907 he was listed for a hearing by the local land board at the Colac Court House regarding his Barongarook selection. He must have retained his licence on that occasion but in 1909 he had to again show cause against forfeiture. His licence was revoked at the end of 1918.⁹ Despite this setback the family stayed in the district.

Richard Belsar enlisted for service at Royal Park in 1916 but was discharged as being medically unfit due to eyesight problems. He applied again in 1918 but this time was discharged "At his own request" so there must have been some unresolved medical or other issues. Interestingly, on this occasion he had to certify that: *"I am not a member of the Association known as the Industrial Workers of the Word or of any other Association within the meaning of the Unlawful Associations Act."* The authorities must have been really worried about the Wobblies!

Mary Jane Belsar née Bickerton of Dreeite (Colac) died of cardiac problems on 6 January 1936, aged 73 years, and her remains were buried at the Colac cemetery.¹⁰

Richard Henry Belsar died in Colac on 11 November 1939 at the age of 80 years. He had succumbed to pneumonia and heart failure and was buried at Colac cemetery. In September 1941 his son Edward James Belsar, dairy farmer of Lapent (Colac), applied for letters of administration for probate of the will.¹¹ It's interesting that his father's occupation is listed as a baker.

We know almost nothing about their children. Martha Belsar who attended St Albans Primary School was born on 27 July 1893 at Swan Hill. She married John Hamilton Bottrell in 1915 and had two sons: Albert James and William Henry (who died in Ardeer in 1984). John Bottrell died in 1967 at Colac and Martha died on 10 November 1975 at Colac.

Jessie Alice Belsar, who was born in Maidstone in 1906, married Ivan Wilfred Morrow from Snake Valley (Ballarat) in 1927 and they had a daughter Janice Elaine. Ivan died in 1969 at Colac aged 67 years. Jessie Morrow née Belsar died in Colac on 17 November 1991, aged 85 years.

That's all that we know about the Belsar family, late of St Albans. #

¹ Mildura Cultivator 28 November 1889 p6

² Mildura Cultivator 17 January 1891 p3

³ Mildura Cultivator 16 December 1891 p2

⁴ Kerang Times 2 June 1893 p3

⁵ Kerang Times 17 April 1896 p3

⁶ Age 3 May 1902 p17

⁷ Age 17 December 1907 p8

⁸ Colac Herald 28 September 1906 p3

⁹ Weekly Times 1 January 1919 p46

¹⁰ Argus 9 Jan 1936 p5

¹¹ Argus 4 September 1941 p4

BELSEY, Catherine, Richard, Thomas

Richard Belsey was a resident of St Albans in 1903 according to the Melbourne Directory listings,¹ and Catherine Belsey (housekeeper) and Thomas Benjamin Belsey (labourer) of Boulanger Reserve² were included in the 1903 Electoral Roll. Catherine was the mother of the family while Benjamin and Richard were two of her sons. The father, William Henry Belsey, had died back in 1878.

William Henry Belsey was born in 1830 in Upchurch, Kent England. His parents were Henry Belsey (1790-1855) from Dover and Mary Elizabeth Cooke (1790-1863) from Sandwich. They married in 1813 and had ten children. William Henry (the son) became a marine engineer and a leading seaman. The family lore is that he jumped ship either in New Zealand or Australia ... but he was in Australia in 1862.

Catherine Mulvin³ was born on 20 October 1840 in Clontarf, Dublin, Ireland. Her parents were Richard Francis Mulvin and Catherine Mockrey. They migrated to Australia and arrived in Melbourne in 1863. Catherine was a widow with three children, having married a Mr. Wenzel but other details are unknown.

Catherine Wenzel née Mulvin married William Henry Belsey in Melbourne on 7 December 1868. They settled in Sunbury and their children included Elizabeth (1871-1954), Richard Francis (1873-1946), Catherine Sarah Kate (1875-1937), Thomas Benjamin (1877-1949), and William (1878-1932).

William Henry Belsey died at the Gipps Street Hospital in East Melbourne on 6 June 1878, at the age of 48. Catharine Mulvin must have had a hard life raising multiple children on her own.

Catherine Belsey née Mulvin probably came to St Albans about 1901 and stayed at least until 1906. She may have come with two of her sons looking for work as she is listed as a housekeeper. She died at Coburg on 11 February 1910 at age 69 years.

Richard Francis Belsey married Annie Marion Given in 1909 and they had a daughter, Hilda May, who was born in Footscray. Annie had been born on 20 February 1880 in Chlemsford, Essex, and died in South Melbourne on 17 April 1919 at age 39. Richard Francis died in Coburg on 21 August 1946 at age 73.

Thomas Benjamin Belsey was born on 25 January 1877 at Sunbury. He was in St Albans in 1902 and worked as a labourer and boundary rider. He even advertised in the situations wanted column of the Age looking for work as "*boundary rider, storeman, station; nine years references.*"⁴ He married Emma Matilda Contran in 1911 and they had a daughter, Maureen. Thomas died on 25 August 1949 aged 72 years. Emma Belsey née Contran died in 1971.

Very little is known about the Belsey family when they were living in St Albans. #

¹ St Albans The First 100 Years p20

² Boulanger Reserve was one of A.H. Padleys land developments from the 1880s and was the area bounded by Alfreda, Fox, Walter and Biggs streets.

³ Some references spell the name as "Melville".

⁴ Age 24 June 1902 p8

BOYD, Jonathan and Emily



The Boyds had a farm at the north-eastern corner of Taylors Roads and the Bendigo rail line. Jonathan Edward Boyd bought the farm in December 1905 but the rest of the family may have arrived late in 1906. They had purchased Block 33, which was 308 acres of the Overnewton Estate about one mile from the railway station stretching north to Sydenham. The contract of the Lands Purchase and Management Board is interesting because it shows the significance of the transaction – no low-echelon public service hacks here, just the top brass. The contract was for the "Conditional Purchase Lease of Farm Allotment" and the contracting parties were Jonathan Edward Boyd, farmer of Coldstream, and The Honorable Sir Reginald Arthur James Talbot, Knight Commander of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath, Governor in the State of Victoria in the name and on behalf of His Most Gracious Majesty King Edward VII. There were also some interesting conditions in effect during the term of the lease, such as:

*"... reserving and excepting to His Majesty all such gravel and stone on the land demised for making or maintaining roads as may be required with full and free right and liberty to His Majesty and his licensees to enter upon the land hereby demised and to search for and take and remove any gravel or stone thereon or thereunder as may appear fit for the purpose ... [and] the said land is and shall be subject to the right of any persons being the holder of a miners right or of a licence to search for metals or minerals or of a mining or mineral lease to enter thereon and to mine and to erect and occupy mining plant or machinery."*⁵

The first point is interesting in that the district was riddled with loose stones and farmers worked hard to clear them off their land; they might have been happy with someone else getting rid of it for them but that didn't happen. The quarries at Albion, Sunshine, St Albans, and Sydenham supplied the crushed stone required for the district. The second point might have been a general clause but it was invoked locally. There was sand mining at Green Gully near the bridge across the creek until a man was killed, and in 1924 Tarsene Pty Ltd of Fitzroy

⁵ Purchase contract from Jimmy Knowles' archives.

applied for a mining lease on Farquhar McRae's land¹ looking for haematite (the main ore of iron) but no one has ever mentioned a mine being built.

The repayment schedule is also of interest because it shows that the conditional purchase contract extended for 31.5 years with 62 half-yearly payments of £45. It's not surprising therefore to read of some families still paying off their selections during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.

The Boyds called their farm "Rockville" and they raised sheep and cattle and sowed crops. In 1935 the Shire of Keilor estimated that about 60 acres had been cleared and Boyd estimated the farm could hold one sheep per acre, so it was not an extensive farming property.

Jonathon Edward Boyd was born on 21 January 1863 at Launceston, Van Diemens Land, but he spent much of his early life at Lilydale. He was the son of David Thomas Boyd and Sarah Jane Ives. Thomas David Boyd was born 11 June 1825 in London, Middlesex, England. Sarah Jane Boyd Ives was born on March 21 1829, in Launceston, Tasmania.

Jonathon married Emily Ellen Day on 11 September 1895. She was born on 3 May 1865 in Melbourne, the daughter of Charles Day and Ann Barnett. Jonathan and Emily started married life in Lilydale. Their children included William Athol (1896), Annie (1899), Dorothy (1900), Eva (1902), and Myrtle May (1910).

William Athol Boyd was born 15 August 1896 at Gruyere,² Wandin, North Lilydale, Upper Yarra Valley. He enrolled at St Albans primary in February 1907 from Gruyere primary and left in November 1911. He married Blanche Irene Millicent Power c.1928. He died on 7 August 1944 at Keilor.

Annie Boyd was born 28 September 1899 at Essendon. She enrolled at St Albans primary in February 1907 from Gruyere state school and left in April 1913. She married Ernest Roberts on 7 February 1924 at St Albans. She died 2 March 1960 at Albert Park and he died in 1985.

Dorothy Boyd was born 9 April 1900 at Gruyere. She enrolled at the St Albans primary school in February 1907 from Gruyere state school and left in May 1914. She married James Ronald Petrie on 17 July 1926 at Footscray. James was born in Brunswick on 12 September 1899 and grew up in North Melbourne. He worked as a clerk before enlisting as an 18-year-old and serving overseas as a Corporal with the A.I.F. He was awarded the British War Medal. They lived in St Albans and then moved to Sunshine about 1938. He worked at the Maribyrnong Explosives factory and was secretary of the Sunshine Church of Christ. James died on 14 November 1951 at his home in Monash Street, Sunshine. Dorothy died on 24 April 1977 at Sunshine. They had at least

two children: Marjory and Keith.

Eva Boyd was born on 9 March 1902 at Gruyere. She enrolled at St Albans primary in March 1908 and left in December 1917. She married Phil Wright on 17 September 1924 at North Melbourne. They had three daughters. Eva died on 20 May 1977 in Nunawading.

Myrtle May Boyd was born on 10 July 1910 at Brunswick. She enrolled at St Albans primary school in February 1917 and left in December 1921 for Sunshine Tech. She wed Harold Knowles of North Melbourne on 4 July 1931 at Swanston Street Church of Christ in Melbourne and they went to live in Truganina as farmers. She nearly died in childbirth in May 1932 but fortunately survived. They later established the first real estate agency in St Albans.

The Depression years were hard for everyone and local farmers were not immune to its effects. In 1935 Jonathan Boyd appealed against the valuation of his property by the Shire of Keilor. He was aged 72 years and might have been thinking of retiring because he was trying to sell his farm. The Shire Valuer estimated that the land was worth £8/15/- per acre and the improvements £1008 so Council's reply to Boyd was that no reduction could be made. The appeal case was heard at the Sunshine court:

*"Evidence was also given by Andrew Fox, whose valuation of the property was £3859, the land being valued at £8/10/- per acre and the improvements at £1235. Mr. Boyd in evidence said he had had the property in the hands of an auctioneer at £12 per acre, and would sell it for £11. He had lost about £100 per year during the last few years. The land would carry one sheep to the acre."*³

After hearing the case, Mr. Andrew, J.P., said that Mr. Boyd had produced no contradictory evidence or figures to show why the valuation should be reduced and therefore the appeal would be dismissed.⁴

Jonathan and Emily died within a fortnight of each other in August 1944. Their closing years together had been in the care of their daughter, Myrtle May Boyd-Knowles, at her home in East Esplanade, St Albans.

Jonathan Edward Boyd died suddenly on 7 August 1944, dearly loved husband of Emily, aged 81 years. Emily Ellen Boyd née Day died on 18 August 1944. Both funerals took place at the Melbourne General Cemetery:

*"For almost 40 years Mr. and Mrs. Boyd lived in mutual affection and in public esteem, in the trim little farmhouse which they named "Rockville." Here they nurtured and sent forth into useful and honored lives their five children, namely, Mr. William Boyd, Mrs. E. Roberts, Mrs. James Petrie, Mrs. Phil Wright, and Mrs. Harold Knowles - all of whom live in the district and continue, in lives of kindness and integrity, the ancestral tradition."*⁵

¹ The Argus 30 April 1924

² Gruyere is south-west of Healesville. It's said that the town was named after the cheese variety because of its dairy history.

³ Sunshine Advocate 24 May 1935

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 24 May 1935

⁵ Sunshine Advocate 25 August 1944

Their daughter Myrtle and her husband Harold Knowles exemplify the productivity of the following generations. Myrtle gave birth to four children between 1932 and 1948:

- William (Evan) was born on 28 April 1932 at Truganina and enrolled at the St Albans primary school in March 1938; he left in December 1944 for Sunshine Tech. He became involved with the scouts and first-aid training and became a leader in the drum band. His training saved a life in October 1952 when the driver of an electric train was thrown from his cabin by a 750 volt shock – he was revived by 20-year-old Bill Knowles who applied the first-aid that he had learnt through the Sunshine Cadets Division of St Johns Ambulance. Evan never married and died on 1 July 1993.

- Ellen May was born on 4 October 1933 at Truganina and enrolled at St Albans primary in March 1938; she left in December 1944 and went on to the Footscray Girls School. She was known as May. In June 1954 she wed Raymond John Stephens of Yarraville at the Church of Christ in Swanston Street. She became a businesswoman, starting the first frock shop in St Albans and worked for years before moving to Yeppoon in Queensland and setting up a clothing store.

- James “Jimmy” was born on 16 March 1935 at Truganina. He enrolled at the St Albans primary school in September 1939 and left in December 1946 for Williamstown High School. He worked at Spaldings at Albion and then at Drug Houses Australia before joining his father in the real estate business. He married Rae Fenner from Sunshine and they had two sons.

- Norman, known as Harry, was born on 16 June 1943 and enrolled in March 1948; he left in December 1955 for St Albans High School, so he was one of their first students in 1956. He was a very good handyman and had land in Knowles Place backing onto Theodore Street. He married Milenka and ended up moving to Yeppoon in Queensland.

The family had moved from Truganina to St Albans in 1938 and that became their permanent home, so the Boyd-Knowles’ children represent the third generation of the Boyd family in St Albans; some of them followed in their parents’ footsteps and became business leaders.

Harold Clarence Knowles was born on 18 August 1899, one of 15 children born to Sydney Knowles and Mary Ann Evans who had migrated from Wales (England) in the late 1800s and settled in North Melbourne. He married Myrtle May Boyd on 4 July 1931 and was working as a grocer and after his marriage as a farmer but that life was interrupted by the war. He enlisted in the army and served overseas as one of the Rats of Tobruk. After returning to Australia he continued working in the army as a physical training officer at Portland and later Watsonia. After discharge he worked at Dycraft in Maidstone and as a commissionaire in the city before deciding to start up as a real estate agent. He operated his “St Albans Real Estate”

business from the family home in East Esplanade and in the 1950s at 382 Main Road East. Arguably he was the first real estate agent in St Albans.

The family started other local businesses such as developing property as well as establishing retail shops. Jimmy Knowles recalls that:

“My sister May started the first frock shop on St Albans in one of our shops at 8 Alfrieda Street. When she left there it was John McGrossin the chemist who came in there. Next door to us was Moran and Cato, who were a branch of the one of largest grocery stores around at the time, and then the State Savings Bank. We had three blocks of land in Alfrieda Street: 18, 20 and 22. Circus people used to come and set up there, and they used to give us free tickets for being able to set up on the land. We built those shops of ours in St Albans during the fifties. Uncle Ern and I dug the foundations for the three shops and had bricklayers put up the walls.”¹

May Stephens became a property developer and built a number of flats in the area. The family bought land in Main Road East and built shops to sell manchester and ladies and children’s wear² and Myrtle Boyd was always there:

“My mother was a marvel because not only did she work in the shops but she made all her own clothes, knitted all our jumpers, grew our veggies, looked after the cows and the chooks in her spare time, as well as growing flowers and selling them to a florist in Paisley Street Footscray. That just doesn’t happen these days. She was always home when we came home from school.”³

The family also built “The Nuts” reception centre on the corner of Alfrieda and Winifred streets – that land was part of John Cavanagh’s selection from the 1870s that was later owned by Ann Parry. The Knowles family operated the reception centre from the 1970s to the 1990s. In recent years it has been converted to a Christian Community Centre.

Harold Clarence Knowles died on 23 August 1961 at the age of 61 years. Myrtle May Knowles née Boyd died on 24 November 1979 at the age of 69 years. Their ashes are interred at Altona.

Their son James “Jimmy” Knowles has retired from his real estate business interests. He lives with his wife Rae in Keilor and they have a wide circle of friends in the Keilor Bowls Club. Their two sons are Rodney and Jason.

Jimmy Knowles has recorded some of his family background in the locally published *Stories About St Albans: Celebrating 125 Years*.

Jonathan Edward Boyd and Emily Ellen Day were definitely pioneers of St Albans from the early 1900s and their family contributed to the social and business life of the district for three generations. What more can you ask of a family? #

¹ Jimmy Knowles in *Stories About St Albans*; 2012.

² In 1970 Knowles & Stephens Drapery was at 324 Main Road East, and Knowles & Stephens Ladies Coats was at 328 Main Road East.

³ Jimmy Knowles in *Stories About St Albans*; 2012.



Boyd family 1902 © Jimmy Knowles



Knowles family 1913 © Jimmy Knowles



Harold & Myrtle Knowles & children © J Knowles



Harold Knowles (centre front) © J Knowles

BROWN, Robert and Josephine

Robert Brown and Charles Brown were brothers from Keilor who obtained two farms through the Overnewton Estate. Charles obtained Block 37 (86 acres) and Robert obtained Block 50 (77 acres).

Robert's block 50 was at the western end of Boundary Road between the Kororoit Creek and Richard Calder's farm and was previously occupied by David Newell from the 1868 Closer Settlement selections. The area was still open land in the mid 1970s but it is now part of Albanvale. Charles' block 37 was immediately west of the Keilor township, between Green Gully Road and Taylors Creek; the area is now in the central part of Keilor, so he was not a St Albans resident. The brothers were from a well established Keilor family, their parents being Thomas Brown and Bridget Fox, who were pioneers from the 1850s. Their history is interesting because it combines Swedish and Irish backgrounds which were an unusual combination in the district.

Thomas Brown senior was born about 1831 in Sweden and came to Keilor in the 1850s. He was a ships carpenter by trade and built his first home in Keilor and gradually extended it to include several buildings on their property in the village centre. Later he was working as a mail carrier.

Bridget Fox was born in 1835 in Kings County, Ireland, and her parents were Christopher Fox and Margaret Byrne. Christopher died in Kings County but Margaret emigrated with her daughter and settled in Keilor. Bridget married Thomas Brown in 1858 at St Augustine's Church which was a major bluestone construction on the eastern side of the Saltwater River overlooking Keilor village. Over the next two decades Thomas and Bridget had twelve children though some did not survive their infancy:

- Thomas 1859-1865
- John 1861-1933
- Charles 1862-1927
- Margaret 1863-1947
- Mary 1865-
- Michael 1867-1872
- Thomas 1869-1870
- Robert 1872-1941
- Alice 1873-1943
- William 1876-1964
- Kate 1879-1950
- Martin Joseph 1881-1964

There is very little recorded about the family in local history, though Keilor Pioneers has a good summary.¹ According to this summary, the sons became involved in milking cows, shearing sheep, and making boots and roads. The three older boys, John, Charles and Robert, later developed orchards and vegetable gardens at Browns Road, Arundel, Keilor. The daughters became seamstresses and at some stage also worked for the Taylor family at Overnewton.

¹ Angela Evans and the Keilor Pioneer Research Collective; *Keilor Pioneers: Dead Men Do Tell Tales*; St Albans History Society, 1994.

Bridget may also have worked for some of the time for Joseph and Elizabeth Ball of Keilor (who had a neighbouring farm in St Albans).

Thomas Brown senior was probably a selector at St Albans through the Closer Settlement Scheme sale of the Keilor Village Common in 1879, having acquired Block #11 of 20 acres between Fox Lane and Three Chain Road (Driscoll Road and Sunshine Avenue). This was paid off in January 1885, so he had stayed there for some time at least. The neighbours were James Anderson, James Harrick and Joseph Ball, but there are no accounts of the initial farming practices. Later there were reports of cattle and horse grazing, growing crops, and some piggeries being established along Fox's lane. Some of this area was occupied by the McRae family in the 1950s and used for grazing horses. It eventually became part of Kealba.¹

Charles Brown was born in 1863, so he was aged 42 when he acquired his Keilor land in 1905 and he is not included in the roll of electors for St Albans. He married Evelyn Skinner about 1911. She had been the licensee at the Keilor Hotel in 1906 when John Milburn was the landlord.

The children of Evelyn and Charles include Evelyn Alma Mary (born in 1912), and twins Eileen Ada and Charles Ernest (born in 1914). The children were born at Essendon and none went to St Albans primary school, so one can assume that the family had little or no connection with St Albans. Charles died suddenly on 22 November 1927, aged 63 years.

Robert Brown was born in 1872 so he was 33 when he acquired his St Albans land in 1905. He is not included in the 1906 St Albans voters roll but is included in the Braybrook ratepayer roll for 1907, so he must have occupied the land for a couple of years at least. He married Josephine Cosgriff in 1912 and they lived at Arundel, Keilor. The Arundel and Annadale Estates were under the control of the Closer Settlement Board and selections for these were available at the same time as the Overnewton Estate was being advertised. These estates were north of the Keilor village and the individual allotments were smaller than elsewhere but the soil was good river loam and much better farming land than that available at St Albans.

Nothing much is known locally about the lives of Robert and Josephine Brown. Josephine died on 15 February 1940 and Robert Brown of Arundel, Keilor, died on 21 September 1941 at age 70 years. The family must have achieved some social standing in the municipality because the Keilor Shire President, Cr. Francis Jolly, Cr. John Fox, and Shire Secretary, Mr. Norman Woods, attended the funeral.

There is no indication of any children of Robert and Josephine attending St Albans primary school. Neither of them seem to have had any significant connection with St Albans, so they could not have stayed long at their Main Road West selection. Their farm was later acquired by Patrick and Alice Harrick who established a dairy and stayed for decades. #

BROWNE, Jessie and Edwin

Edwin Brown [sic] was listed as a St Albans resident in 1903. In the 1906 Electoral Roll he was listed as Edwin Browne (coach builder) and his wife was Jessie Browne (home duties). They had moved from Braybrook in 1891. Jessie had previously been married to Joshua Edward Crosbie and her maiden name was Thompson.

Jessie Thompson, born about 1858 in Renfrew, Scotland, was the youngest daughter of George Thompson of Glasgow. It is not known when she migrated to Australia. On 20 July 1879 she married Joshua Edward Crosbie at the Manse in Sandridge.

Joshua Edward Crosbie was born about 1854 in Liverpool, Lancashire, England, to Frederic and Elizabeth Crosbie. Joshua became a mariner and arrived in Melbourne about 1884; he was working on ships carrying passengers between Sydney and Melbourne; his positions included 2nd Mate, 1st Mate, and Chief Officer.

Jessie and Joshua initially settled in Port Melbourne but may have later moved to Williamstown. Jessie gave birth to three children: Jessie (1882), Elizabeth (1884), and Frederick (1886), who became a long-term St Albans resident.

The genealogical records do not indicate what happened to Joshua Crosbie, but it appears he might have died, because in 1891 Jessie Crosbie married Edwin Browne and they settled in St Albans. They must have stayed at least a decade, because in 1889 Edwin made a complaint:

*"Edwin Brown [sic] complained that a road in the People's Freehold township at St. Albans had been closed by Mr. Opie, and requesting the same to be opened. Resolved that Mr. Brown be informed that as the road is a private one the Council declines to interfere."*²

Jessie Crosbie née Thomson's children include:

- Jessie Crosbie was born at Sandhurst on 2 June 1882 and admitted from Braybrook to St Albans State school in August 1891 and left in August 1895. She died at her mother's home in St Albans on 28 June 1903, at just 21 years of age.

- Elizabeth "Elsie" Crosbie was born at Melbourne on 31 October 1884 and admitted to St Albans State school in August 1891 from Braybrook and left in September 1895. She married Ivor Percival Stewart in 1920. He was born in 1888 and might have been from Craigie in Victoria. He died on 13 July 1970 aged 82. Elizabeth died on 1 August 1974, at the age of 77 years. They are buried at the Majorca cemetery.

- Frederick George was born at Williamstown on 16 November 1886 and was admitted to St Albans State school in October 1891 and left in December 1895. He married Marion Ethel E White in 1923 and they settled in St Albans at their home "Roslyn" in Main Road. They became involved in the district's social and communal life, and a few

¹ Refer to *Just A Little History* by Alie Missen, 2009.

² Bacchus Marsh Express 18 March 1899 p3

items are recorded in the local media. He played with the St Albans Football Club and was known as "Bing" Crosbie in the backline with the Goddard brothers. He helped re-form the C.E.B.S. branch that had ceased during the war and the boys would often use their home as a venue as Marion would invite the boys over for their monthly tea. They also supported the scouts. Frederick sang at fund-raising bazaars. He assisted at the wedding of Mavis King and Bill Hunter and was the best man at the wedding of John Stevens and June Butler, some of the notable offspring of local pioneers. In 1949 Frederick received a silver salver from I.C.I. as a Long Service Award for 40 years of service.

Frederick and Marion's children attended the St Albans primary school and include:

- Edward Robert was born in St Albans on 29 January 1924 and as a three-year-old his thigh was badly broken when he was kicked by a horse. He enrolled in school in August 1928. In 1936 he received a nasty surprise when he broke his arm at the school but he received well-wishes from the Happy Circle of the Sunshine Advocate to ease the pain. Later in the year he won a first prize at the school's annual speech night, so he did well. His 21st birthday was celebrated in style with over 100 guests at the Mechanics Institute. He enlisted and became a Lance Corporal in Borneo and is listed in the St Albans Roll of Honour.

- Ronald Frederick was born in Sunshine on 6 November 1925 and enrolled in March 1930. He was a contributor to The Letterbox of the Sunshine Advocate. He also had a nasty accident as a lad when he broke his arm in collision while playing football¹ but was delighted to win a book from the Big Smile Section a couple of months later.² In 1948 he married Beryl Josephine Clifton of Sunshine. He enlisted in the R.A.A.F. and is listed in the St Albans Roll of Honour.

- Jessie Stewart was born on 25 July 1927 and started school in February 1932 and left in December 1934. She was a regular contributor to the Happy Circle column of the Sunshine Advocate. She sang for entertainment at social events. She became engaged to Keith Nunweek in 1945.³ In 1954 it was reported that she had been in bad health and had had a disability for some years but always managed a happy smile.⁴ There was picture of her published with Russ Tyson who was a popular A.B.C. radio announcer.

Jessie Thompson the wife of the late Edwin Browne and relict of the late Joshua Edward Crosbie, died on 9 February 1927 at Sunshine, at age 69, a St Albans Resident for 35 years.⁵ Very little is known about Edwin Browne except that he died before 1927. Frederick George Crosbie died in St Albans in 1960, aged 73 years. #

¹ Sunshine Advocate 20 March 1936 p1

² Sunshine Advocate 15 May 1936 p6

³ Sunshine Advocate 24 August 1945 p2

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 15 October 1954

⁵ Argus 11 February 1927 p1

CALDER, Richard and Christine

Richard Calder and Christine Moir were Scottish immigrants who shifted with their young children from Pakenham to St Albans in 1906 – he was aged 41 years and she was 38, so they were in their prime. They had acquired Block 51 which was 79 acres on the south-west corner of Main Road West and Station Road, being part of the Overnewton Estate. It was opposite the Sykes' farm and was one of the better blocks because it was relatively free of surface stones and there was a water hole on the corner. The Calders were farmers but their sons became builders. This property was later subdivided and sold for housing as the R.D.C. Estate in Albanvale.⁶

Richard Calder was born on 13 August 1864 at Rafford, Moray, Scotland. His father was John Calder (1812-1894) and his mother was Jane McGillivray (born in 1827). It is not known when Richard emigrated but he'd arrived in Victoria by 1897 because that's when he married Christine Moir (she was born in Scotland circa 1867). They must have moved from Richmond to Pakenham because that's where their children were born:

- David Alexander (Alick) was born on 9 February 1898 in Richmond and was admitted to St Albans primary school in May 1906 from Pakenham and left in December 1911. He died on the 16th November 1952.
- Allan Edward was born on 2 December 1900 at Pakenham, admitted to St Albans primary in May 1906 and left in November 1913. He wed Margaret Emma Briggs at Footscray on 19 November 1927. Allan died at Footscray on 7 August 1982.
- Gordon Richard Moir was born 10 April 1901 at Pakenham and admitted to St Albans primary in May 1907 and left in September 1915 for Sunshine Harvester Works. He married Eileen Hanna Carter in 1923. He died on 25 February 1970 aged 68, and was buried at Altona.
- Doris "Dorrie" Ross McGillivray was born on 11 October 1905 in Pakenham. She was admitted to the St Albans primary in October 1912 and left in December 1919. She married Fred Deveson and they had several children. She died in 1994.

It appears that several years after arrival the family bought more property in central St Albans in the sons' names. David Alexander Calder and Gordon Richard Calder bought part of John Cavanagh's selection from 1868 (block 20 east of railway station) which had been sub-divided in the 1880s by Alfred Padley's Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company that went broke in the 1890s.

⁶ RDC Projects (Vic) bought the land in 1974 as part of the Albanvale development in the seventies.

The Calders' purchase comprised two blocks between Alexina Street and Victoria Crescent on each side of the Theodore street intersection. It is not known when this occurred but it was possibly about 1920 because David was born in 1898 and Gordon in 1901.

The family were members of the St Albans Presbyterian church and Richard Calder was an Elder of the church. In that office he was described as being "*conservative in a sense noble and necessary; conspicuous ever of innovation, he was steadfast in his loyalty to Evangelical Faith and polity.*"¹ John Stevens recalls the Calders as being nice people. They used to go to church past his parents' Edenhope farm in a horse and sulky and occasionally "if he was good" they would give him a ride home from the church.

Not much detail is recorded about the Calders' farm or their early lives in the district. Their main production appears to have been growing crops and raising pigs and poultry but that was on a small scale. People remember the orchard that was established there and that might have been done by the sons.

Richard Calder is mentioned in the local press in 1937 after an accident between his cart and a car along the road to Albion. Although the horse was not injured, the shafts of the spring cart were broken and the car was damaged. Calder was aged 73 so it was not surprising that he would have been shaken up by the incident, but he recovered satisfactorily over the following week.² Perhaps this was the incident that encouraged him to retire because in March he held a clearing sale of his farm comprising:

*"3-f. McKay disc, 3-f. Newell Sanders disc, 2-f. Massey Harris M.B. plough, 3-leaf Howden harrow, 6-ft. Massey H. binder, 15-hoe drill, wooden roller, tabletop hay wagon, tip dray, scoop, old type water cart, good wheels; hay ropes, horse works, chaff cutter 2K Bentall; corn crusher, saw bench, belting. 8 farm horses, aged mare, aged geld., 6-off black dr. mare, 13-yr.-old dr. mare, broken to lead: 1 dr. gelding, rising 2, broken to lead; 3-yr.-old bay pony, lead; 2-yr.-old filly, lead; aged sp. cart mare. Sundries: large white boar, 2 Berk, sows, 200 good poultry, harness, chains, bars, bags, tools, &c."*³

Richard Calder died on 7 November 1938 after a long illness. He was aged 74 and had been a St Albans pioneer for 33 years. The funeral took place at the Footscray cemetery and some of the well-known and respected citizens of St Albans were pall bearers, including Fred Stenson, Henry Griffiths, John McKechnie, Peter Anderson, and James Luxford.⁴

Christina Calder left St Albans in 1939 and

moved to Drummartin Street in Sunshine, which was the home of her daughter and son-in-law, Doris and Fred Deveson. She was farewelled at a large gathering of people at St Albans who were celebrating the anniversary social of the Presbyterian Church. Christina Calder passed away at Sunshine on 28 July 1948 and was buried at the Footscray cemetery. She had lived to 81 years and had been a St Albans pioneer since 1905.⁵

Richard and Christine's children in adulthood had settled in St Albans and Sunshine and there was also a connection with Moonee Ponds.

Gordon Richard Moir Calder became a builder and established his home in Boundary Road about a quarter mile from the railway station. He owned one of the few cars around the area at the time, having bought a British model from a Melbourne dealer about 1928. He got into trouble in June 1928 because he was caught driving an unregistered car. He was involved in an accident on the Ballarat Road, in which Elizabeth Caswell sustained a compound fracture of the leg and he was charged with driving an unregistered motorcar. His defence was that the firm that sold him the car was supposed to arrange the registration and they had admitted the lapse was their fault. Nevertheless, Calder was fined £3.⁶

In 1930 Gordon became the licensee of the Racecourse Hotel in Keilor and ran that probably till late 1931. In 1932 he nominated for the Keilor Council elections. There were two nominations for the Maribyrnong Riding to fill the vacancy after the death of Cr. Evans, viz:

*"Mr. Herbert Milburn, of Keilor and Mr. Gordon Calder, of St. Albans. However, Mr. Milburn very generously withdrew his nomination in favor of Mr. Calder thereby saving the expense and trouble of an election. Mr. Calder is well versed in the requirements and geography of both St. Albans (where he is living) and Keilor, he having had charge of an hotel there some few months back, and should therefore ably fulfill the duties of a councillor."*⁷

Had Milburn contested the election it would have been the battle of the orchardists, because the Milburn family were well-known orchardists of Keilor and by many accounts Gordon Calder was responsible for much of work on the orchard at his parents' farm in St Albans. Fred Stenson was another local orchardist elected to Keilor council. The big problem for the Calders was they did not have access to a regular water supply whereas the others did because they were located along the Saltwater (Maribyrnong) River.

On 25 February 1936 the home of Gordon and Eileen Calder was destroyed by fire. The building was a six-roomed dwelling, situated in Boundary Road about a quarter of a mile from the station. Two fire brigades attended the scene but the firefighters were hampered by lack of water and

¹ Sunshine Advocate 11 November 1938

² Sunshine Advocate 26 February 1937

³ Age 13 March 1937 p3. It was one of the smaller farms judging by the equipment and stock that was sold. Compare with the sale of the Millet farm.

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 11 November 1938 p8

⁵ Sunshine Advocate 30 July 1948 p8

⁶ Sunshine Advocate 21 July 1928

⁷ Sunshine Advocate 18 December 1931

thus were not able to save the building:

*"It appears that Mr. Calder was writing, when his sister-in-law, who had retired to bed, thought she heard something in one of the rooms. and got up to investigate. She found the back portion of the house was alight. The blaze was immediately tackled, but it was soon found that the task was an impossible one. An effort was then made to save some of the contents, but so quickly did the flames spread that the only articles secured before the flames prevented further work were a wardrobe, a couple of pictures and a quantity of bedding. Some idea of Mr. Calder's loss can be gained from the fact that included in the many valuable furnishings and conveniences were an electric refrigerator and a stove. it is estimated the total loss would be about £1000."*¹

The incident galvanized members of the St Albans Water Trust, the Progress Association, and both Keilor and Braybrook councils to lobby the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board for urgent action in supplying reticulated water to the district. (A water supply was finally connected to parts of St Albans in 1940, but it was not extended to the outlying areas till much later.)

Some time after the fire, Gordon and his family established their new home at 50 Station Place in Sunshine because in 1937 he was advertising his business through the Sunshine Advocate, arguing that the Sunshine district was growing and that housing properties were a reliable investment:

*"Why pay rent, when by progressive weekly payments you can become the owner of your home in a few years. Drop me a line or call, and I will be pleased to discuss the proposal with you!"*²

In 1954 Gordon and Eileen Calder were living at 50 Station Street in Sunshine. Gordon was a contractor and his son Gordon jnr was an assistant. In 1964, Gordon and Eileen were back in St Albans living at 13 Emily Street and Gordon was working as a remover. Their children included:

- Shirley was born on 28 March 1924, enrolled at St Albans primary in July 1929, left in December 1935 for Moonee Ponds.
- Dorothy (Dorrie) Fran was born 10 June 1925, admitted to St Albans primary in January 1930 and left in February 1936 for Moonee Ponds West.
- Gordon Richard was born 2 December 1926 and admitted St Albans primary in January 1933; he left in December 1934 for Moonee Ponds.

Gordon Richard Moir Calder passed away on 25 February 1970 at age 68 years and was buried at the Altona Memorial Park. Eileen Hanna Calder née Carter died 26 August 1984 at Sunshine.

David Alexander Calder also became a carpenter-builder and was living in Victoria Crescent. He married Victoria "Tory" Beatrice Griffiths who

came from Katamatite and was born on 12 March 1898. Her parents were Henry and Emma Griffiths who came to St Albans in 1906 and acquired Block 31 of the Overnewton Estate; it was in Taylors Road between the Milletts and the McAuleys who were at the railway crossing. David and Victoria had both started at the St Albans primary school in 1906 so they were childhood friends.

David Calder signed on with the Labour Corps Register (Civil Construction Corps) on 14 July 1942 at the age of 25 years. He had been working as a carpenter with Hansen & Yuncken at Flemington. He was discharged in April 1944 on medical grounds.

Victoria "Tory" Beatrice Calder née Griffiths had at least one child but details have not been discovered. Victoria died on 7 September 1948 at the age of 50 years and was buried at Footscray.

In 1951 David was selling a block of land on the corner at St Albans, close to the station, with made roads and water tapped onto land at £250. This was probably one of the blocks that they had bought earlier on the corner of Victoria Crescent. He died suddenly on 16 November 1952 at his home in Victoria Crescent, aged 54 years, and was buried at Footscray:

*"The late Mr. Calder had lived practically all of his life in St. Albans and was highly respected. He was of a retiring disposition and keenly felt the passing of his wife who died a few years ago."*³

Not much has been recorded about Allan Edward Calder. He was born in Pakenham on 2 December 1900 and started at St Albans primary in May 1906 and left in December 1911. He wed Margaret Emma Briggs on 19 November 1927. She was born at Mangalore in 1900 and died on 18 July 1986. He died in 1984 at the age of 84.

Richard and Christine Calder's only daughter was Doris "Dorrie" Ross McGillivray Calder. She was born on 11 October 1905 in Pakenham and started at the St Albans primary school in October 1912. She married Frederick Joseph Deveson in 1928 and they lived at Drummartin Street in Sunshine with three sons and a daughter. Fred worked at the Sunshine Harvester Works as the transport manager and was a member of their Rifle Club. There's a nice photo of him driving a Massey Harris tractor pulling three timber trailers in the back paddock of the Sunshine factory. Dorrie and Fred celebrated their silver wedding anniversary in 1953 at the Presbyterian Church in St Albans. Fred Deveson died on 10 July 1976 at the age of 71 years. Dorrie Deveson née Calder died on 24 June 1994 at the age of 89 years. They are both buried at the Altona cemetery.

Note: The Calder Highway running through Keilor has no connection with the St Albans family, as it was named after William Calder, who was chairman of the Country Roads Board of Victoria from 1913 to 1928. #

¹ Sunshine Advocate 28 February 1936

² Sunshine Advocate 23 December 1937

³ Sunshine Advocate 28 November 1952

COLEMAN, Henry and Margaret

The Coleman family came to St Albans circa 1905 and is another of the pioneer families about whom there is little recorded, especially about their personal lives. Their first listing in the local papers was in 1905 with the notification about the allotment of Block #11 (309 acres) of the Overnewton Estate to "H. Colman" of Glenloth, who was most probably Mr. Henry Coleman of Glenloth.¹ This selection was so far west along Taylors Road that it was in the Rockbank Estate. Later records show that Henry Coleman and his family settled closer to St Albans at blocks #41 and #42, which were immediately west of Malcolm King's farm on the corner of Taylors Road and Kings Road. Some of the oral history recollections are somewhat confusing as it is unclear whether they refer to the father or the son.

Henry Coleman was born in 1864 at Elwood. His father was Henry Coleman (1840-1924) and his mother was Margaret McKenzie (1835-1914). She was born at Dingwall, Scotland, and arrived at Adelaide circa 1859 with her parents Kenneth McKenzie² and Margaret Fraser;³ they were living in Alma, South Australia. She married Henry Coleman in 1862 at Melbourne; they lived around Ballarat before moving to Moffatt about 1884. Their children included Henry (1864), Annie (1866), Richard Kenneth (1868), Sarah (1873-1888), Sydney John (1874) and Margaret Ann.

Henry Coleman married Mary Cameron in 1886. She was born about 1862 to Cosmo Cameron and Mary Morrison of Dowling Forest by Ballarat. Henry and Mary lived for a time near Wycheproof where some of their children were born. They had four children:

- William Henry was born and died in 1886.
- Mary Ellen, known as Nellie, was born in 1887 and died in 1948.
- John Henry, also known as Jack, was born in 1888 and died in 1980.
- Sarah Margaret was born in 1891 and died in 1961.

The Coleman farm was 303 acres that was part of the 1868 Closer Settlement selection by Paul Tate⁴ who described it as "splendid grazing land." The Overnewton map describes it as being part of an old cultivation of volcanic formation that was well grassed with some patches of stone. The land was drained to the south by shallow gullies running into the Kororoit Creek.

Henry Coleman was one of the farmers who addressed the 1914 Royal Commission inquiring into closer settlement problems. Local grievances

included the fact that the blocks were too small to sustain a living, the lack of free title to the land, and the under-valuation of improvements. Some settlers bought neighbouring land in their spouse's name (as did Henry and Mary) to increase the size of their holdings. Coleman reported that he:

*"... worked a combined area of 302 acres ... [and] this would be sufficient if it were all cleared, but half of it was stone country. He estimated the cost of clearing it at £2 an acre. In common with other witnesses, he stated definitely that when he became a settler he considered that he would get a Crown grant, which he understood to mean a free title. Once paid for, he thought it would always be his. The restriction had a bad effect, because many people would not take land under those conditions."*⁵

The problems with the small size of allotments must have been real because a number of the successful long-term farmers acquired multiple properties as their solution. These include James and Agnes Stevens, Farquhar and Annie McRae, John and Robert Sykes, as well as Peter, Fred and Horace Anderson to name a few.

John Perrett's family came to St Albans in the 1920s and he remembers the Colemans:

*"John and Mary Coleman were another of the early settlement families and they also were in Taylors Road, next to Fred Anderson. There were three children in the family: Jack, Nellie and Sarah. When the two sisters were going on their regular journey into Melbourne they would drive their horse and cart to our store in Main Road and leave it there. Then they would catch the train into town and do their shopping and sight-seeing. They were always impeccably dressed in stylish black for these occasions."*⁶

Henry Coleman was one of founders of the St Albans Presbyterian Church that was built about 1912.⁷ The Church wrote to Keilor Council in 1915 asking for assistance with its construction debt but the council took no action. However, the local community did rally to the cause and would include the church in fundraising activities held at the Mechanics hall. Nellie Coleman's support for the church included playing the organ at their services.

In 1911 Henry Coleman decided to nominate as a candidate for the Maribyrnong Riding of the Shire of Keilor. It was probably a surprise for the established order in that the incumbent was Cr William Henry Taylor, whose father William Taylor was sometimes referred to as the "Father of Keilor" because he had served as a councilor for 40 continuous years and whose former farmlands comprised the Overnewton Estate. It was probably a bigger surprise when Coleman outpolled Taylor by 108 to 107 votes – a victory by one vote! Why did this occur? One possibility is that St Albans ratepayers were questioning if they were getting good value out of Keilor council – there was much

¹ Glenloth is near Wycheproof.

² His lineage goes back to Alexander McKenzie born about 1779 in Ferrintoch, Rosshire.

³ Her lineage goes back to Margaret Fraser born about 1802 in Foddery, Rosshire.

⁴ Refer to chapter in *St Albans Pioneers: Settlers and Speculators from the 1860s*, 2013.

⁵ Argus 1 August 1914 p17

⁶ Stories about St Albans 2012

⁷ Sunshine Advocate 8 September 1944 p3

talk in 1915 about seceding from Keilor Shire and amalgamating with Braybrook, but this did not occur. The St Albans population was restive and wanted parochial representation for their cause.

Coleman stayed on as the member for the Maribyrnong Riding of the Shire of Keilor until 1925, when he retired because of health problems. Coleman may have been a diligent councilor but there are no press reports of any major developments for which he was directly responsible. His replacement on council was Samuel James Evans, J.P., another farmer from Taylors Road in the Overnewton Estate, who had moved to the area from Derrimut where his parents were established farmers. With Evans' election, St Albans again had the full complement of representatives for the Maribyrnong Riding, the other councilors being Frederick Charles Stenson (an earlier pioneer from the 1880s) and James Henry Stevens (who was another of the Overnewton settlers from 1905).

Henry Coleman passed away at his home in Taylors Road, St. Albans, on 6 January, 1932, at age of 67 years, a St Albans pioneer for 27 years. He was buried at Footscray cemetery.¹

Mary Coleman passed peacefully away on 3 September 1944 at her home in Taylor's Road, St. Albans, at the age of 82. She had been a resident of St Albans since 1905, a fact that was cited by the local press in her obituary:

*"Somewhere about 40 years ago, and very soon after that part of the country was made available for settlement, Mr. and Mrs. Coleman established their home there, together with others whose honoured names have been recently and tenderly recalled in our columns ... revives and hallows tender reminiscences within the minds of kind-hearted neighbours mutually associated for 40 years in rural life with its peaceful industry, its changes and chances, and its simpler, purer delights. Mrs. Coleman herself exemplified all such excellence. She was of a quiet nature, and yet her silences were never disquieting, never ambiguous, but alit always with a kindly smile which made them happily characteristic - indeed, there were the self revelation of a heart of goodness. The manner in which these ancestral virtues have been assimilated in the children ... is frankly acknowledged in the community."*²

Nellie Coleman passed away on 13 October 1948. Little is known about her personal life. She came to St Albans at the age of 18 and thus did not attend the local school. She trained in music and passed some of her theoretical and practical examinations in 1913. She used her musical skills to play the organ at the Presbyterian church services and also at weddings that were held there and where she was known as "a friend of everybody". She was also good at baking biscuits – she won prizes for jellies and biscuits in 1928³ and won the top award at the Royal Melbourne Show in 1937.⁴

¹ The Argus 7 January 1932 p1

² Sunshine Advocate 8 September 1944

³ Sunshine Advocate 6 October 1928 p3

⁴ Australasian 2 October 1937 p26

Sarah Margaret "Babs" Coleman died on 23 February 1961, aged 69 years, and is buried at Footscray. She came to St Albans at the age of 14 years and did not attend the local school. Nothing is known about her personal life.

John Henry "Jack" Coleman was born in 1888 in Wycheproof. He was aged 17 years when he arrived in St Albans and started working as a farmer. He joined the Australian Imperial Force in July 1915 and served overseas as a driver with the 4th Division Artillery. He was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal. He was discharged in June 1919. He had never married but attended the social life of the district through the church and Mechanics Institute. Colin Missen recalls that transport was a problem in the early years, and that Jack would allow neighbours the use of his horse and cart if they needed to go shopping.

Jack Coleman was probably a member of the Loyal St Albans Rechabite Tent.⁵ Meetings were sometimes held at the home of William Hounslow⁶ and other members of the Tent included Mrs. Alice Errington (who donated Errington Reserve to the people of St Albans) and James Blount. They would arrange meetings for young people and encourage them to adopt temperance.⁷

Locals recall that Jack Coleman managed the old family chook farm and ran a few cows as well, but the full extent of the farm operation in its latter stages is not known. Jack was unfortunate enough to sometimes lose a number of fowls when some thief came in the night and stole them.⁸ This had happened to other poultry farmers in the district so it was not an isolated case and was a frustration.

Coleman had acquired title to the property in 1968 and at that stage the area was still open farming land. The old Coleman selection was still mostly open land in the mid 1970s when Les King's neighbouring property was being sold and subdivided and the new residential development was about to expand past Kings Park Estate. The Burnside Heights development started in the 1990s and is now a thriving neighbourhood with over 6,000 people.

John Henry Coleman was the last of the three siblings to die, on 6 March 1980, at the age of 94 years. He came to St Albans in 1905 as a teenager, so had made a contribution to the district for all his adult life. Surprisingly little is known about the family despite their long residency. #

⁵ Sunshine Advocate 5 June 1926

⁶ William Hounslow was a local carpenter and the brother of Alice Errington.

⁷ The temperance pledge by the Band of Hope society was: I promise by Divine Assistance to abstain from all intoxicating liquors as beverages and to discountenance all the causes and practices of intemperance.

⁸ Sunshine Advocate 10 December 1937 p3. In 1917 Mr S J Evans of St Albans obtained permission from Keilor Council to use a shot gun to prevent people killing or stealing his stock and damaging his property.

DICKSON, Alexander and Ada



Alexander and Ada Dickson moved to George Street, St Albans about 1905 or earlier, so they are pioneers from the Overnewton era. Tracing the family history is a bit complicated as there were three men named Alexander Dickson in the Braybrook area about that time, but they were from the one family,

being the grandfather, father, and son. James Dickson was in Braybrook about the same time but he was from a different family.

Grandfather Alexander Dickson was born in 1839 and married Maria "Mary" Frances Gregg in 1868. She was born about 1849 and was the daughter of Henry Gregg and Frances Maria Holmes. Alexander and Mary became farmers at Bacchus Marsh and in 1870 Alexander signed a petition to establish a Farmers' Club in the district. They had an 80-acre dairy farm on the Parwan creek south of the railway station with a substantial brick house and other outbuildings, and 44 acres on Geelong road. Their first four children born at Bacchus Marsh include Henry Alexander (1869), Jane (1872), Margaret Frances Victoria (1873), and Elizabeth Emma (1877).

In 1877 Alexander Dickson took over the Kororoit Creek Hotel at 762 Ballarat Road in Deer Park, Braybrook; it was built near the Kororoit Creek in 1865 after the Gold Rush decade.¹ Dickson renamed it as the Cricket Club Hotel though it was later known as the Deer Park Hotel. The hotel became the family's home as well as their business as publicans.² For a while it was the de facto town hall because the Braybrook council would meet there on the first Monday of each month. Alexander built a hall next door which was known as "Dickson's Hall" and was soon a popular venue for concerts, dances and St John's church services. The Kororoit Cricket Club used it for their social events and the Church of England congregation also used it for their annual meetings.

Alexander and Mary Dickson were both referred to as being hotel licensees and it wasn't all about the conviviality of liquid refreshment for boarders and the public. In October 1888 Mary Dickson was a witness in the case where James Quirk was charged with the manslaughter of Thomas Ryan and the accused was committed for

trial.³ In another case she reported a man for theft of a bottle of whiskey and some tobacco; he was tried and sentenced to a month's imprisonment.

The seven Dickson children who were born in Braybrook include Matthew William (born 1878), George (1880), Alexander (1882), Laura Holmes (1886), William (1888), Emma Linda Gregg (1891), and Peter Leslie (1893).

The family had retained their Bacchus Marsh properties after their move and then sold them in 1892. Alexander Dickson snr died in December 1900 "after a lingering illness" and was buried at Footscray. He obviously had garnered considerable respect in the community because the funeral cortege included some thirty or forty private vehicles.⁴

The other Dickson of Braybrook in the late 1800s was James Dickson, one of the earliest colonists in Port Phillip and he was no relative of Alexander's. James was from Belfast, Ireland, born about 1835, and he was very young when he migrated with his mother Jane (Rae) in 1840 on board the *India* heading for Port Phillip. The ship caught fire en route and the passengers were rescued by a French whaler and landed at Rio De Janeiro before being sent on to Melbourne in 1841. What happened to the family after arrival is not known, but by 1852 James was living at Ballarat Road in Braybrook, was a storekeeper by 1855 and later became the district postmaster possibly in 1861 when the post office was first opened. He was a member of the Braybrook shire council in the 1860s and was president in 1884, 1886 and 1891. His possible connection with St Albans may be through John O'Connor and James Finn, both of whom were St Albans pioneers from 1868. In 1877 James Dickson and John O'Connor were executors for the late James Finn's estate – his property along the railway line was sold to James Evans who sold it immediately to the Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company.⁵ James Dickson married Selina Hooton in 1878 and fathered six children. He died in 1895 in Maidstone at the age of 60 years and was buried at the Footscray cemetery.

Alexander Dickson's son named Alexander Dickson was born in Maidstone in 1882 and went to the Deer Park school – he's the one who became a community leader at St Albans from the early 1900s. He married Ada Spence in 1899 – she was born in 1875 to George Spence and Jane Heslop who had migrated from England. Alexander and Ada had three children: Nellie Anastasia (1899), Alexander George (1900), and Peter Leslie (1902). They established their home in George Street, St Albans, in about 1903. It was about three-quarters of a mile from the primary school.

Nellie Anastasia was born on 13 November

¹ The Kororoit Creek Hotel was built in 1865 and nearby was the "Old Kororoit Creek Hotel" later known as the Barley Mow and rebuilt as the Hunt Club Hotel.

Brimbank City Council Post-contact Cultural Heritage Study HO 083 Deer Park Hotel.

² In 1887 the annual fee for the publican's license at Kororoit Creek was £25 (\$50).

³ Footscray Independent 6 October 1888 p2

⁴ Footscray Independent 29 December 1900 p3

⁵ *St Albans The First Hundred Years: 1887-1987*; St Albans Railway Centenary Committee, 1986.

1899 in Port Melbourne and enrolled at the St Albans primary school in January 1906 and left in December 1914. (Her father's occupation was listed as being a labourer.) She married Thomas Osborne "Ossie" Opie of Deer Park, and they had a son, Ronald Osborne known as "little Ossie". Ossie senior was from an established family in Deer Park and a relative had acquired a selection in the St Albans land sales of 1868. Ossie had been working at Nobel's factory in Deer Park and was severely injured in the explosion of 1941 – he'd been working there for less than a year. He died in hospital on 31 January 1941. Little Ossie had died in his infancy in 1931 and Nellie died in 1983. They are all buried at Footscray.

Alexander George, the son, was born on 26 December 1900 at Maidstone. He enrolled at St Albans primary school in January 1906 and left in 1915 to become a law clerk. (His father was listed as a carpenter.) Alexander George married Marjorie Ellen Mort of St Kilda in 1926 and had a son Donald. They moved to Munro Street East Kew. Alexander George Dickson died at the Austin Hospital on 21 November 1937 at the young age of 38 years.

Peter Leslie was born on 4 November 1902 at Deer Park; he enrolled at St Albans primary in November 1907 and left in March 1917 to take up farming, and there is a press reference to him working on the Mechanics Hall in 1932. He wed Florence Mary McIntyre in 1933 and they had at least two children: Leslie (born 31 March 1934) and Ronald (born 14 May 1938), both of whom attended St Albans primary school in the 1940s.

Mr. Alexander Dickson might have started in St Albans working as a labourer but he was soon listed as a contractor, carpenter and builder; and it was never easy work. In 1906 he sued Patrick Cannon for underpayment in a disputed contract that was heard before the Footscray police court. It's interesting to note that Dickson was charging 8 shillings (80 cents) per day for his work, which calculates to £2 8/- (\$4.80) for a 48 hour week. The court arrived at a compromise amount of £13 for Dickson. Hopefully his other work was more remunerative. His range of work included building a nice house not very far from the St Albans railway station in 1912 (and which might have become the family home), he was awarded the tender for building a vicarage at St Alban the Martyr Church (1921), he relocated a villa from McIntyre's road to Northumberland road in Braybrook (1925), was building a shop at Deer Park, and another of his contracts was to supervise the buildings that were being erected for the Australian Explosives and Chemical Co. at Deer Park for the manufacture and storage of acid (1925). He also built the concrete bridge over the Kororoit Creek in McMahon's road off the Ballarat Road (1932). Much later he was building bus passenger shelters in Braybrook (1943). A versatile builder was he.

In 1924 Dickson was engaged to build a shop in St Albans for a green grocery and that became a critical point for building regulations in the district. Another contractor planned to build a butcher's shop, but neither would be able to go ahead with their work if Keilor council enforced its by-law that only brick or concrete buildings were allowed to be constructed. Fred Stenson, the President of the Keilor Shire Council, thought the council should assist the contractors in the matter. The shire secretary advised that the council had power to vary the regulations and suggested that he be empowered to give permission for the contractors to erect the buildings in wood:

*"The proposal was debated, but generally there was much sympathy for it. Cr. Stevens argued that council should encourage people who are struggling to make a home. Cr. Dickson stated that in the building boom, tragedies occurred when people built houses and later found out they could not pay for them. Cr. Stenson said he would be prepared to amend his motion so as to require three rooms to be completed before the house was occupied: two front rooms and the kitchen. The motion was then agreed to. This was the start of a flexible building code, which continued to evolve, because in the bungalow boom of the 1950s many houses started with only one or two back rooms, which were gradually extended."*¹

The thousands of migrants who came to St Albans in the 1950s would have been grateful of this concession as it later enabled them to build a small bungalow and move in.

Dickson became involved in the local council elections via Braybrook in 1925 because he was still a ratepayer in Deer Park.² Cr Charles Tilburn had resigned as councilor for Western Riding in March and Dickson was encouraged to nominate for the vacancy:

*"At the request of a large number of ratepayers, Alex. Dickson, the well-known building contractor, has decided to contest the seat in the Braybrook Shire Council recently rendered vacant by the resignation of Cr. Tilburn. Although comparatively a young man Mr. Dickson has for a considerable number of years taken a keen interest in the general all round welfare of the district and at the present time is an active member of the progress association. As the owner of extensive and valuable property in the shire, Mr. Dickson's interests are naturally concentrated on seeing the council affairs conducted to the best advantage for the ratepayers."*³

Unfortunately for Alex Dickson's aspirations, Tilburn's resignation was not accepted by council and consequently there was no election. A new

¹ *St Albans Pioneers: Settlers and Speculators from the 1860s*, 2013, p155

² Ada and Alexander Dickson had a property on the Deer Park road that was rented out. It burnt down in 1931. This may have been the 80-acre property along Kororoit Creek for which Ada was fined for not cutting boxthorn in 1939.

³ *Sunshine Advocate* 21 March 1925 p4

opportunity came in 1932 when Cr. Gordon Calder of St Albans decided to retire from Keilor Shire Council and Dickson was encouraged to stand for that vacancy against Edward Bennett of Keilor:

*"Mr. Dickson said he was in favor of constructing existing partly constructed roads their full length as money permits. He is also keen on the new road between Albion and St. Albans - the road to be built with financial assistance from the Government. Water for St. Albans, reduction in electric light charges, and a revaluation of the Shire are further proposals that will have his whole support. He is also against noxious trades, but is in favor of the basic wage for work for sustenance. Finally, he will, he states, lend his aid to all matters affecting the welfare of the Shire generally."*¹

Alexander Dickson won the poll for the Maribyrnong Riding quite convincingly with 153 votes to Bennett's 142.² This undoubtedly would have enhanced his growing political stature within St Albans because he was now on par with the long-established local councillors such as Frederick Charles Stenson (who was elected in 1907) and James Henry Stevens (elected in 1915).

With regard to his community involvement, Alexander Dickson had joined several of the community organisations in the area not long after his arrival in the district, one of the first being the St Albans cricket club. In 1908 he was a batsman and bowler with the club with the commendable figures of 3 for 19 in the friendly against Sunbury.³ In 1922 he was referred to as "the veteran player" who compiled over 70 runs.⁴ He also served on the committee.

In 1915 Dickson replaced James Henry Stevens as Secretary of the St Albans Progress Association when the latter resigned, and thus he was working closely with leaders like James Luxford and Frederick Stenson. Dickson's name became more prominent about 1916 when the debate about severance from the Keilor Shire was occurring. At a deputation to Keilor Council, Cr. Stevens said he was in favour of St Albans seceding from Keilor as local businessmen had come to the conclusion that their interests would be best served by joining Braybrook; he reported that residents of St Albans had signed a petition in favour of the change, which it was proposed to present to the Minister of Public Works.⁵

Alexander Dickson spoke a fortnight later at the St Albans hall in an opposing position where a public meeting endorsed his motion that "*they do*

their utmost to keep the Keilor Shire intact." Mr. Holmes moved that the motion be carried into effect by petition in direct opposition to the pro-severance petition which was being circulated through the Maribyrnong Riding. The motion was carried unanimously. Dickson further moved that "*a fit and proper person or persons be duly appointed to take the petition throughout the Maribyrnong Riding for signatures.*"⁶

Quite clearly there was no separation of St Albans from the Shire of Keilor. Dickson and Stevens represented the opposing voices in this debate and they had exchanged some sharp letters through the local press over this time. However, one of the options mooted at the time by Cr James Stevens was the amalgamation of Keilor and Braybrook shires, which was prophetic:

*"... anyone who will take the trouble to examine carefully a map of the two shires side by side cannot fail to see that they form an almost perfect square, and are eminently suited for amalgamation into one strong shire, whose revenue would not, as now, be largely absorbed in routine expenses, leaving only a small and ineffective balance for urgent road improvements."*⁷

In December 1924, Dickson joined James Luxford and Frederick Stenson in celebrating the Hume and Hovell centennial memorial in December 1924: "*Much of the credit for erection of the memorial is due to Mr. A. Dickson snr, for the amount of time he put in and the running about he had in connection with it.*"⁸

Alexander George Dickson, the son, was also involved with local groups and thus worked for the good of the community and was acknowledged for being "*a very active part in most public affairs in St Albans for a number of years*". He was the treasurer of the St Albans Progress Association (1922), on the committee of St Albans Tennis Club (1924), and was treasurer and later secretary of the Mechanics Institute and Free Library (1925-1926). He resigned from his positions in 1926 because he was about to marry and leave the district. He married Marjorie Eileen Mort of St Kilda on 27 November 1926.

The severance debate about St Albans leaving Keilor and joining Braybrook was raised again in 1930 via public meetings and discussions, and Alexander Dickson arranged a meeting to be held at the Mechanics Institute hall. This time round it was Thomas Lewis a poulterer of Walter Street who was behind the newly formed St Albans Severance Committee. The debate was not only about the financial benefits of amalgamating with Braybrook but also about the social and political benefits of having a united town:

¹ Sunshine Advocate 19 August 1932 p2

² Bennett was elected to Tullamarine Riding after an extraordinary vacancy in 1935 when he beat Harold Hilbert, but he then lost to Hilbert in 1936.

³ Sunbury News 8 February 1908 p3

⁴ Footscray Independent 21 January 1922 p6

⁵ Flemington Spectator 10 August 1916 p4. One of other options mooted by Stevens was the amalgamation of Keilor and Braybrook shires, which of course happened in 1995.

⁶ Essendon Gazette 24 August 1918 p4

⁷ Essendon Gazette 14 September 1916 p6. Stevens' vision came to fruition 80 years later, in 1994, when the City of Brimbank was formed by the amalgamation of the former cities of Keilor and Sunshine.

⁸ Sunshine Advocate Saturday 10 January 1925

*“St Albans, despite artificial boundaries, was one town, not two. One third was in Braybrook and two-thirds in Keilor. The result was that the energies of the people were divided, they spoke with two voices and did not carry the weight they should carry. Severance would unite the people, make them a moral unity and give them the strength to work together for the advancement of the whole town. There was no community of interest between St Albans and Keilor, while on the contrary the geographical position, the commercial and social relationships of the people drew them to Braybrook.”*¹

Despite the sincerity of such debates, it is evident that that severance did not occur and St Albans remained a neighbourhood divided by a municipal boundary through the middle of town.

Health problems for the Dicksons occurred in the early 1930s when Mrs Ada Dickson was hospitalized for unspecified special treatment. In 1934 Alexander's mother, Mary Frances Dickson née Gregg, died on 3 September at the age of 85 years. After her first husband died she had married widower Charles Carter Simmons, but there were no children born of the marriage.² In 1935 Alexander George Dickson was hospitalised for several months with health problems. He was released home but apparently he never fully recovered because at times he was confined to bed. He died on 21 November 1937.

In 1934 Alexander Dickson snr was appointed as a trustee for Errington Reserve in place of Claude Turnley, and thus Dickson became one of the few respected men entrusted with the preservation of Alice Errington's most historical donation to the district. Edward Luxford was another trustee who was a builder and when there was a call for a toilet block to be built at the reserve Dickson and Luxford volunteered to do the construction.

In 1937 Dickson argued that the unemployment relief tax that had been levied against local councils should be reduced because unemployment rates after the Depression were almost down to normal, yet the tax was just as high as ever and being diverted into general revenue. In Keilor there were now only six unemployed persons, whereas at the peak period it was 80.³

In 1938 he faced a strong challenge from Walter Gordon Jackson for his Keilor council position. Jackson had lived in St Albans 20 years earlier but left to pursue his interests as a farmer and master butcher. (His son Gordon Alex William Jackson enrolled in St Albans Primary in 1919.) In 1935 Jackson snr returned and bought 120 acres of farm land on Boundary Road and leased the adjoining 120 acres⁴ so he had land in Keilor and Braybrook. Perhaps his domestic accommodation

was not as advanced as his business plan because in August he advertised for the purchase of a building in St Albans township. The Sunshine Advocate was quite unequivocal in backing Mr. Jackson:

*“Six years ago Cr. Dickson won the seat by 11 votes from Mr. Bennett, but since then many of his actions have not met with the approval of ratepayers, and there is likely to be a big swing toward Mr. Jackson. The public mind is hard to fathom and the result of the voting may cause surprise.”*⁵

In the following edition the Advocate editors were even more enthusiastic:

*“Mr. Gordon Jackson, who is making an attempt to wrest the Maribyrnong Riding seat in the Keilor Council from Cr. Alex. Dickson, is being very well received in the district, and he is quite optimistic as to his prospects. He is, however, not relaxing his efforts, as he is aware of the fickleness of the ratepayers, especially at election time. From other sources it has been ascertained that he is likely to poll exceptionally well in St Albans, a district which was recognised as the stronghold of Cr. Dickson. It is not usual for this paper to take sides in a municipal election, but on this occasion it is felt that in recommending the rate-payers to support Mr. Jackson that they will be amply repaid in the service that he will render. He is a successful business man, and at the comparatively early age of 45 years, he is able to place the management of a large part of his interests in the hands of others so that he can devote time to the public welfare.”*⁶

The predicted big swing to Jackson did not occur. Alexander Dickson was well backed at the St Albans polling station and thus won the election by a total of 176 votes to 170. He had even tougher opposition a decade later in 1948 when he was challenged by Alexander Wright and Harold Easton, both from St Albans. Dickson received the highest primary vote, but after the distribution of Wright's votes the final tally was Easton 260 and Dickson 257, so it was a loss by 3 votes for the incumbent. It was probably a disappointment as by now Dickson had served 16 years on Keilor council which was equal to James Stevens' record. At this stage Dickson was aged 66 years and Easton was half his age at 33 years so he represented the younger generation of settlers coming to St Albans. Harold and Agnes Easton were from Footscray and were related to the Self family of St Albans. They settled in Victoria Crescent and Harold established Eastons Hardware store at 8 East Esplanade opposite the railway station.

Dickson had continued working as a builder through the forties and fifties. Mary Smith née Stein remembers him fondly as a family friend who helped them build their house during the difficult war years when building materials were hard to obtain because of the war austerity:

¹ Sunshine Advocate 14 February 1930 p4. In 1986 the St Albans population distribution was relatively the same, with 40% in Sunshine and 60% in Keilor.

² Simmons was born in 1838 in Norfolk, England. and died in Victoria on 25 January 1921.

³ Sunshine Advocate 7 May 1937

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 12 August 1938.

⁵ Sunshine Advocate 12 August 1938

⁶ Sunshine Advocate 19 August 1938

*"We had all the house plans drawn up by council before and started building during the war. Everything was difficult to get at first, so it was a pretty drawn out job. A builder and friend who lived in Main Road, Mr. Dickson, assisted my husband to build the house to lock up stage. Mr. Dickson built so many homes around here. He put the iron on our roof as a wedding present. He was a good man and had a wonderful family. His wife was also lovely. They lost a son early; Alex Dickson was his name."*¹

Apparently about 1944 Dickson took the first steps in starting the volunteer-based Auxiliary Fire Brigade in St Albans with washing facilities, electric light and telephone, with help from Keilor Shire Council and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.² They acquired a shed in East Esplanade near the station. The volunteers would tackle grass fires in the paddocks with hand-spray backpacks and the fire truck would come from Sunshine.

Mrs. Ada Dickson née Spence, an "old and respected resident of St Albans" died at her home in Main Road West on 1 September 1953. The notice in the Age refers to her as the "*dearly beloved wife of Alexander, mother of Nellie, Alex (deceased), Les and dear mother-in-law of Mary and Marjorie, loved grandma of Ossie Don, Les and Ron. A patient sufferer at rest.*"³ She was aged 78 and had been one of the new St Albans pioneers for fifty years.

Alexander was in his seventies, still working, and life wasn't getting any easier. In 1954 he was charged by a taxation officer for failing to make taxation deductions from the wages of an employee. Dickson's solicitor said that at the time of the alleged offence Dickson had suffered the loss of his wife and two other relatives, he had sustained a severe fall in February 1953 and had been ordered to rest. When cross-examined, the taxation officer admitted that on the two occasions he interviewed Dickson the latter was in bed and appeared to be under physical strain. Dickson's defense was that the employee had agreed to pay his own tax and it appears that at this stage Dickson was relying on contractors to assist with his constructions. Despite this understanding, Dickson was fined £3 on each of the charges.⁴

It is not known what happened to Alexander Dickson of St Albans in the last two decades of his life because there are no reports about him in the digitized local newspapers after 1954. Perhaps in his frailer years he went to stay with his daughter, Nellie Opie, who was a widow.

Alexander Dickson late of St Albans died in 1972 and was buried at Footscray cemetery in his daughter Nellie's family grave site. He was aged 90 and had been a St Albans pioneer for most of his life, for at least 70 years. #

ERRINGTON, Alice and William

Alice Errington née Hounslow was described by John Stevens as "*the most gracious and philanthropic lady of St Albans*" because in 1910 she donated the land in central St Albans that is now known as Errington Reserve. She lived with her husband William and their son Bobby in Strathalbyn, one of the early-built grand homes of the district, at the corner of West Esplanade and Albert Crescent. Strathalbyn is an old name of a district in Scotland. Originally from the Gaelic tongue, 'strath' means a wide valley or a stretch of flat land by the water-side. Whoever selected that name chose it well, because it perfectly describes the circumstances of the Keilor Plains on the Saltwater River.

Alice Errington née Hounslow was born in 1864 in Campbellfield, Victoria. This was an 'in-between' era in a number of ways. The gold rushes of the 1850s had severely effected the pastoral and farming sectors as men left the land to seek their fortune in the gold fields. Thus the large land owners were now looking for cheap labour to replace the workers who had left at a time when the supply of free or cheap convict labour was drying up. After years of agitation the transportation of convicts to the colonies was being stopped, and the last of the convict ships landed in Western Australia in 1868. But at the other end of the country private enterprise was replacing what government enterprise was curtailing. In 1863 the first indentured labor was brought into Queensland. It was "black-birding", the trade in islander natives brought here to work in the cotton and sugar plantations.

After the heyday of the gold discoveries around Australia, men were looking to lead an independent existence – they wanted land. It was a time of strong, continuing migration to the colony, stimulating prosperity and creating a demand for residential and farming properties. It was also the time between the dominance of the rural squatters who commandeered enormous tracts of Crown land in the 1850s, and the Land Acts of 1865 and 1869 which attempted to break down these large holdings and make the land available for small farms at affordable prices.

The 1865 Amending Land Act and later acts provided the opportunity for people to select farmland on the plains between the shires of Keilor and Braybrook. Although Keilor had been named 25 years earlier, it would be another 22 years before St Albans acquired its own name.

In fact, the introduction of the Land Acts was the basis for the future development of St Albans, because it drew new settlers to the area. Under the 1869 Act, a selector received a license to rent the land for the first few years, during which time they had to make improvements. After three years they could either buy the land outright or continue paying rent for up to seven years until the purchase price was paid in full. As one example,

¹ Memoirs of Mary Smith; unpublished manuscript.

² Sunshine Advocate 30 May 1947

³ Age 2 September 1953 p13

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 9 April 1954 p2

John Cavanagh selected 60 acres adjacent to the railway line probably in 1869, got his licence to occupy the land, and then in January 1872 he applied to purchase the land. The 'improvements' to the property were valued at £132 and included the fencing of the land, construction of a house, digging of a water hole, and putting about fifteen acres under cultivation. Presumably the other selectors were experiencing similar achievements and timelines. Hannah Errington (Alice Hounslow's future mother-in-law) selected land of similar size just a couple of farms further east of Cavanagh's.

It is not clear in which year the Hounslows came to St Albans, but it is likely that some of them came between 1874 and 1880. Therefore Alice Errington's story starts during the first stage of local settlement, the pioneering stage, the time when St Albans was formed as a village of 100–200 people within a small farming community.

Alice Errington's maiden name was Hounslow. Her father was Joseph Hounslow, who was born in 1840 in Buckinghamshire, England, the only child of James (1812–1868) and Hannah (1815–1895) Hounslow. The three of them migrated from England, arriving in Melbourne aboard the Marco Polo in September 1857. No fast jumbo jets then to cross the world in a day or so, just wooden sailing ships that took three or four months to complete the ocean journey. The early days of the spectacular gold rushes were starting to fade, and though small teams of diggers were still setting out to scratch for gold dust, the less successful miners were already looking for other means of making a living. In 1851 the population of Victoria was only 77,000 but by 1861 it was 539,000, which was the fastest growth rate in the state's history.

Joseph Hounslow married fellow Buckinghamshire emigrant Eliza Stranks in Victoria in 1862, and they settled in the Campbellfield part of Broadmeadows to a farming life. There were eight children of the marriage:

- George Albert (1863–1921)
- Alice (1864–1931)
- Annie Elizabeth (1866–1949)
- William James (1868–1956)
- Arthur Thomas (1870–1928)
- Ernest Henry Vaughan (1872–1887)
- Emily Hannah (1874–1960)
- Elizabeth Hester Hannah (1880–1959)

Most of the children were born in Broadmeadows or Campbellfield, except for Elizabeth Hester, who was born in St Albans.

The Hounslow family were in St Albans by 1880 because that's when their youngest child was born. By then other family members had already settled in Preston, Northcote, and on a dairy farm in Brunswick.

The 1880s was a period of intense activity in Victoria. A high migration intake of working-age settlers helped stimulate the economy. It also encouraged investment in new housing in Melbourne's suburbs. Alfred Padley and his business

colleagues in the Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company were some of those who responded to the economic boom by investing in residential development on Keilor Plains. Here they bought up local farms, subdivided them, and sold them off as housing blocks. They designed street layouts and built some grand homes. They had advertised widely and positively about the advantages of this new suburb, and they invested in building a railway station. They created a St Albans identity.

In 1893 Alice married William Errington, a railway ganger who was the son of local farmers, George and Hannah Errington, who also migrated from England. William was a real local, because he was born in Braybrook.

George Errington had bought land in various parts of Melbourne but settled in the St Albans-Keilor area. He and his wife Hannah are recorded as living in Boundary Road (Main Road) on a farm of 68 acres with a weatherboard house; an early map shows they had selected land on the Keilor side of Main Road East, next to Mary Egan's property. They were some of the first selectors of land in St Albans and became stock graziers. On 12 December 1893 George Errington bought some land opposite theirs on the Braybrook side of Main Road from David Milburn, a Keilor farmer. This is the land in central St Albans that now includes the football and cricket ground, the Tin Shed, tennis courts, and the Scout hall. George died on 5 November 1907 at the age of 81. Hannah died on 23 October 1909 at the age of 80 years.

Some time in the 1890s Alice Errington bought at least two pieces of land from the Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company near the corner of Adelaide Street and West Circus. There were several palatial homes with many rooms built in St Albans, and the Errington home was one of these. It was her home for the next forty years.

Alice and William Errington had only one child, a son called Bobby (Robert William), who was born on 22 May 1901. He was a 'Federation' baby, because he was born in the same year as the new antipodean nation, the Commonwealth of Australia with Edmund Barton as the first Australian Prime Minister.

The first decade of the twentieth century started off well for Alice Errington but ended in much sorrow. She became a mother at 37 years of age, but there were only a few years of happy family life together before disaster happened. Firstly, Alice's father Joseph Hounslow died in 1906. Then both her husband William and her father-in-law George Errington died in 1907 within a few months of each other. Thus several of her closest family members died before her child had started elementary school. Then in 1909 her mother-in-law Hannah Errington also died.

When William Errington died on 27 July 1907 at the relatively young age of 47 years, his son Bobby was only 6 years old. Alice Errington had the responsibility of supporting and raising the

young boy on her own. She never remarried but devoted the rest of her life to her son's wellbeing and doing charitable works in the community.

As both her father-in-law and her husband had died before her, Alice inherited the properties from the Errington side of the family. (George and Hannah Errington had also given birth to a daughter, but she had died in infancy.) The inherited estate included several parcels of land in St Albans and another one in Preston, though this latter block may have belonged to her father.

In between all these personal losses, women in Victoria were given the right to vote in 1908. For the tough, doughty and independent women like Alice Errington it would have been taken as the natural right that had finally been acknowledged. Despite her personal grief, she became involved with many committees in the district, including the Church of England, the School Committee, Mothers Club, the Picnic Committee, and the Independent Order of Rechabites. As women have always done, she was involved in running the community in which she was living.

Bobby Errington attended the St Albans school between 1908 and 1914 by which time he was already fourteen, the school leaving age. This was the normal length of schooling for many young people at the time. Eight years of schooling would get you the Merit Certificate. After this basic education children would mostly work with their parents on the farm or whatever the family business might be. One of his farming colleagues says that as a young man Bobby was a quite a good amateur photographer and delighted in taking portraits and snapshots of family groups for his friends. He sometimes played the piano at social events.

William James Hounslow, a brother of Alice's, came to St Albans about 1919 and became well known as a carpenter-builder. He had at least three children: Raymond William (born about 1903), Edward (1910) and Joseph (1914). Some local residents still remember this 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 William's wife Amy Alice Day died in 1917, Alice Errington took over the care of her brother's six children.

Raymond William Hounslow, who was probably the oldest son of this family, was later living with his wife Mary Ellen Lewis at 33 Main Road East. This was in the 1950s. Their house with the small timber yard was near the site of the present Safeways store. They had two girls, Coral (1939) and Wendy (1944). William Hounslow died in 1956 at the age of 82, and his son Raymond died in 1962 at 59 years. Mary Hounslow continued to live there for a few years but in 1967 moved to 321 Main Road East.

In 1910 Alice Errington donated the six-acre St Albans Recreational Reserve, later known as the

Errington Reserve, to the people of St Albans to be used as a sports ground, and there seems to have been a close connection between the trustees of the property and the cricket club. The cricket club was one of the early users of the ground and has been there ever since. In 1911 the three trustees were Frederick Stenson, Edward Luxford, and Claude Turnley, who was later replaced by Alexander Dickson. At first the reserve was just a paddock with wire fencing; later it became a fine sports ground.

In October 1929 the Braybrook Shire Council was in the process of constructing Percy Street, and all the land owners along the street were required to pay for the costs. The trustees objected to the construction of the road adjacent to the reserve as they did not have the funds to pay. The members of the cricket club that was based on the reserve also objected on similar grounds. Mr. William Hounslow, Alice's brother, objected on her behalf against the 'excessive cost', as at that time she still owned some land along Percy Street. She later withdrew her objection.

The trustees then approached Mrs. Errington and obtained her consent to the land being transferred to Council as a way of circumventing the financial impost. Discussions were held in 1929 to transfer the land to the Braybrook Shire, and councilors Lowe and Barclay moved that the Council accept the offer of the trustees.

Alice Errington died in June 1931 at the age of 67, after a long period of ill health. A short service was conducted at her home by the former Vicar of St Albans, Reverend Kedel, before she was buried at the Footscray cemetery, where a large number of people attended for the final burial service. The IOR members showed their respect by attending in their regalia. A special memorial service was also held on the Sunday evening at the Church of England in St Albans. Her standing in the community was such that even the Braybrook Council and the St Albans Ratepayers Association formally recorded their condolences.

Mrs. Errington had sold off some of her real estate in the 1920s and left all her remaining property to be held in trust for the benefit of her son, who was then thirty years of age. Her personal and real estate amounted to £3,400 and the income from this was to be used for his benefit. This was a considerable sum of money for the times. The trustees were her brother William Hounslow and her solicitor Ralph Candy. 1931 was not a good year, financially speaking. Unemployment had been running at more than 20%, wages had been cut back 10% by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, and the Australian pound was devalued. It was a time of economic recession and reduction in living standards, and a time of considerable hardship that would last another decade. The nominal basic wage at the beginning of the year was about £3/16/- before the 10% cutback. The value of real wages then

declined during the decade (except for a brief rally in 1939) and did not recover to the pre-cutback value until 1943. Bobby was fortunate that his mother was able to set aside assets for his welfare.

Alice Errington was a generous person who is remembered for her gifts to charity and her "fine character and personality". People recall her driving around the area in her Plymouth car before her final illness. It was an unusual sight in that there were very few cars around at the time and even fewer women drivers, which goes to prove that she was indeed an independent woman. She has been described as a doughty old lady who was even willing to have a go at "old" Mrs. Stevens, even though they were the best of friends. Many residents who never knew the family personally are nevertheless familiar with the name because of Errington Reserve.

In 1934 the transfer of the reserve to Braybrook Shire Council had still not been accomplished, as the title had been lost. Then in August that year the title for the property was finally registered in council's name.

In August 1934, James Hook, the secretary of the Errington Reserve Committee, wrote to council seeking a donation towards the cost of erecting memorial gates, to which request the council made a donation of £25. It took some time to raise the rest of the money for constructing the gates but finally it was done. A fine set of memorial gates made of wrought iron and bluestone pillars complete with a sandstone memorial plaque had been erected, and the Committee organised the formal opening of the Memorial Gates for Saturday 3rd April 1937. The official opening included a procession and a gymkhana held to celebrate the occasion. It was a ceremony that some of the original participants still remember clearly.

Robert Errington never married. He lived for many years in West Esplanade and was supported by Mrs. Ada Lodge, who had been the housekeeper at Strathalbyn. The grand old home passed out of family hands and though still occupied in the 1950s it was eventually pulled down. Mrs. Lodge looked after Bob (as he was now known) until he was admitted to a Salvation Army home in his later years. It has been said that Bob died a pauper in 1973 and only three people went to his funeral.

Errington Reserve is still a major focus of recreation in St Albans. In 2011 the St Albans Historical Society held a commemoration ceremony on the reserve to acknowledge its centenary of existence and placed a memorial plaque on Alice and Bobby Errington's unmarked grave at the Footscray cemetery. Tom Rigg and Alie Missen also published the history of Alice Errington and her donation to the people of St Albans.¹ #

¹ Alie Missen and Tom Rigg; *The Errington Reserve : An Historical Account of Recreation Land Ownership and its Uses*; St Albans History Society, 2011.

EVANS, Samuel and Ida

Samuel James Evans of Derrimut obtained Block 39 (196 acres) of the Overnewton Estate in 1905. The land was towards the western end of Taylors Road, almost five miles from the St Albans railway station. It was a long block stretching from Taylors Road to the north to Kororoit Creek in the south, adjacent to the Anderson property.

Samuel Evans was born about 1872, the son of Samuel Evans and Margaret Reid. Samuel Evans snr was one of the pioneers in Truganina, along with Messrs. Septimus Davis² and George Missen³, whose families would later establish connections with St Albans in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The farmers of Truganina were mainly involved in dairying and growing crops of lucerne and hay and pressed hay was even exported to India. Samuel Evans bought the first land at the Crown Land sales in the 1850s.⁴ He donated land for a Baptist church to be built in 1863 which became the Presbyterian church in 1907. He was also one of the people who built the first school in the district. Samuel Evans married Margaret Reid in 1852 and they lived on their "Cold Harbour" farm at Derrimut. He died on 31 August 1867 of heart disease, aged 57 years. Margaret died in Yarraville on 6 March 1899, aged 81 years.

Samuel James Evans was born about 1872 but unfortunately his early life in Derrimut is not recorded. He married Ida May Watson in 1906 at the Union Memorial Church in North Melbourne. Ida was born about 1882 to Alexander Watson and Angelina Florence Morey (1856-1892). Samuel and Ida started their life together in St Albans in the 5-roomed weather-board house that was built on their selection, as the wedding notice states:

*"After the ceremony about forty guests sat down to wedding tea at the residence of the bride's parents. The happy couple left during the evening for their future home in the country, the bride travelling in a pretty wine colored costume, embroidered in blue and gold with lace vest."*⁵

Samuel and Ida's children were born over the decade between 1907 and 1917, including:

- Lena May was born on 17 August 1907 and enrolled at the St Albans primary school in March 1915. She left in December 1922 to take up home duties.
- James Alexander was born on 10 January 1909 and enrolled in March 1915. He left

² Three sons of Septimus and Lucy Davis - Edmund, Arthur, and George - acquired neighbouring blocks in Taylors Road, St Albans, through the Closer Settlement Scheme in November 1868. Refer to their story in *St Albans Pioneers*, 2013.

³ The Missen family became related to Macrae family of St Albans and Keilor when Roy Missen of Rock-bank married Jean Macrae.

⁴ Gary Vines *Pastoral Pioneers: Grazing on the Keilor-Werribee Plains* 1993

⁵ North Melbourne Courier 18 May 1906 p2

in November 1922 and took up farming. He enlisted in 1939 but other details are not available.

- George Leslie was born on 31 August 1910 and enrolled in January 1916. He left in October 1925 to work at home.
- Beryl Irene was born in 1912 but is not included in the primary school register. It appears that she died in infancy.
- Ida Florence was born on 2 September 1914 and enrolled in September 1920. She left in December 1927 and went to Footscray Domestic Arts.
- Stanley Gordon was born on 23 January 1917 and enrolled in June 1922. He left in April 1931 for work on the farm. He married Kathleen Haysom of Fairfield in November 1944. He joined the A.I.F. but details are not available.

Ida May Evans died a few years after the birth of her last child. She died on 17 August 1921 at her home in Taylors Road, at just 39 years of age.¹ The fifteen years of her life in St Albans have not been documented.

The farming life was not always a tranquil existence. In 1917 Evans obtained permission from Keilor Shire Council to use a shot gun to prevent people killing or stealing his stock and otherwise damaging his property.² Some of the district's orchardists and poultry farmers had similar problems and similar solutions. The shot guns were mostly used for deterrence and sometimes fired for scare tactics.

Samuel Evans decided to enter local politics and became a councilor for the Maribyrnong Riding of Keilor in 1925 after Henry Coleman retired because of health issues. Samuel's fellow representatives for the Maribyrnong Riding were Frederick Charles Stenson, a pioneer from the 1880s, and James Henry Stevens, who was another Overnewton settler from 1905. Evans had joined the St Albans Progress Association and thus formed close connections with the businessmen of the district. He was well received at the municipal level and was elected as the Keilor Shire President in 1927-1928, which was a quick ascendancy to that official position.

Evans took a high profile in supporting local projects, and some of the ones that he backed very publicly were the severance proposal, the unemployment support program, and the water scheme. One of his pet projects was the Konagadeera irrigation proposal, which he believed could be implemented and would be of great advantage to the district because it would have transformed miles of dry country into fertile farmland. (The battle for a water supply was fought for thirty years before the town was finally connected to the Board

of Works scheme in July 1940. Frederick Stenson and Edward Luxford were long term supporters of this project.)

On the water problem, Evans backed Cr. J. H. Stevens in an endeavour to keep the small local reservoir free of bathers wanting to use it as a swimming pool when it was essential to preserve it for rough domestic use.³ However, Evans opposed Cr. Stevens in the campaign for the severance of St Albans from Keilor Shire and its annexation to Braybrook. He said the sponsors of the severance movement were contemplating handing over St Albans to the Braybrook Shire unconditionally, which he thought inadvisable. Evans' idea was a new shire embracing St. Albans, Deer Park and Sydenham, with the civic centre at St Albans.⁴ It was a grand idea but, needless to say, the severance did not occur.

The perennial problem of wandering stock and "sheep drovers' wiles" also received Cr Evans' attention, who raised it again at a Keilor Council meeting for some hope of action. He reported that the drovers "hung around" any bit of grass near a water hole, and when spoken to declared that they were on a reserve to which the statutory regulation regarding travelling did not apply. Their sheep got "boxed up" with those of the farmers, and sometimes sheep belonging to residents were found to be missing. Council decided to raise the matter with the Lands Department who controlled the water reserves.⁵

In 1929 Cr. S. J. Evans was gazetted as a Justice of the Peace, following the presentation of a petition of residents to the Keilor council. As a local J.P. he would have been expected to sit occasionally in the Sunshine Magistrates' Court.

Some discord also occurred between Samuel Evans and James Stevens with regard to the St Albans Unemployment Relief Fund. Cr. Stevens always claimed that he proposed the idea based on his wife's recommendation, but others noted that Cr. Evans had taken the initiative in implementing the idea. As was reported in 1930:

*"We have received a communication from Mrs. L. Turner, hon. secretary of the St. Albans Unemployment Relief Fund, drawing attention to the excellent services rendered by the movement by a number of gentlemen who have lately resigned. Appreciative references are made to the energy displayed by Cr. S. J. Evans, the originator of the fund. ... He has been a staunch worker right through. Other gentlemen ... found to have been self-sacrificing in their desire to help the unfortunate are: Messrs. L. Self, A. Dickson, J. Perrett snr., and Mr. A. Tong. Farmers in the district are also thanked for loan of drays and other kindnesses."*⁶

Despite some discord and personality clashes the unemployment support group provided a

¹ Argus 18 August 1921 p1

² Weekly Times 17 November 1917 p42

³ Sunshine Advocate 8 December 1928 p3

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 27 February 1931 p1

⁵ Sunshine Advocate 10 May 1929 p5

⁶ Sunshine Advocate 21 November 1930 p3

valuable support in the district during the 1930s. Alexander Menesdorffer was another local resident who was active with the group.

With such a brilliant start in local politics only a major disaster could stop Evans for advancing to greater heights. It occurred in December 1931:

“At 11.30 p.m. on Wednesday last, Cr. Samuel James Evans, J.P., a resident of St. Albans and a member of Keilor Shire Council, passed away and death came as a shock to the district as only on Saturday last he was present at the meeting of the Keilor Shire Council. He became ill on Tuesday and was removed to a private hospital in Sunshine where the end came on Wednesday. Cr. Evans, who was a big man, both in outlook and physique, was elected at an extraordinary vacancy for the Maribymong Riding of the Shire of Keilor in March 1925. His occupancy of the Presidential Chair in 1927-28 was notable for the manner in which he conducted the business of the council and for his many acts for the public benefit. He was a consistent advocate for water for St Albans and was a Commissioner of the Trust since its inception.”¹

Evans' death created a vacancy on Keilor Council and two nominations were received for the position in December 1931: Herbert Milburn of Keilor and Gordon Richard Calder of St Albans. Milburn withdrew his nomination in favor of Calder, thereby saving the expense and trouble of an election. Expectations were positive:

“Mr. Calder is well versed in the requirements and geography of both St. Albans (where he is living) and Keilor, he having had charge of an hotel there some few months back, and should therefore ably fulfill the duties of a councillor.”²

In January of 1932 the Evans' farm was put up for sale: *“196 acres 2 roods 1 perch, situated about 4 miles from St. Albans, 5-roomed weather-board house, in good order, and out-buildings, frontage to Kororoit Creek, well fenced and subdivided. This is a first class dairying and agricultural property.”* It was sold to Sassella Bros P/L of Footscray.³ This is probably some of the land that James Eddie acquired when he and his wife Marjorie came to St Albans in the 1940s.

Samuel James Evans was a St Albans pioneer and a community leader for 26 years, and he deserves to be remembered as such. #

¹ Sunshine Advocate 11 December 1931 p1

² Sunshine Advocate 18 December 1931 p4. Gordon Calder was the son of Richard Calder, another of the Overnerwton Estate pioneers from 1905.

³ Argus 9 April 1932 p26. The Sassella brothers had more land on the corner of Furlong and Station roads. The Sassellas bought property in St Albans prior to 1924 and several of the family were connected with this property. Mr. Sassella was involved in the 1938 Gymkhana at Errington Reserve. A & G Sassella were residents in 1940 and Stephen Sassella was resident in the area about that time. Tony Sassella settled in Deer Park, hence the name Sassella Park.

GRABASCH, Heinrich and Jane

Heinrich and Jane Grabasch came to St Albans in March 1909 and settled on a property over a mile away from the railway station, so it must have been in the farming district. They had transferred from Areegra, which is a small town east of Warracknabeal. Did they acquire one of the Overnewton properties? That is not known.

Heinrich Grabasch was of German heritage but he was born in 1862 in Break O' Day near Warracknabeal, so he was Australian. His parents were Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Grabasch and Anna Rosina Schulz, both of whom were from Prussia in Germany. They took up farming reasonably early, because in 1879 J. K. Schultz and Anna Rosina Grabasch obtained a lease at Bangerang⁴ and in 1886 Anna Grabasch transferred some of her property to the Wimmera United Waterworks.⁵

Jane Otilie Ackerley Kranz was born in Hamilton in 1876, so she also was Australian-born. Her mother was Johanne Christiane Kranz who was born in 1846 in Prussia, Germany. Her stepfather was George Eckel who was also from Prussia.

Heinrich Grabasch wed Jane Otilie Ackerley in 1893. He was 31 and she was 17. They had seven children, most of them born in Sheep Hills with the last one born in Keilor. The children were Anna Ottelie (1894), August Heinrich (1895), Alfred Emil (1898), Ida Louisa (1899), Frederick Oswald (1903), Stella Eleanora (1905), and Gilbert Edward Francis (1910-1920).

The family moved to St Albans in 1909 and Mrs. Grabasch was listed in the 1910 Melbourne Directory of St Albans residents. Mr. Grabasch was recorded in the school register as being a retired farmer, which seems unusual as he was aged only 49 years at the time and had a family to support. Three of the children attended the St Albans Primary School:

- Alfred Emil was born on 17 March 1898 and enrolled at the school in March 1909 from Areegra. He left in February 1911. He married Mabel Shephard in 1930 and died in 1966 at the age of 67.
- Ida Louisa was born on 16 March 1899 and enrolled at the school in March 1909 from Areegra. She left in October 1910. She married Henry Hamilton in 1929 and died in 1975 at Ballarat.
- Frederick Oswald was born 23 January 1903 and enrolled at the school in 1909. He left in February 1911. He married Grace Terlich in 1937 and Beatrice Coulter in 1957. His children are Frederick, Mervyn, Donald, and Diana. He died in 1984 and is buried at Frankston.

Little is know about the family's circumstances

⁴ Hamilton Spectator 30 September 1879 p3

⁵ Horsham Times 19 October 1886 p3

in St Albans as they stayed only a couple of years. The family probably went back to the Wimmera. Jane Grabasch was in St Albans in 1909 and then back in Wimmera (1914-1937) and later in the Bendigo electorate (1942-1954). There are many Grabasch family members in the Bendigo electorate so that region must have been their main settlement point.

Sheep Hills, Areegra, and Bangerang are all small towns near Warracknabeal in the Wimmera region in north-west Victoria. The population grew in the 1870s when selections became available and German and Scottish migrants began farming in the area. German colonists became prominent in agricultural development in harsh environments like the Mallee-Wimmera or in rural enterprises like wine production. The Wimmera and the hinterland of Melbourne were the primary areas of German settlement in Victoria in the 1860s and 1870s. Australian agents brought over 30,000 German-speaking migrants to Australia in the late 1800s.¹

The presence of German nationals in the pioneering years of St Albans was noted by the St Albans history project in 1986:

“Speaking of names, some of the people mentioned in the book ‘St Albans: The First Hundred Years’ have wonderfully long and grand names. Other names indicate that quite a few of the early buyers of subdivided land were Germans - this was in the 1880s and 1890s.”²

With regard to the immigrants who came to St Albans in the 1950s, German-speakers came from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, USSR, Bulgaria, and Romania, so language does not equate to national identity. After WW2 the German-born people in Australia made up 0.2% of the population and by 1981 it was 0.8% but this included the children of the displaced persons of diverse origin who were born in the refugee camps of Germany. In 1986 when the St Albans history project was started, there were about 1,000 St Albans residents who were born in Germany, or 2% of the local population.

Germans connected with early St Albans include von Stein, Schutt, von Stieglitz, Schwarze, Liebman, also and possibly Wolfe. The Stein family is an example of long term settlers; his full name was Wilhelm Ferdinand Anton Paul Clemens von Stein but he was known as Fred Stein. He sailed to Adelaide in the 1880s before moving to Queensland and then settling in Melbourne. He moved to St Albans in the 1920s and when his Australian-born daughter married she became Mary Smith. How much more Australian can you get than that?

The Grabasch family did not stay along in St Albans. Heinrich Grabasch died at Bendigo in 1951 and Jane Grabasch died at Bendigo in 1957. #

¹ Yarriambiack Shire Heritage Study Stage 1. Volume 1: Thematic Environmental History Final, 28 June 2012 pp22-23

² Christopher Evans, St Albans Community Committee for the Centenary of St Albans Railway Station 19.1.1987

GRIFFITHS, Henry and Emma

Henry and Emma Griffiths came to St Albans in 1906 from Avenel (which is a small place between Seymour and Nagambie) and took up farming on Block #31 of the Overnewton Estate. The farm was on the Sydenham side of Taylors Road between the Millett and McAuley³ selections and to the south of them was the King family's Plainfield Dairy. The Griffiths' farm comprised of 286 acres of “clean land well grassed interspersed with stony areas of varying extent”. They named the farm ‘Somerset’ and became cattle farmers – in the 1920s they were selling fat cattle at £13 12/6 per head. They might have had some sheep also because John Stevens mentioned that at some stage he took his flock to the Griffiths' farm to put through their sheep dip.

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 and Maria married in Victoria in 1866.

Emma Amelia Patten was born in Avenel in 1873 to Joseph John Patten and Ellen Cox. They were a young couple in their twenties when they came from England in 1857 on the *Undaunted* with one infant. They lived at Collingwood before moving to Avenel where a dozen more children were born.

Henry Edward Griffiths married Emma Amelia Patten in 1896. Their children included Victoria Beatrice (1898), Frederick Thomas (1900), Joseph William Patten (1902), Henry Theodore (1905), Ellen Esther (1907), Marjorie Winifred (1910), and Margaret (1915).

Victoria “Tory” Beatrice was born on the 12th March 1898. She enrolled at St Albans primary school from Katamatite in July 1906 and left in February 1913. She married David Alexander Calder, who was from another Overnewton Estate settler family, and they lived in Victoria Crescent. David was a carpenter with Hansen & Yuncken at Flemington. He signed up with the Australia Labour Corps in 1942 and was discharged in 1944 due to health problems. Victoria died on 7 September 1948, aged 50. David died on 16 November 1952, aged 54 years.

Frederick Thomas was born 10 April 1900 in Seymour. He enrolled at the St Albans primary school in July 1906 and left in July 1914 to take up farming. He married Marcella Rebecca Hopkins in 1935 and they became farmers at Balliang East. He enlisted with the Volunteer Defence Corps (The Home Guard) in 1942.

Joseph William Patten was born on 16

³ Marion McAuley's family story is included in *Stories About St Albans: Celebrating 125 Years*; 2012.

October 1902, enrolled in January 1909 and left in December 1917. He did well in the St Albans Sunday School classes of 1914 with classmates Gladys McKechnie, Bobby Errington and Ruby Stenson. He became a St Albans farmer but little information has been traced about him other than him being a witness to an accident at the railway crossing:

“Joseph Griffiths and Ambrose Macauley, two St Albans farmers, said that Cairns made no effort to hasten until the train was just upon him, when he urged his horses violently. From his actions it did not appear that he had noticed the train until it was within a few yards of him. Robert Cairns said he was taking a grader to Digger's Rest and when crossing the line between St Albans and Sydenham, the grader was struck by the Eaglehawk train, but he and the horses got clear. He did not hear any whistle, nor did he see the train approaching, until it was only a few yards away. He had to pay £200 for the destruction of the implement. He was fined 20/- with £3/2/6 costs.”¹

Henry Theodore was born on 16 February 1905 in Katamatite, enrolled at St Albans in October 1911 and left in February 1918 to go to Sunshine Technical School. He enlisted in the Australian Army from Bacchus Marsh in 1942 but other details are not available in. He married Annie Elizabeth Higgins.

Ellen “Nell” Esther was born on 4 August 1907 and enrolled at St Albans in January 1914 and left in 1922. She married Oscar Oliver Jensz in 1936 and had three sons (John, Arthur, Douglas) and two daughters (Ellen, Shirley). Oscar Jensz of ‘Monovale’ at Bacchus Marsh was born on 26 December 1907 and died on 29 January 1994. Ellen Jensz née Griffiths died on 8 March 2000.

Marjorie Winifred was born on 24 October 1910 and enrolled in January 1917, left in July 1925 to Domestic Arts at Footscray. She married Leo Pickett on 24 December 1938 at St Albans and they probably settled in Sydenham.

Margaret Edna was born on 8 March 1915 and enrolled at St Albans primary in January 1921 and left in December 1928 to study Domestic Arts at Footscray. She married Keith Alexander Anderson, a farming neighbour, the son of Peter and Hannah Anderson who came to St Albans about 1910 and became one the greatest hay-growing families in the district. The sons Horace and Keith became next door neighbours when they bought the Milletts’ farm.

Emma Amelia Griffiths née Patten, a “*well known and much loved resident of St. Albans*” died on 19 January 1941 after several months’ illness. A memorial service was held for her by Rev. Sambell at the Church of England.² She was 67 years of age, a St Albans pioneer for 35 years. Henry Edward Griffiths died on 7 July 1968 aged 99 years, a St Albans pioneer for 62 years. Both of them were buried at the Footscray cemetery. #

GRIMMET, Jabez and Isabella

Jabez Lorenzo Grimmett was listed in the 1903 electoral roll for St Albans as being a line repairer living in Ballarat Road. The St Albans state school register includes Lorenzo Frederick Grimmett being admitted in January 1903 from Diggers Rest and leaving in March 1903; his father is listed as being a railway employee at Sydenham. The Grimmett family may have had only a brief connection with St Albans, but it probably reflects the short-term nature of some work with the railways where gangers and line-repairers were shifted to wherever the work was required. Other railway workers listed in the St Albans Electoral roll at the time included Andrew Douglas (line repairer), Henry Mancy (railway ganger), William Errington (railway ganger) and Duncan McLachlan (who was an assistant station master).

Jabez Lorenzo Grimmett was a British national and could trace his family tree to the 1700s in Oxfordshire, England, where his grandfather worked as an agricultural labourer. Jabez’s father was Joseph Grimmett (born in 1826 in Bladon) and his mother was Martha Pottinger (born in 1830 in Banbury); they were farmers of Oxfordshire.³ Joseph and Martha married in 1852 and had two children born in 1853 and 1855. The family emigrated from Southampton on 14 January 1855 on the barque Mallard and arrived in South Australia on 21 April.⁴ They moved to Angaston where a third child was born. They then moved to Victoria and settled in Laanecoorie near Bendigo, where seven more children were born between 1858 and 1874.

The Grimmett family became farmers and business merchants around Bendigo. Joseph Grimmett was a trustee with the Wesleyan Church and several of the brothers, including Jabez, joined the Laanecoorie Cricket Club.⁵ A couple of Grimmet men later enlisted in the A.I.F.

Jabez Lorenzo Grimmett was born in New-bridge in 1869. In 1891 he married Isabella Mary Ann Smith, who was born in 1864 at Hawkesdale, the daughter of Frederick Smith from Kent, England, and Margaret Adamson from Inverleigh, Victoria. Jabez and Isabella appear to have had only the one child, Lorenzo Frederick. Jabez continued his work with the railways and the family moved to places like Hamilton, Newmarket, Horsham and Sunbury.

Isabella Grimmett née Smith died in 1948 in Sunbury, aged 84 years. Her husband Jabez Lorenzo Grimmett died in 1951 in Gunnedah West, NSW, at the age of 81 years. Their son Lorenzo Frederick Grimmett died in 1974 at Williamstown, aged 80 years. They had only a passing connection with St Albans. #

¹ Sunshine Advocate 26 March 1927

² Sunshine Advocate 31 January 1941

³ ww.ooocities.org/merinotech2000/famhis/Watts/grimmett.htm

⁴ Adelaide Observer 28 April 1855 p4

⁵ Bendigo Advertiser 31 July 1894 p3

HEALEY, Denis and Mary



Denis Healey was a line repairer with the Victorian railways. He probably came to St Albans before 1889 because that's when his children enrolled at the primary school. He is listed in the Melbourne Directory as being in St Albans in 1904 and his son, James Healey was

included in the Electoral Roll in 1906.

Denis Healey was born about 1857 in Co. Limerick, Ireland, his parents being Patrick Healey and Margaret O'Connor. Denis migrated to Australia at about four years of age. He married Mary Ann Finn of Keilor in 1880; he was aged 23 years and she was aged 21. Mary was born in Williamstown in 1858 – her parents were James Finn and Mary Long who were also of Irish heritage. The Finn family settled in Riddell, Victoria, in the early 1860s before moving to Keilor later in the decade. Mary Ann was their first-born child of eight born between 1858 and 1873. James and Mary Finn were some of the earliest pioneers of St Albans as they had acquired Lot 19 in the 1868 subdivision sale of the Keilor Braybrook Farmers Common by the Closer Settlement Board.¹ James worked with the Victoria Railways and obtained a position at the #11 gate at Keilor Road (Sydenham). Denis worked as a line repairer with the railways and it is probably through his work connections that he met his future wife.²

James Finn died at Keilor on 26 May 1875. His executors, Michael O'Connor and James Dickson, sold his farm in 1887 and it was subsequently sold to Alfred Padley's Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company,³ so the family farm was taken over by the local land boomers.

Denis Healey married Mary Ann Finn in 1880 and they raised six children, all of whom attended the St Albans primary school:

- James Finn was born 3 January 1883 at Footscray, was admitted to the old St Albans primary school in August 1889 and left in December 1899. He died of tuberculosis at St Albans on 8 September 1906 at the age of 23 years and was buried at Keilor.
- Ellen Mary "Nellie" was born 6 October 1884 at Footscray, was admitted to the old St Albans primary in August 1889 and left in August 1898. She died of tuberculosis on 20 July 1911 at Footscray at age 27 years and was buried at Keilor.

¹ Refer to article in *St Albans Pioneers: Settlers and Speculators from the 1860s*.

² Two of Mary's sisters married railway men. Elizabeth wed Cornelius Devitt and Anastasia wed Frank Kavanagh.

³ *St Albans The First Hundred Years 1887-1987* p3

- Gerald Denis was born 12 March 1887 at Footscray, was admitted to the old St Albans primary school in May 1892 and left in October 1902. He also worked as a railway employee. He died on 19 November 1920 at Footscray at age 33 years and was buried at Keilor.
- Timothy Esmond "Ted" was born 26 October 1890 at #9 Gatehouse, St Albans, was admitted to the primary school in September 1897 and left the new school in April 1906. In adulthood he changed his name to Esmond Francis Healey. He married Amelia Colahan in 1922 and they had two daughters and a son. Amelia was born on 27 December 1898 in Ballarat East; her father was John Colahan (1861-1924), whose family was from Galway, Ireland. Her mother was Elizabeth McLaughlin (1862-1947) who was born in Greenock, Scotland, and had migrated to Australia as a very young child with her widowed father. Her father was originally from Northern Ireland.
- Denis Joseph was born on 24 February 1899 at St Albans. He attended St Albans primary school between February 1905 and December 1908 and then St Monica's in Footscray. He married Rose Cleary and had no children. He worked as a supermarket manager and died from myocardial infarction at Ascot Vale on 29 August 1981 at age 83 years.
- Patrick Leo (known as Leo) was born on 24 April 1902 at Keilor. He attended St Albans primary between May 1908 and December 1908 and then St Monica's in Footscray. He married Mary Louise Anderson and they had three children: Leo, Marise, and Stewart. Patrick Leo was a dispatch manager who died of cerebral thrombosis at Strathmore on 29 September 1962 at the age of 59 years.

In retrospect, 1889 was not a particularly good year to come to St Albans because, despite the land boom optimism of the 1880s, the district was soon caught up in its biggest ever real estate collapse. Alfred Henry Padley was the manager of the Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company and had bought lots of the St Albans' farmlets and subdivided them into suburban allotments. Padley negotiated for the St Albans railway station to be built and offered a rented house in Adelaide Street to be used as the first school in the district. (The school was also used as a church on Sundays.) The school opened in August 1889 and the older Healey children were amongst the first to be enrolled – James was the tenth child in the school register and Nellie was the eleventh. There were 27 children enrolled in that first year and eight of them were children of two local railway families. In 1893 James was one of six pupils in Grade 5, Nellie was one of six pupils in Grade 3, and Gerald was one of ten in Grade 1.

Alfred Padley's land sales in "*the new suburb of St Albans*" had generated interest and optimism.

Postal authorities proposed opening a post office at the railway station. A commercial directory lists the business people as being two blacksmiths, a commission agent, a furniture manufacturer, and the Nico Explosive Company. 1893 was also the year that Padley's Cosmopolitan company became insolvent thus decimating local real estate. The explosives factory that opened in 1891 was the only real industrial venture in the district and closed in 1894 after an explosion killed one worker and seriously injured another.

Local optimism was restored a decade later when the Closer Settlement Board subdivided the Overnewton Estate which attracted a new group of settlers to the district that was still classified as agricultural and pastoral. At this stage there were 48 households in the district housing about 200 people of whom 106 were electors. The new, purpose-built primary school was located in West Esplanade, the first general store was established near the railway station, and the recently-built Mechanics Institute and Library was at the village centre in East Esplanade.

The Healey family left St Albans in 1909 and settled in Footscray. Their new home was in Newell Street and they named their abode "Keilor" so they must have had positive memories of their old neighbourhood. The younger children continued their education at the nearby St Monica's Catholic Primary School in Wingfield Street. They clearly enjoyed the experience because they later joined the Past Pupils' Association and assisted with the entertainment and fundraising activities. Esmond was the vice-president of the association as well as one of their singing artists. Denis was the assistant secretary and Leo was also vice-president at one stage. There was a strong Irish contingent within the membership and at times:

*"The entertainment as a whole was even more Irish than Ireland, for it concentrated, in a little over two hours, the majority of the features held dear and which appeal most forcibly to visitors."*¹

On this occasion Mr. Esmond Healey sang "Mother Machree" while Miss Millie Colahan sang "Come Back to Erin". Dare one speculate that Miss Millie Colahan was the Amelia Colahan who would marry Esmond Healey a few years later?

Esmond must have been a good speaker and was praised for his oratory at one of the Association's Communion breakfasts when he proposed a toast to "The Hierarchy and the Clergy":

*"In a stirring speech Mr. Healey spoke of the strong bond of sympathy and love which has existed between the clergy and the latter from times immemorable. He detailed instances of the great work the priests were doing in the firing line, and paid tribute to Dr. Mannix, whom he designated as the 'greatest democrat in democratic Australia'."*²

Mary and Denis Healey and three of their

children died fairly young of consumption. James died at Keilor in 1906. Nellie died at Footscray in 1911. Denis Healey snr died of tuberculosis and heart failure at Footscray in 1919. Mary Healey née Finn died of heart disease in 1920. Gerald died at Footscray in 1920, just two months after his mother's death. At this stage the immediate family consisted of the three youngest brothers: Ted aged 30, Denis aged 23, and Leo aged 21.

Esmond married Amelia Mary Colahan on 25 March 1922 at St Augustine's Catholic Church in Yarraville, Victoria. At the time of his marriage, Esmond's address was The Esplanade, Altona. His age on the marriage certificate is 30 and Amelia is 24. Amelia was born in Ballarat, Victoria in December 1898; her parents were Elizabeth McLaughlin and John Colahan, a stone mason.

About 1926, Esmond and Amelia moved from Yarraville with daughters Joan (born December 1922) and Therese (born August 1925), to a house at 19 Odenwald Road, Eaglemont (Heidelberg), Victoria. They bought the land, and the house was built for them by Amelia's brother, John, who was a builder by trade. A son, Esmond John (Teddy) was born in April 1930.

Timothy Esmond "Ted" started working as a salesman and shipping clerk and advanced to becoming the departmental manager with Robert Bryce and Company, an importing firm established in 1913. Esmond earned a good living with the company and continued with them until he retired.

Regarding the children of Esmond and Amelia Healey, Joan (1922-2009) married Francis Arthur Lane in 1947 and raised four daughters and one son. Therese Mary (born 23 August 1925) married Crofton Joseph Uniacke³ in 1950 and raised a daughter and two sons. Esmond John (1930-2005) married Denise Melville and raised four daughters.

Amelia Healey née Colahan died on the 15th December 1959 at Heidelberg at age 62 years. She is another pioneer whose life history is mostly undocumented in the public media. She obviously cultivated an artistic talent because in her youth she would sing as her contribution to community celebrations, e.g. at the 1918 concert presentation by Miss Rose McGown's pupils to His Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne, the Most Rev. Dr. Mannix.⁴ She also performed with her sister Kathleen in a pantomime at Princess Theatre for the Christian Brothers Golden Jubilee in 1919. The pantomime was the popular "Dick Whittington" and was also attended by the Most Rev. Archbishop Dr. Mannix. Kathleen Colahan was one of the solo dancers with a fine exhibition of Irish dancing via

³ Robert Fitzgerald Uniacke came to Australia from Mount Uniacke, Co. Cork, Ireland in 1852. A great great grand-daughter, Jan Uniacke, was a youth worker with the St Albans High School in the 1970s and organized youth leadership courses in conjunction with the St Albans Community Youth Club. She died in 1996 at age 42 from breast cancer, leaving a husband and two children.

⁴ Melbourne Advocate 7 September 1918 p29

¹ Footscray Advertiser 7 July 1917 p3

² Footscray Independent 20 October 1917 p2

“The Spirit of Erin” while Millie Colahan rendered a beautiful presentation of “The Spirit of the Sea-divided Gael.”¹ (Singing talents were evident across a couple of generations. Millie’s sister, Elizabeth, was a singer and actress who toured with J.C. Williamson’s Gilbert and Sullivan productions under the stage name of Lucy Colahan. Her son John Lanigan was born in Seddon in 1921 and had a successful career as a principal tenor with the Covent Garden Opera Company in London.²)

After Amelia’s death in 1959, the family home in Eaglemont was sold and Esmond went to live with his elder daughter, Joan Lane, and her family at 3 Albert Street, North Coburg, where he lived until his death. Timothy Esmond Healey aka Esmond Francis Healey, usually known as Ted, died from coronary occlusion on 25 January 1967 at Coburg North, at age 76 years. He is buried with Amelia in the Heidelberg cemetery.

Denis Healey and Mary Finn were St Albans pioneers from 1889, and they were following in the footsteps of her parents, James Finn and Mary Long, who were St Albans pioneers from 1868.

Suzanne Uniacke, a granddaughter, writes of Esmond Healey that:

“Mary and Denis Healey and some of their children died of consumption when my grandfather was quite young. He was left with his two younger brothers, Denis and Leo. I recall going to St Albans in the car with him and my mother when I was a child and we went to the area where his family had lived. The railway gatehouse had been demolished long before but there were still flowers growing where his mother had had a small garden. I remember the tears in his eyes. Even though his family life took a very sad turn, he had a good and successful life thereafter. He married and had three children and he had a good job with an importing company all his working life, even through the Depression. He was an avid reader and largely self-taught, very knowledgeable about trains and ships and other parts of the world. Esmond was artistically very talented and sketched and painted all his life. He was a very accomplished cartoonist and his work was published in journals and magazines. His artistic talent passed onto my aunt, Joan Lane née Healey, who was a portrait painter. He was a generous man, devoted to his family, and a great storyteller. His grandchildren called him Gar. His chosen vice was cigars.

“He was deeply fascinated by the railways. This is partly attributable to his family’s close connections with the railways and the fact that he lived so close to a very busy line when trains were the main mode of transport. But it’s clear that his appreciation of the trains and their crews was more aesthetic and humane than mechanical. One gets the impression that the railway was a source of excitement and glamour and human interest for him as a young boy, in what were otherwise his quite austere surroundings. The railway activity also provided him with a connection to the world beyond St Albans.”



Amelia and Esmond Healey c.1920 © Suzanne Uniacke



(L-R) Elizabeth O’Brien, Amelia & Esmond Healey c.1950



Esmond Healey & daughter Therese 1950 © S Uniacke



Denis Joseph Healey & Rose Cleary © Marie Harrison

¹ Melbourne Advocate 23 August 1919 p13

² Recollections of Suzanne Uniacke.

Remembering St Albans – Esmond Francis Healey

Let me turn back the clock, well over 50 odd years ago and give you some impressions of St Albans (10 miles from Melbourne, on the Bendigo line). I was born in #9 Gatehouse, long since demolished.¹ These gatehouses were built of solid blue stone and were really meant to last for years. They were built square, with four rooms and had slate roofs. They were within a few feet of the railroad and one had to be born in one to get used to the rumble of goods and passenger trains at night. To wake up out of a doze was quite a shock. You became used to the sound and could name the trains. Other gatehouses I remember were, one, #10, where St Albans station now stands and was the residence of the Ruling Station Master. Another one, #11, which my grandmother and her daughters kept, one being my mother, was at the old road to Keilor, about one mile north of the present station.²

The few people who lived around about on the vast windy plains, they numbered about 20 families and we first had school in an old vacant house about one mile north-west of the railway station.

The big sheep runs were owned by a Mr Taylor³ of Overnewton, at Keilor, and also Sir Rupert Clark of Rupertswood, at Sunbury. The country was used for sheep grazing and also a few cows etc. Plenty of rabbits abounded and also it was the home of the deadly tiger snake. It was, I remember, a lonely place at night and was continually swept by the howling north winds, cold in winter and really torrid in summer.

The railway station, plus one store run by an Englishman (Mr Aylmer⁴) were the only civic spots, later we built a new school, #2969, just about half a mile north of the present station and near the railway line, where today it is a big school, catering for a big population, a terrific number being new Australians.

The Railways in those days were the main means of all transport and the Bendigo line was an extremely busy one. Goods for Echuca, Kerang, Swan Hill, Bridgewater, Deniliquin and all towns in the north, with dozens of branch lines from these places to remote towns in those days, such as Monegeeta, Lancefield, Redesdale, Daylesford, and Maldon. We had the fast Bendigo Express drawn by 'A' class locomotives and they looked splendid in their coats of dark green with brass

domes and brass rings on their boilers. The drivers took great pleasure in keeping them clean and fit and it was the custom for the crews to be allotted to their own engine. The Bendigo cars (A412 426) were American Pullman type. You could walk through the centre of the train and at each car end they had platforms and a catwalk across the couplings to the other car. They were exceedingly fast trains and had crack drivers, one I remember was Jack Straughair⁵ of Bendigo – a model driver, spick and span like his loco, and he dressed and looked the part. His train came to Melbourne from Bendigo and returned at night. (Ran at 60mph.)

We also had ordinary passenger trains stopping at all stations, morning, noon and night – both ways. The goods traffic was terrific – mostly 'Y' class and they were a remarkable engine, very, very reliable. Later on, I remember the first imported from America – the V class #499 – she really caused a sensation with her big kerosene head light (never known of before) and her alarming whistle, which could be heard for miles. Her first run, on trial, she proved a bit too broad for the platforms and in fact tore some edges a bit. They were really terrible to fire, and it was said that at the time, they were stoked in America by negro firemen. I'm not so sure about that, but they sure used coal and water. You could hear them coming for miles as they emitted a peculiar sound from their exhaust and there was a reflection in the sky as they climbed the Sunbury cutting.

On the local train that ran from Melbourne to St Albans, about 6 trips a day, we had first the E class. The well known little 2.4.2. – a wonderful job, quick off the mark and a wonder in reversing. I remember the E426 first model sent to us – as a pattern from Leeds, England. It was a mighty little loco and did a super job – as did its successors of this type. We saw many 'B' class of the famous Beyer Peacock manufacture and they were often used on the local line as a stand-in for the 'E' class. We also had the old 'D' class 4.4.0, they were a bit like the 'A' class, only lighter and not as powerful. Passing through, going to light lines, we saw the W & S types, the 'H' class, the 'T' class, the S & P, whilst the old 'R' or Bulldog, often were used on 'goods' with the 'Y's.

Down the line from St Albans we had a small flag station, known as Albion, about a mile north of the present Albion. I think the earth bank still remains where the platform used to be. I must check this up. Just near, are the Albion Quarries – Sunshine was then Braybrook Junction and with the quarries we had a ballast train (the Pilot) sent with stone every afternoon to St Albans, it being the only place where the engine could change ends – so as to bring the train to Melbourne. This train consisted of about 10 trucks and a van and was usually drawn by an 'O' class 0.6.0, an ugly

¹ Gatehouse #9 was near the Albion quarries between Furlong and Ballarat roads.

² The Keilor Road station opened on 1 March 1859. It was re-named Sydenham on 1 April 1887.

³ William Taylor settled at his Overnewton estate in Keilor in 1849, parts of which were bought by the Closer Settlement Board and sold in 1905 as small farms.

⁴ Robert and Elizabeth Aylmer established the first general store in Boundary Road (Main Road West) about 1902. Robert (1844-1922) and Elizabeth nee Hoare (1846-1918) were from Norfolk, England, and immigrated in 1891.

⁵ Possibly John Straughair (1829-1902) engine driver or his son John Thomas Straughair (1859-1940) fireman.

looking loco, with cumbersome looking side rods. At St Albans the engine dropped the trucks back on the 'up' line, then followed it with the van and ran round, tender first, to link up to take the train back to the city.

Just before the Great Sunshine Smash – they had changed the name to Sunshine – it was now on the 'up' grade as H.V. McKay had quitted Ballarat and had removed to Braybrook Junction – hence the name Sunshine after the famous Harvester. I saw the night Bendigo train frequently, and I have often spoken to driver Milburn.¹

I remember the morning after the disaster. The Bendigo engines were AA564 and AA544. I think these are correct. The Bendigo suffered practically no damage, except 564, who lost her cow catcher. The Ballarat suffered terribly, I think 44 dead and approximately 250 injured. The old dog box cars just collapsed into matchwood. It was really a dreadful accident. I knew some of the injured people and also many who assisted at the wreck. The town fire bells rang to arouse the people who flocked to the station to try and help. All doctors and horse ambulances were alerted and all night the rescuers worked to try to release the dead and wounded. The morning dawned on a dreadful scene. I saw some cars – all that was left was the chassis, the upper works were gone. The State was plunged into dreadful gloom and mourning. Then we saw the original Bendigo train, with its two engines, the cars filled up with sandbags to make up for the weight of passengers. This train backed up every night for days, to as far as Sydenham or Diggers Rest, and trial runs were made to try and see how the brakes acted. The trains had many noted men and experts aboard, one being a Mr Kernot.² It presented a very sombre looking ghost train dimly lit as it charged south again at top speed towards Sunshine, one really shuddered at the memory of that awful night.

I remember on our little suburban local a well-known character, Guard Carey,³ with his little trim pointed beard. He was the Commissioner's special guard and also conducted the Duke and Duchess of York on their tour of the Vic railways.⁴ These

¹ Leonard Milburn (1851-1935), locomotive driver, was involved in the Sunshine railway disaster on Easter Monday 20 April 1908. He was acquitted of negligence but was removed from driver duties. Refer to John Buckland's *The Sunshine Railway Disaster*, Australian Railway History Society, Bulletin No. 382, July 1969.

² William Charles Kernot (1845-1909) was professor of engineering at Melbourne University and a chief investigator of the train crash. Maurice Edwin Kernot (1852-1934) was Victoria's Chief Engineer of Railways from 1904 to 1923.

³ Henry Bryan Carey (1848-1933) was born in Co. Dublin, Ireland, and died at Footscray aged 85. After he retired from the railways a portion of the Commissioner's special train was named the Carey coach in recognition of his service in the Department.

⁴ The Duke and Duchess of York visited Australia in 1901 to open the first Federal Parliament.

Royal visitors later became King George and Queen Mary.

Goods trains passed our home at all hours of the night and especially in the wheat season. I remember well being roused out of bed by a guard up a freight to tell us that they had run over some cows who had gone to sleep on the track. The 'Y' stayed on the track, but she was covered in gore and the place looked like a slaughterhouse.

I remember the Victorian Railroads picnic to Bendigo – Mr Gus Hogan was the Secretary. They ran dozens of trains to Bendigo – a very popular day out.

Sunbury was a popular place for the army and every year the trains conveyed hundreds of troops and guns there for manoeuvres – Sir Rupert Clark was a great man for this and had his own body of troops. I can still see the trains and the guns and horses and all the khaki clad soldiers, en route to the big camps.

I remember the Beyer Peacock A class, it had a very high but narrow tender, which gave the crew a good view when running tender first. They were typically English and a very smart job. Another job was a Belgian R class with the Continental cab.

Some of the older classes of S or W class for a time had spark arrestors and it really spoilt a nice-looking engine. Those engines were like the old Union Pacific, and very low and with outside cylinders, an unknown thing in the days of English design. The coming of V499 from the USA changed all that. I saw the wood casing of a Y class catch fire and it really burned and took a bit of putting out. Also gauge glasses sometime blew out and I saw a fireman badly scalded with one, near our home. Sometimes in the winter a kindly crew tossed us off a big lump of coal for our house fire – a welcome fuel in the cold nights on the plains.

I saw too a few runaway trucks, that got away and charged down the track, a dreadful menace to the fettlers who would be unaware of them until they were almost on top of them. We had some wonderful station masters, I remember Mr Surridge,⁵ Mr Newstead,⁶ Mr Robinson,⁷ Mr McElwee,⁸ all wonderful men and well liked.

As a boy I spent many hours in the Relaying gang camps, putting in the heavy T class rail replacing the old B rail (with wooden keys). The camps followed the replacements as they went along, and we had a big camp in tents at St Albans

⁵ Robert Surridge was the station master and also the post master operating from St Albans from 1894 to October 1900.

⁶ George and Margaret Newstead transferred from Conwarr in Gippsland. George was station master from October 1900 before transferring to Devenish in 1904.

⁷ James Robinson (q.v.) was from Westmorland, England, and was station master at St Albans from 1905 to 1926. He and his wife Catherine had five children.

⁸ Daniel Goodall McElwee (q.v.) was station master at St Albans 1904-1905. Ada McElwee helped raise funds for the public hall. Their son William fought at Gallipoli.

in the siding. They were mostly young men from Woodend, Tylden, Taradale, and Kyneton, etc, and they worked hard in torrid heat to lay the track, heavy lifting from ballast trains, material trains, etc, and to see these lads toss rails up on to ballast trucks from the ground was really something. I think Mr Campey¹ was one of the men in charge of this job and today look at our crack Bendigo line.

These fellows lived hard. They came off the job at night, put kerosene tins of meat on the fire to cook, plus tea and bread and jam and sometimes Tin Dog² as they called it. They were super men – poor pay, hard work, blood and sweat. Let us remember them when we speed north on the Bendigo run.

It is not generally known too, that the old Catholic church at Keilor has an inscription in the tower to the original builders of the Bendigo line – a contribution from the members of one of the first construction gangs on the rail to Bendigo.³ That's history!

I remember too Guard Dowsett⁴ – who was on the train to Glenrowan at the time Ned and his boys played up. He was sometimes on the Bendigo passenger train.

The Great Rail Strike⁵ was a thing to be remembered, or should we forget it? I saw scratch crews run trains at all odd timetables and some of the crews were certainly characters. They were trying days for rail men out on strike and one travelled at your own risk or not at all.

As a small boy I remember faintly the death of Queen Victoria when all engines wore a black and purple sash around the dome – as mourning for the Queen.⁶

In the old days we had plenty of fast trains and plenty of drivers dubbed "Hellfire Jacks" and some of the old As and Bs did some really fast runs – up to 70mph. Nothing to it!

So I have given you some tales of my youth at old St Albans which I still remember and hope it proves of interest to you. #

Esmond Francis Healey
North Coburg, circa 1960

Note: The transcript of Esmond Healey's St Albans recollections was provided by two of his granddaughters, Judith (Lane) Kos and Suzanne Uniacke. Many thanks to them for making this available and for providing other details of the family history.

¹ George Campey (1856 -1930) of Macedon worked with the railway engineers/repairers. Originally from Yorkshire.

² Colloquialism for a can of bully beef.

³ Workers on the Bendigo line donated money for the bell and tower at St Augustine's Catholic Church.

⁴ Jesse Dowsett (1842-1931) was a guard on the special train taking police to capture Ned Kelly. Refer to <http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/dowsett-jesse-13563>

⁵ There was a strike of the Victorian Locomotive and Enginemen in May 1903.

⁶ Queen Victoria's death was on 22 January 1901.



Esmond Healey (L) St Albans Primary School c.1898.



Tom & Margaret O'Brien, Amelia & Esmond Healey © S Uniacke



Esmond Healey with grandchildren 1957 © S Uniacke

HESTER, Charles

Charles William Hester (1835-1916) must have come to St Albans in the late 1890s as he was listed in the Melbourne Directory as being in St Albans in 1902 and in the Electoral Roll for St Albans in 1906. He was a gold miner aged in his seventies who became a poultry farmer in Helen Street. It is not known if any of his children joined him in this enterprise, though one daughter, Mrs. Catherine "Kitty" Thrupp, was living not far away at Droop Street in Footscray.¹

Very little is known about Charles's early life. He was born in 1835 in Berkshire, England, and probably emigrated with his parents in the 1850s as his father was later at Morpeth, New South Wales. Charles was probably at Newcastle before moving to Bendigo in the 1850s where he was mining for gold. In the early days he was employed in the Alabama and Butler's Reef at Caledonia Gully. Apparently he became known in Bendigo around places like Tooborac, Sugar Loaf, Raywood, Eaglehawk, Woods Point and Heathcote. The mining industry in the region was in decline during the late 1890s and this was probably the incentive to look elsewhere for himself and his children who had also become involved in mining.

Charles married Margaret Nicol of Eaglehawk, Bendigo, on 3 August 1860. She was born in 1843 at Linlithgow Burgh, West Lothian, Scotland, to William Nicol and Elizabeth Gardner. Charles and Margaret's children were mostly born at Huntly or Raywood: William (1861-1861), Elizabeth Ann (1862-1947), Charles John (1863-1863), Bethiah (1864-1864), Catherine (1865), Harriet (1867). Charles William (1871-1960), Margaret (1873-1957) and Andrew (1876-1876). Charles John, Harriet, and Andrew did not survive.

Unfortunately, Margaret and her youngest baby died in his year of birth – Margaret Hester née Nicol died at her mother's home in Eaglehawk on 6 August 1876. She was just 33.²

It is not known who took care of the children because Charles senior was the breadwinner and gold mining was his work. In 1877 he was recommended for a lease at Hospital Hill and planned to employ six men for the first six months, and twelve men afterwards.³ In 1888 at Caledonia Gully he applied for £200 to work with four men in sinking a shaft on Rosey Reef, which had given yields up to 20 ounces to the ton and thought it would cost £1 a foot to sink.⁴ By the 1890s Charles was working with his son Charles and reported that they had obtained 5 ounces 5 hundredweight of gold from seven tons of dirt from their reef at Tooborac.⁵

In May 1895 Charles Hester of Tooborac applied

to the Warden of the Mining Division of Heathcote for a 15-year lease for the "Try Again Gold Mining Co." to operate at Sugar Loaf.⁶ He was notified in July that the lease would be granted but in May 1896 Hester's Sugar Loaf lease was declared void.⁷ It must have been after this that he started to look at poultry farming as a future career potential.

The St Albans district had started as a farming community though the area was in a rain shadow and there was no reliable supply of water in the summer. Chook farming must have been seen as a possibility for a small business because it didn't require lots of land, especially if there was limited income and assets available. Stephen Lewis established one of the bigger poultry farms in St Albans about 1893; he was on the corner of Biggs and Walter streets. Herbert Laurie came later. Several people in the 1906 electoral roll for St Albans listed their occupation as poultry farmers, including Charles Hester, Stephen Lewis, James Shortell, Henry Thomas, Anna Wolfe, William Clifton, William Martin, Albert Gibson, Catherine Waters and Percy Jenkins.⁸ Poultry farms were advertised quite regularly in the major papers, such as: "*St Albans Poultry Farm: cottage, 4 rooms, fruit trees, vegetables; £100*"; and "*Poultry Farm, St Albans. Compact half acre 3 rooms, tanks, three minutes station; £150*." You could do a course on "Poultry for Profit" at the Working Men's College on Thursday evenings for 9 pence for a single lecture or 5 shillings for a series on 10.⁹

Charles Hester died of heart failure on 12 April 1916 at his home in St. Albans, aged 82 years, and was buried at Footscray Cemetery.¹⁰ He died intestate leaving assets of £338,¹¹ so one could conclude that neither mining nor poultry farming had made him a wealthy man:

*"The death of Mr. Charles William Hester occurred at St Albans on 12th ult., suddenly from heart failure. The deceased, who was 82 years of age, was well known in the Heathcote, Bendigo and Wood's Point district. In the early days he was employed in the Alabama and Butler's mines. He leaves three daughters (Mrs. A. Marchesi, Heathcote; Mrs. E. Harnell, South Melbourne; and Mrs. H. E. Thrupp, Footscray,) and one son (Mr. C. W. Hester, Gisborne) to mourn their sad loss."*¹²

Charles William Hester, the son, was also a miner from Bendigo and living in Woods Point. In 1897 he married Margaret Knopp, who was the daughter of a German miner, Johann (John) Knopp, and his Irish wife, Catherine Foley. They lived in the suburb of Piccadilly where three of their

¹ Catherine married Harry Edmund Thrupp in 1895.

² Bendigo Advertiser 4 September 1876 p2

³ Mclvor Times 7 June 1877 p3

⁴ Mclvor Times 24 August 1888 p2

⁵ Bendigo Advertiser 1 January 1895 p4

⁶ Mclvor Times 3 May 1895 p3

⁷ Mclvor Times 28 May 1896 p3

⁸ Commonwealth of Australia Electoral Roll, Division of Corio, St Albans Polling Place, 1906

⁹ Age 30 April 1902 p10

¹⁰ Argus 11 April 1916 p1

¹¹ Age 23 May 1916 p8

¹² Mclvor Times 4 May 1916 p2

children were born. The mining industry around Woods Point was in decline at the turn of the century and would not pick up for almost two decades. This is perhaps what prompted the family to leave Woods Point around 1903, following Margaret's mother and brother who had moved to Gisborne a year or two earlier.¹ Charles and Margaret raised seven children: John Charles (1899), Catherine Mary (1901), Charles Leo (1903), Fran Bernard (1906), Vincent Patrick (1908), and Margaret Elizabeth (1909). Margaret Hester née Knopp died in Koo Wee Rup in 1937 at age 66 years. Charles William Hester died in Warrnambool in 1960 at age 90. (Louisa Blake, who is a descendent of Margaret Knopp, has documented the family's settlement at Woods Point based on Margaret's scrapbook diary, parts of which can be read online.²)

Elizabeth Hester married Adolph Marchesi in 1884. He was a miner at the Just in Time Reef in Heathcote and had the Rosy Gully Reef at Rosy Gully in 1887.³ He spoke to the Gold-Mining Commission at Rushworth in July 1891.⁴ He died in October 1921 in Heathcote, at age 67 years. Elizabeth died suddenly on 9 May 1947 aged 85 years at Heathcote South, loving mother of Mary (Mrs. Howat), Margaret (Mrs. Turner), Kitty (Mrs. Ring), Elizabeth (Mrs. O'Brien), and Fred.⁵

Catherine Mary "Kitty" Hester married Harry Edmund Woodfield/Thrupp in 1895. He may have had an interest in mining as his father or brothers probably had shares in the True Blue Quartz Mining Company in 1867. About 1916 Kitty and Harry were living in Droop Street, Footscray, where he was listed as a mining engineer. By 1919 they were using the surname Woodfield and he was working as a munitions worker. They had four sons: Eddie, Leslie, Clarrie and Nicol. Catherine "Kitty" Thrupp née Hester died on 4 August 1937 at Elsternwick.

Margaret Hester wed James Edward Harnell in 1894. He also had a quartz claim in Tooborac in the 1890s. Their children were born in Heathcote: Elizabeth Margaret (1894), Sarah Ann Catherine (1896), Winifred Ellen (1898), Ethel May (1900), Edward James (1902), and Evelyn Edith (1909). James Edward Harnell died in 1942 in Hampton. Margaret Harnell née Hester died in 1977 in Surrey Hills.

Charles Hester was in St Albans from about 1900 to 1916, but none of his family appears to have joined him. Many hopeful prospectors had passed through Keilor and Braybrook on their way to the goldfields at Ballarat and Bendigo, whereas Charles is one who did the reverse. #

KELLAWAY, Catherine Sophia

Catherine Sophia Kellaway probably came to St Albans between 1903 and 1906. Little is known about her; for example, only her surname is included in the local history book *St Albans The First 100 Years* without any other details. Her full name is included in the 1906 and 1909 Electoral Rolls for the district where her occupation is listed as the ubiquitous "home duties". Who was she and why did she come to St Albans?

Catherine Sophia Dyer was born on 4 May 1834 in Hobart⁶ to Benjamin Bissell Dyer (1796-1875) and Anne Reay (1803-1879). Catherine was the eldest of nine children born to Anne Dyer between 1834 and 1849. Benjamin Bissell Dyer was born on 24 July 1793 in Stathern, Leicestershire, England; his parents were Robert James Dyer (born 1754) and Sarah Bissell (born 1767). Benjamin B. Dyer was appointed postmaster at Brighton, Hobart, in August 1861⁷ and he was pound keeper in April 1865 a position that he maintained for several years.⁸ Benjamin died on 14 November 1875 in Brighton at age 82, and was buried at St Marks Pontville Cemetery. Anne Dyer née Reay died on 8 December 1878 in Brighton and was buried at St Marks Pontville Cemetery.

Thomas Stone Kellaway was born on 10 October 1821 in Shipton Gorge, Dorset England. His parents were George Kellaway (1794-1877) and Lydia Stone (1796-1861). George was born in Elworth Dorset England and died on 6 October 1877 at Woodstock, Huon River, Tasmania; he was aged 83 years. Lydia was born in 1796 in Bridport Dorset England and died in Tasmania. It is not known when they arrived in Australia.

Catherine Sophia Dyer married Thomas Stone Kellaway on 29 March 1853 at the Trinity Church of Hobart according to the rites and ceremonies of the Uniting Church of England. He was a bachelor, she was a spinster, and the ceremony was under a special licence because she was only 18 and thus was "underage" for marriage purposes.⁹

They settled along the Huon where there were other Kellaway families residing and some of them must have been close relatives given that Thomas's parents had migrated to the district. In November 1853 a licence was granted to Thomas Kellaway to establish the Franklin Hotel in Franklin Village, Huon.¹⁰ Thus he became a "licensed victualler" with a business to retail wines and spirits, though in December 1854 the licensee was Elijah Brown.¹¹ The Kellways bought about 100 acres from the crown on South Egg Island along the Huon River¹² and the young family appear to have

¹ <https://www.prov.vic.gov.au/explore-collection/provenance-journal/provenance-2009/woods-point-my-dwelling-place>

² <https://www.prov.vic.gov.au/explore-collection/provenance-journal/provenance-2009/woods-point-my-dwelling-place>

³ Mclvor Times 4 February 1887 p3

⁴ Argus 6 July 1891 p9

⁵ Argus 10 May 1947 p19

⁶ Some references state she was born in Sydney.

⁷ Mercury 13 August 1861 p2

⁸ Mercury 6 February 1868

⁹ Launceston Examiner 2 April 1853 p3

¹⁰ Tasmanian Colonial 10 November 1853 p2

¹¹ The Hobart Mercury 9 December 1854 p2

¹² Courier (Hobart) 6 December 1858 p2

turned to grazing for a livelihood. Kellaway came to the attention of the public in 1865 when he was elected as the jury foreman in the inquest on the bodies of two murdered children.¹ In 1857 he was elected as a trustee for the Huon Road District, being a landowner on Egg Island.²

Thomas and Catherine's children included Ellen Anne (1854), Thomas (1857), Amy Lydia (1859), Ida (1864), Edwin (1866), Thomas Dyer (1866), Stella Kate (1873), and Lillian Annie (1878).

The family appears to have led a fairly routine life until the late 1870s when Catherine's father Benjamin Dyer died in 1875, her mother Anne Dyer née Reahy in 1879, and her youngest daughter Lillian died in 1879 as a one-year-old.

The family moved to Sutton near Queanbeyan (New South Wales) in the 1880s and probably they became graziers. There was another death in the family when the youngest living child, 12-year-old Stella Kate, died on 2 February 1885.³

Regarding land acquisition, Thomas Stone Kellaway and Edwin Maximilian Dietrich applied to the Goulburn Land Court for 150 acres at Cookbundoon and later acquired extra acres. Their selection was forfeited for non-fulfillment of the conditions after Thomas Kellaway died.

Thomas Stone Kellaway, grazier, died on 21 December 1890 at Sutton Park, near Queanbeyan, in the Colony of New South Wales. He was aged 69 years. Catherine was only 56 years old and it must have been a difficult time for her. Both of her parents had passed away, three of her children had passed away, and now she was a relatively young widow, presumably living on her own. Her oldest daughter Ellen Anne had married Robert Bennet and they were living in Glenorchy, Tasmania. Her youngest surviving child was her son Thomas who married in 1895 and moved to Queensland, so he was quite independent. (He died in 1906.)

Catherine must have been looking for a new life, but why she chose to come to St Albans on the Keilor plains is unknown. Perhaps there were relatives nearby, or perhaps like other selectors she hoped to win in the Overnewton Estate lottery. She lived here from five to ten years.

Catherine Sophia Kellaway passed away in Melbourne East in 1911 aged 76 years and was buried at the Footscray cemetery in the Church of England section. The notice in the local newspaper about her passing was brief:

*"The many friends of Mrs. Kellaway, a well-known and respected resident, will be sorry to learn of her sudden death."*⁴

Catherine Kellaway née Dyer might have spent up to a decade in the district, but for a "well-known and respected resident" we know nothing about her material or social life here. #

KING, Malcolm and Lucy

It is not known when the King family came to Australia, but they settled in Braybrook about 1884. Melford "Malcolm" Jacob King and Lucy King née Riddle⁵ were living in a house near the Nobels Explosives factory in Deer Park, and they were included in the Shire of Braybrook's list of ratepayers for 1892. In 1905 "M. J. King" of Keilor was allocated Block 43 (155 acres) of the Overnewton Estate⁶ and he was undoubtedly Malcolm Jacob King of St Albans. The selection was on the corner of Taylors Road and the northern end of Station Road that would later be known as Kings Road. This land was from the old 1868 Closer Settlement subdivision and was originally in the names of David Milburn (from Keilor) and Bennett Opie (from Deer Park) before being acquired, again, by the Closer Settlement Board.

Melford Jacob King was a native of Nova Scotia and his parents were James King and Sarah Campbell. Melford, known as Malcolm, was an early immigrant to Victoria because even though we do not know precisely when he arrived, it was before 1884.

Lucy Riddle was born about 1866 in Hobart, Tasmania, to Thomas Riddle and Susan Mason who had married in Hobart in May 1861, so they too were early immigrants to Australia.

Lucy Riddle and Melford King married in Victoria in 1886 and raised six children between 1886 and 1899. Their first child was born in Nhill in 1886, so the family already had a connection with the Wimmera and Victoria's Little Desert region. Perhaps they were looking for land, as there is also an Argus notice of a Melford King applying for a selection in Gippsland in 1890.⁷

The King children included:

- Ethel Maud was born in Nhill in 1886. She married Russell John Roberts in 1907 and in 1910 she had a daughter, Thelma Maud Rose. They had a grocery store in Miller Street, North Fitzroy. Russell Roberts died unexpectedly of a heart attack in Fitzroy in 1939. Ethel Roberts née King died in Fitzroy in 1970 aged 83.
- Melford Jasper, known as Malcolm, was born in Maidstone on 10 September 1889. He was admitted to St Albans state school in May 1902 and left in November 1904. He married May Victoria Bond in 1916 and worked as a foreman in a timber yard. May Victoria died on 7 July 1956 and Melford Jasper died at West Brunswick on 7 August 1966. Both of them are buried at the Footscray cemetery.
- Maggie May "Margaret" was born on 19 May 1888 and was admitted to St Albans

¹ Mercury 16 September 1865 p2

² Launceston Examiner 14 May 1857 p3

³ Mercury 7 February 1885 p1

⁴ Footscray Independent 16 September 1911 p3

⁵ Name spelt as "Riddell" in some records.

⁶ Bacchus Marsh Express 11 November 1905 p3

⁷ Argus 31 March 1890 p3

state school in February 1902 from Deer Park and left in February 1904. She worked at home on the family farm. She never married and was known as Aunt Mag. She lived in "Pommie Paddock" in a house next to her parents' Wattle Grove homestead.

- Stella Myrtle was born in Maidstone on 11 August 1904 and admitted to St Albans state school in January 1910 and left in December 1913. She married Thomas Frederick Grantley in 1924 and they had at least one son, Don. Stella died in 1924 at age 20 years.
- Leslie Lennard was born in Maidstone on 5 October 1894, started at St Albans state school in May 1902 and left in October 1909. He married Ethel Anderson in 1920; her parents were Peter and Hannah Anderson who bought some of the Overnewton Estate farmland in 1905 and cultivated crops. Leslie and Ethel established Plainfields Dairy on the corner of Kings and Taylors roads.
- Lucy Evelyn was born in Maidstone on 1 March 1899, started at St Albans state school in August 1903 and left in November 1913. She also worked on the farm. She married Vivian Rogers in 1936.

The family's life in St Albans started in 1902 on their farm that they called Wattle Grove. Mavis Hunter, a granddaughter of Malcolm and Lucy King, writes that:

*"The King family moved from Deer Park to a farm in Boundary Road (Main Road West) St Albans in May 1902. Malcolm's occupation was a carpenter-builder, but, as usual at the time, people were living on a few acres and also raising some stock or planting crops to support the family. This farm was about eighty acres and they had dairy cows. It was on the south side of Main Road West about where Emily Street comes out, down to the bridge that used to be called Crosbie Bridge. That's the old farm; Grandma's farm we used to call that."*¹

In 1905 they acquired their second farm from the Overnewton Estate sale on Taylors Road. Like most of the farmers of St Albans, they soon had some cows and one must assume that they grazed them on both farms. At first Malcolm was referred to as a builder or carpenter, but later he was known as a dairyman, so the herd had grown. The first farm was in the area later known as Pommie Paddock, which was on the Sunshine side of Main Road West opposite the Stevens' farm. Neighbours used to take a pail to the dairy and get fresh milk. This practice continued into the 1950s.

Malcolm Jacob King's life in St Albans was not very extensive, because he died at home in 1916, at the age of 55 years:

*"On Sunday, August 27th, there passed away at St Albans Melford Jacob King, an old resident of the district of 32 years' standing. Deceased for a number of years carried on the business of farming, and was widely known and respected. For some little time deceased had been ailing, and eventually medical men found him to be suffering from a serious stomach trouble, but though he knew the end was coming throughout, he maintained a calm and peaceful attitude. His remains were interred at Footscray Cemetery on Tuesday, August 20th. Deceased leaves a widow and grown-up family of two sons and four daughters."*²

Malcolm's remains were buried at Footscray. His will identifies his assets and their valuations, including land at St Albans with a weatherboard cottage valued at £785, a block of land in Cecil Street Yarraville £20, land under lease or licence at Parish of Maribyrnong with a capital value of £1000 (amount due £777), 15 farm horses £225, 2 ponies £10, 1 wagon £20, 1 light wagonette £5, harness and saddlery £15, furniture and household goods £35, watches £1, 110 tons of hay £165, and farming implements £240. It's interesting that Malcolm was a dairyman and had 17 horses but apparently no cattle, and that there were 110 tons of hay on his farm. One wonders if he was now growing hay as a primary concern and if the dairy farm had already been passed on to his son.

The tradition of dairy farming was definitely taken over by the younger son of the family, Leslie Lennard King known as Les, who was aged 22 when his father died. After finishing his schooling Les had started working at the St Albans quarry in McKechnie Street.³ He took over the dairy farm after his father's death and he is remembered by many of the oral history recollections as the iconic St Albans milkman with his horse and cart doing milk deliveries around the district. He obtained the Plainfields Dairy of 155 acres on the corner of Kings Road and Taylors Road – the Stevens' farm was to the east and the Colemans' farm was to the west so these farming families were all settlers from the 1905 Overnewton Estate era.

Running a dairy was hard work because the milking had to be done twice a day without exception; and it was not just about the cows, as Mavis King says: *"After finishing delivering the milk about lunchtime Les would harness up the Clydesdale horses and put a crop in or take it off, whatever the case was for that time of year, so he was a very busy man."*⁴ In the early 1920s, Jack Richards started Richards Dairies in the Sunshine area, so Les sold his Sunshine part of the milk round to them and concentrated on the St Albans part. In the 1920s there would have been about 75 households in St Albans and milk was a staple so it was a business opportunity.

² Footscray Independent 2 September 1916 p3

³ St. Albans Quarrying Co. Pty. Ltd. opened in 1913 and closed in 1937.

⁴ Mavis Hunter in *St Albans Oral History From the Tin Shed Archives* 2004

¹ Mavis Hunter in *St Albans Oral History from the Tin Shed Archives*, 2004, p33

Barbara Turner, whose family home was not far from the Wattle Grove farm, recalls getting milk direct from the dairy:

*"We used to take a pail to the dairy and get fresh milk. You'd take your jug there and they'd use the milk ladle to fill it up. You couldn't do it these days. We didn't have a fridge in the early days though we had the old Coolgardie so it was better getting your milk as fresh as possible."*¹

Leslie Lennard King married Ethel Anderson in 1920. Their children included Mavis Jean (1921), Phyllis Maude (1922), Beryl (1925), and a son who did not survive.

- Mavis Jean was born on 8 January 1921 and attended St Albans Primary from 1926 to 1934, then worked at home on the family farm. In 1942 she went to work at Nobels Explosive Factory in Deer Park for about eighteen months. She married Bill Hunter in 1943 and they built a home in Erica Street, St Albans. They had a son Lennard (1945) who worked with the railways, and a daughter Janice (1949) who worked with the Reserve Bank.
- Phyllis Maude was born on 8 December 1922 and attended St Albans Primary from 1928 to 1934. After finishing school she stayed at home to work around the farm. Then in 1942 she went to work at the Nobels Explosive Factory.
- Beryl was born on 20th October 1925 and attended St Albans Primary from 1930. After finishing her primary schooling, Beryl went to the Sunshine Technical School and then worked for a Footscray business for about seven years.

Lucy King née Riddle died in Prahran in 1940. She was aged 74 years and had been a St Albans pioneer for 72 years:

*"On December 21 at Alfred Hospital, Lucy, the dearly loved wife of the late Melford King, of Mainroad, St. Albans, the dearly loved mother of Maude, Maggie, Melford, Leslie, Lucy and Kilda, aged 74 years. Father and mother reunited."*²

The Kings' dairy was not the only one in the district. Other dairymen were Philip Rohan who had a farm along Biggs Street and Phil Hill who was on the corner of Sunshine Avenue and Biggs Street. Les would get extra milk and cream from Phil Hill for his deliveries. Mary and Alexander Sykes had a dairy and poultry farm on the corner of Kings Road and Main Road West.

Les continued with the St Albans milk round until 1949, when he sold it to Bill Stewart³ who'd established his dairy in Main Road East opposite the Errington Reserve. He sold the business to Croftbank Dairies of Northcote and the St Albans

branch was run by Cliff Butler⁴ and Ivan Skinner.

When Les sold off the milk round, he and Ethel moved back to the old Wattle Grove farmhouse in Main Road West. They had bought the old farm from the other members of the King family and built a new house next to the old one for themselves and one for Auntie Mag. Later on Les sold the old family home to John Thornton who had started building half-houses for the many migrants coming to St Albans. Thornton developed the farm into housing lots for the migrants at that time and introduced half-houses to St Albans, which helped people to settle easier. However, despite selling the older farm the Kings must have kept a few cows nearby. The Svaizgne family was one of the new settlers in the area and Dace Svaizgne remembers that when her father bought land at St Albans and started building he must have bought from the Kings:

*"... because their house was next door and we shared a slight boundary. We would walk over to their place to get cream – we were just tiny kids but we'd walk over with a little jar to their back door and get cream from 'old' Mrs. King. We were in Kodre Street and right near the Kings' house. That might have been about 1951."*⁵

With the old farm sold off for housing Les and Ethel continued with their milk run from their Plainfields Dairy for another decade before deciding to retire. As their daughter Mavis recalls:

"In 1962 Dad sold Plainfields. The quite little town had suddenly started to expand from the central area and out into the surrounding farmlands, which were gradually being converted to residential living. Dad donated ten acres of farmland to the Keilor Shire Council so that the St Albans Football Club would have a football ground; the value was about £10,000. Dad was the timekeeper for the club and also marked the ground."

Les King at this stage was nearly 70 and no doubt looking forward to retirement. His wife Ethel was 65 so she also would have appreciated a slower pace of life. Les King died of a massive stroke on the 17th September 1980, at the age of 85 years. He had lived 80 years in St Albans and had seen the place grow from a small rural village to a thriving metropolis of over 40,000 people. A few years later (in 1984) Ethel King née Anderson retired to a nursing home in Queenscliff and passed away on 30 May 1987. She had been a St Albans pioneer for 75 years.

In 2004 there were four generations of the King and Anderson families still living in St Albans, so the family was witness to the many changes that have occurred locally over the last century. Mavis Hunter née King has written of her family background in the book *St Albans Oral History from the Tin Shed Archives*. #

¹ Recollections of Barbara Turner, 2015.

² Age 23 December 1940 p1

³ William Stewart sold the dairy in 1953 and became the licensee of the Waterside Hotel in King Street, Melbourne. He died in 1955.

⁴ Cliff Butler was from Sydenham and his sister June Butler married John Stevens of St Albans.

⁵ Dace Svaizgne in *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years* 2016

LEWIS, Thomas and Elizabeth



Thomas David Lewis and Elizabeth Ellen Johnston were St Albans residents in the early 1900s. They were both home-grown Australians from the western suburbs of Melbourne and thus represent some of the second-generation pioneers who re-settled in the broader Keilor plains.

Thomas David Lewis was born on 5 February 1884 at Williamstown to Stephen Lewis (1846-1924) and Mary Davies (1845-1909). Stephen's family was Welsh and has been traced to 1825 in Llanfyrnach, Pembrokeshire, Wales. Mary Davies was born in 1845 and her family has been traced to 1690 in Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire, Wales. Stephen and Mary married about 1875. They migrated to Australia in the early 1880s and settled at Williamstown with their two children Ben William (born 1875) and Martha Elizabeth (1880). Thomas David was their third child and was born on 5 February 1884 at Williamstown, followed by Mary Ann (1885) and Margaret.

Elizabeth Ellen Johnston was born on 25 May 1889 at Maidstone. Her father was George Johnston who was born about 1846 in Kidderminster, Worcestershire, England, and migrated to Australia in the 1880s. Her mother was Jane Ellen Hughes who was born in 1867 in Liverpool, Lancashire, England, and migrated to Melbourne. Jane Hughes married George Johnston in 1888 and Elizabeth Ellen Johnston was their only child, born in Maidstone on 25 May 1889.¹

Stephen and Mary Lewis came to St Albans with their young family in 1893 and established a poultry farm. At first they were recorded as being in Biggs Street but later their farm was in Walter Street between William and Henry streets. Early records are difficult to trace but there are several people who listed their occupation as poulterers in the 1908 electoral roll, including Charles Hester, James Shortell, Anna Wolfe, William Clifton, Albert Gibson, Percy Jenkins, William Martin, and Henry Thomas. They represented nearly one in six people eligible to vote in the area, which was a sizable proportion of the population. More would come later. Poultry farms might have been an

economical business opportunity in the early 1900s as you could buy one with a cottage, four rooms, fruit trees and vegetables for £100.²

Young Thomas David Lewis was enrolled in the St Albans primary school in November 1893 and left in December 1897. He later worked as a clerk and an accountant, so other family members must have helped out with the poultry farm.

Mary Lewis née Davies died at Keilor on 19 June 1909 at the relatively young age of 64 years – she had been a St Albans pioneer for some 15 years. Stephen Lewis died on 10 September 1924 at age 78 years, a St Albans pioneer of 30 years. At this stage Thomas David was aged 40 years. The family continued to live in St Albans. There was more than one house on the property and over the years four families lived there including Mary Hounslow's grandmother, Jane Johnston, sister Jessie and Alan Priest, sister Helena and Harry Minns, and sister Betty McIntyre.³ Local oral history recollections from the 1930s are that "Granny Lewis" was living in the little cottage on the corner of William and Walter streets and would treat young visitors to biscuits and lemonade.

The Lewis family was connected with the Presbyterian Church and Thomas would transport congregation members in his motor truck on annual picnics to places like Williamstown.⁴ He was also the Superintendent of the Sunday School and held that responsibility for some years.⁵ The Lewis family were reputedly the first in the district to obtain a radio receiver and this novelty was shared with the members of the Presbyterian Church one Sunday night:

*"... when the service broadcast from the Welsh Presbyterian Church, Melbourne, was listened to by members of the congregation through the agency of a wireless set owned by Mr. Lewis. The experiment was a decided success, the reception being very good, and the worshippers were able to follow the service distinctly."*⁶

The Welsh connection was an important one for the family. The local newspaper reported of Thomas that he:

"... belongs to the old Cymric or Celtic race of Wales, and is an enthusiastic apostle of its culture. Brought up in a Welsh-speaking home, he was eight years of age before he could understand English and he has never permitted the later language to crowd out of memory the old Welsh tongue. Last year he journeyed to the fatherland of the Cymry to attend an eisteddfed, or assembly of bards, and on the journey was appointed instructor in Welsh to many, who during their residence in Australia, had forgotten their native language. "Welsh", by the way, is a foreign word and was used by the Anglo-Saxon invaders to describe the

¹ George and Ellen Johnston were Braybrook ratepayers in 1892.

² Age 30 April 1902 p10

³ Recollections of Wendy Taylor nee Hounslow.

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 6 February 1926 p5

⁵ Sunshine Advocate 5 May 1928 p1

Sunshine Advocate 23 June 1933 p5

⁶ Sunshine Advocate 21 July 1928

old inhabitants, who were driven back. It means 'strange', 'barbarian'. “¹

Thomas David Lewis became a clerk and an accountant. He married Elizabeth Ellen Johnston of Deer Park in 1907 and they raised seven children:

- Mary Ellen was born in St Albans on 18 February 1909, started at the primary school in 1915 and left at the end of 1919 for a private school. She married Raymond Hounslow on 21 August 1937 and they had three children: Coral (1939), Raymond (born and died 1941) and Wendy (1944).² The Hounslow family were related to the Errington family of St Albans through Alice Hounslow (1864-1931) who had married William Errington (1860-1907). Raymond Hounslow was a carpenter-builder and had established a small furniture factory with his father William Hounslow in Main Road East. He also had the first petrol pump in the village but the businesses folded with the Depression and Raymond went to work as a storeman at Nettlefolds. Raymond Hounslow died in 1961 and Mary Ellen Hounslow née Lewis died in 1987 at Queenscliff.
- David Stephen was born 18 October 1911 enrolled 1915 and left for a private school in 1920 before coming back in 1924 and leaving at the end of 1925 for the Sunshine Technical School where he trained as a mechanic. He married Doris Maude Patterson and they had three children: Lorraine, Doris and David. David Stephen Lewis died at Footscray on 26 May 2000. Doris Lewis née Patterson died on 16 March 2008 at Glen Waverley.
- Gwladys Muriel was born 10 February 1913 at St Albans, enrolled at the primary school in 1920 and left in December 1924. She married Adam Alfred Arden (known as Jim) in 1939 and their children included Douglas and Thomas. Gwladys died in 1970 and Adam died in 1971.
- Margaret Florence was born in St Albans on 9 February 1915 enrolled in 1920 and left in 1928 to become a dressmaker. She married Leonard Tasman Rae in 1938 and their children were Joan and Beryl. Leonard died in 1984 in Geelong and Margaret died in 1990.
- Helena “Nell” Lavinia was born in Sunshine on 1 April 1917 enrolled in 1922 and left in 1930. She married Henry “Harry” James

Minns on 4 April 1942 at St Andrew's Church in Footscray. Their children included David, Ian, Elizabeth, Christine and Sheryl. The Minns family were well-known farming pioneers of “The Oaks” in Melton. Henry's mother was Ella Burge Derham who was the daughter of Braybrook pioneers Thomas Burge Derham and Matilda Bryant.³ Henry Minns died at Warragul on 12 June 1981 and Helena Lavinia Minns née Lewis died at Sale on 23 January 1998.

- Jessie Martha was born in St Albans on 14 January 1920 enrolled in 1925 and left at the end of 1933. She wed Alan Clarence Priest of St Albans in 1940 and they lived in Walter Street. Their children were Elaine Jessie (1940) and Robert Alan (1945). Alan “Mousey” Priest worked in the meat processing trade and was quite an accomplished footballer by inclination. He played with the St Albans Football Club with his name appearing in the local papers during the 1940s and 1950s – he was named in the club's “team of the century”. The family moved to Bacchus Marsh in the 1970s where Alan was working as a technician. He died at Bacchus Marsh on 26 September 1997. Jessie Priest née Lewis died on 23 May 2000 and is buried at Bacchus Marsh.
- Betty Joan was born on 28 December 1922 enrolled at the primary school in 1928 and left in 1934. She married Thomas McIntyre whose first wife died in 1964.⁴ Thomas had six children from his first marriage but he and Betty did not have children of their own. In 1972 they were living in Hertford Street, Sunshine, with some of his adult children and then moved to Ocean Grove.



¹ Sunshine Advocate Friday 14 February 1930

² Wendy Hounslow was one of the first students at St Albans High School and has written some of the family history in *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years 1956-2016*.

³ Refer to article in *St Albans Pioneers from the 1860s*.

⁴ Thomas McIntyre married Winifred May Self in 1933; she was a daughter of Norman Goodwin Self (1891-1966) and Agnes Emma McDonagh (1891-1967). Winifred was born at Footscray in 1911 and died at Sunshine in 1964.

Thomas David Lewis rose to some public prominence locally in the 1930s when he helped establish the St Albans Severance Committee. Local residents were striving to achieve a unified community and a responsive government:

*“St. Albans, despite artificial boundaries, was one town, not two. One third was in Braybrook and two-thirds in Keilor. The result was that the energies of the people were divided, they spoke with two voices and did not carry the weight they should carry. Severance would unite the people, make them a moral unity and give them the strength to work together for the advancement of the whole town. There was no community of interest between St. Albans and Keilor, while on the contrary the geographical position, the commercial and social relationships of the people drew them to Braybrook.”*¹

Thomas Lewis took on the role of Chairman and Alfred Clarke that of Secretary. The area that was proposed to transfer to Braybrook shire was the St Albans township, about 1,900 acres or 3 miles by 1 mile in measure, which included 92 houses and 6 shops. A public meeting was held at the Mechanics Institute Hall in February 1930 and attended by 28 ratepayers “including several ladies” where the issue was debated. Lewis’s explanation for his stance was that:

*“... he had been in St. Albans for 38 years, and he could not recollect that the Keilor council had done anything in the area commensurate with the amount of rates received. On the other hand, the difference in the Sunshine area was a marked one. Braybrook council was composed of keen business men desirous of developing the shire, and he believed that if St. Albans joined Braybrook it would participate in the benefits of business management.”*²

However, there were opposing forces and Henry Wilson³ hotly attacked the Braybrook council for its alleged neglect of parts of its territory and declared that its roads and drains were a disgrace and the worst in Victoria. It was not a new debate and the arguments had hardly changed since 1916 when it had been James Stevens promoting the severance of St Albans and Alexander Dickson speaking against the notion; and despite considerable debate for and against the proposal including petitions and deputations to both councils, that earlier-proposed severance had not occurred. The 1930’s proposal had the backing of James Stevens and other notable community leaders such as Cr. Frederick Charles Stenson and Walmer Coleman who had the largest landed interest in the area.⁴ A lobbying campaign ensued and a petition with 80 signatures was organized, presented to the local member of parliament, Mr. Reginald Thomas Pollard, the federal member for Lalor, and then finally submitted to the Public Works Department in September 1930. In March 1931 the

Severance Committee was informed that the petition had failed because the majority in favour of the severance was below that required.⁵

In the 1930s the two biggest poultry farms were those managed by Stephen Lewis (in Walter Street) and John Snaith (in Gertrude Street near West Esplanade and adjacent to Mrs. Errington’s grand home). The Lewis property had over a dozen sheds and appears to have been bigger than the Snaith property, but Snaith’s farm was probably more prominent as a business because he advertised regularly through the local newspapers.⁶

The 1950s were times of major change in St Albans population-wise because of the impact of post-war immigration and business-wise because of greater regulation about noxious trades, such as piggeries and poultry farms. Snaith’s farm near the railway station was sold in 1952 and he moved to Sunshine taking over the farm of Mr. Mills in Wright Street. It is not clear when the Lewis family sold their farm for housing but it was probably in the 1950s.⁷ One recollection is that the farm was sold to Keilor council except for the house blocks where various family members continued living. The poultry sheds were still on the property in 1956 by which time a number of migrant families were already building their bungalows on vacant land around the perimeter of the farm.

Elizabeth Ellen Lewis née Johnston died in St Albans on 21 March 1948 in her 59th year so she had been a local pioneer for about 40 years. Her passing might have been the impetus for the family to consider retiring and selling the poultry farm. The times and the population were changing. The latest census figures showed that Braybrook had 15,100 residents, Keilor had 3,200 and St Albans had about 830.⁸ The district was still a small village but the immigration boom was about to happen. Within a decade the local population skyrocketed to about 6,000 people and St Albans was changed forever.

Thomas David Lewis left the district some time during the 1950s. He married a widow, Vida Mary Britter née Lawton, in 1950 and they retired to Ocean Grove on the Bellarine Peninsula about 1954. Thomas died later that decade on 12 March 1958 at Ocean Grove at age 75 years. He’d been a St Albans’ pioneer for nearly 60 years. Vida died on 26 January 1999 aged 93 years and was buried at the Geelong West public cemetery. #

⁵ Sunshine Advocate 13 March 1931 p1

⁶ John Wilson Snaith (1893-1974) and Sarah nee Rye were from Bolton, England. John was a carpenter by occupation before starting his Crescent Poultry Farm. He became Vice President of the Poultry Farmers Protection League. Sarah worked in munitions.

⁷ In Elizabeth Lewis’s will dated 1945, Thomas David Lewis is mentioned as being a poultry farmer of Walter Street St Albans, so he must have continued operating or managing the property to some extent.

⁸ Based on 1947 census.

¹ Sunshine Advocate 14 February 1930 p4

² Sunshine Advocate 14 February 1930 p4

³ Henry Wilson was a poultry farmer in Arthur Street.

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 28 March 1930 p2



Thomas David Lewis 1884-1958



Mary Lewis, Elizabeth Hughes, Elizabeth Lewis, Jane Johnston

LINTON, Robert and Jane

Robert and Jane Linton came to St Albans between 1903 and 1907 and settled in Biggs Street. They were related through marriage to the Turnley family (q.v.) who settled locally about 1900 and were also living in Biggs Street, so it might have been part of an extended family migration from country Victoria to metropolitan Melbourne. The Lintons' documented link to local history is that one of the first local tennis clubs was named after them – the Linton Tennis Club – connected with the Presbyterian Church of St Albans.

Robert Allen Linton was born in 1841 to Joseph Linton and Mary Dunlop who were Scottish immigrants. Joseph Linton (1795-1854) was from Renfrewshire and Mary Dunlop (1808-1887) was from Ayrshire. They came to Australia with their first three daughters in February 1839 and landed at Geelong. They established their Emu Hills station in the district of Wardy Yallock about 50 miles north-west of Geelong. Their farm of 15,000 acres with a capacity for 8,000 sheep must have been successful as by 1843 they were offering for sale 850 wethers, 870 ewes, 300 lambs, 20 pigs, several horses and bullocks and sundry farm equipment.¹ Their property soon became a local identifier. When gold was discovered in the district it was known as Linton's Diggings and was the basis for the township of Linton.

Joseph and Mary Linton raised a large family of eight daughters and three sons. Robert Allen was their first son, born in 1841. Joseph Linton died on 22 August 1853 at the age of 59 years:

*"It is our painful duty to record the death of Joseph Linton, Esq., Emu Hill, Wardy Yallock, one of the first and oldest settlers in the western district, which melancholy event occurred in consequence of his gig upsetting, with him in it, when returning from his son in law's. He leaves a widow and large family to lament his loss."*²

Mary Linton née Dunlop died in 1887 at the age of 79 years. Her obituary has not been found.

Robert Allen Linton most likely started his working life on his parents' sheep station. In 1865 after the gold discoveries he was one of the provisional committee members of the Linton Park Gold Mining Company³ but he does not appear to have taken to mining as a livelihood. In 1869 he married Jane "Jean" Bunkin who was born in Adelaide in 1851. Her parents were Frederick Bunkin and Georgiana Flaxman who were from Whitechapel St Mary, England. They came to Australia in the 1840s and married in South Australia in 1849.

Robert Linton continued his farming expertise in the role of manager for a couple of Sir Samuel Wilson's estates in the Mortlake district. Sir Wilson was a pastoralist and politician who had bought

¹ Port Phillip Gazette 21 June 1843 p3

² Geelong Advertiser 26 August 1853 p2

³ Ballarat Star 1 May 1865 p4

William Taylor's Longerenong property.¹ Wilson died in London in 1895, so presumably his pastoral estates were sold and Robert Linton would have lost his position as station manager. When this occurred is unknown but the family were in South Melbourne in 1903 and moved to St Albans by 1907. At this time Robert's occupation was recorded as carpenter. He was aged 67 years and might have been hoping to retire.

The Lintons were definitely of the Overnewton Estate generation, because in 1907 they joined Alfred Henry Padley in a petition protesting against the Overnewton settlers for using water from the nearby reservoir. The Turnleys and Lintons had settled into Padley's "St Albans Estate" which had been subdivided in 1888. They were in Biggs Street where the houses were mostly located near the Theodore Street corner south of what was known as Padley's Reservoir. Padley and others complained to the Premier about the new settlers:

*"The trustees of the St Albans' Reservoir at St Albans have received a petition dated the 10th inst from the residents and which we beg to enclose you a copy of, in which they state that the Overnewton Closer Settlement folk are trespassing on the Estate and using the water from this reservoir. You will doubtless remember that some few months ago, at the time when you were cutting up Overnewton Estate, the trustees notified you that the Government would be held responsible for anything that went from the Closer Settlement land into the reservoir, and made it unsuitable for domestic purposes; but we did not dream that at any time your settlers would deliberately steal the water of this reservoir."*²

The motivation for the Lintons resettling in St Albans is not clear. It might have been because the Overnewton land became available and the fact that Jane's younger sister, Emma, had moved to the district with some of her children might have extended the motivation. Emma Bunkin had married Harold Henry Turnley in 1879 and they raised a family in Shepparton. Harold died unexpectedly in 1892 and a decade later Emma and two of her children moved to Biggs Street in St Albans.³ It's therefore not surprising that Robert and Jane also settled into their new home in Biggs Street. One noticeable difference between the families was that they belonged to different churches. The Turnleys were members of St Alban the Martyr Anglican Church in East Esplanade while the Lintons were Presbyterians and became involved with the Presbyterian Church that was built nearby on the corner of Elaine Street.

¹ William Taylor settled at his Overnewton estate in Keilor in 1849.

² Alfred Henry Padley, letter to The Hon. Thos. Bent, Government House; *St Albans The First Hundred Years 1887-1987*, p46.

³ Refer to Turnley family story in this publication. Grace Turnley trained as a nurse and served overseas during WW1. Her awarded medals included the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

The Lintons' connection with the Presbyterian denomination had occurred much earlier. Robert became a trustee of land for the Presbyterian Church of Victoria at Linton by 1865⁴ and further afield by 1887.⁵ It's likely that the family became involved in establishing the local church that was built in 1912. Jane tutored children for concerts that were held in the Mechanics Institute to raise funds for the building and its organ.⁶ She was also a pianist and would play the organ at events such as the farewell social for Rev. George Brodie who was leaving the district.⁷ Rev. Brodie was probably the first minister at the St Albans Presbyterian church but there was no local accommodation for the family so they lived in The Manse at Sunshine. (His wife was Lydia Louisa née Miller and they had one daughter, Jean Lydia, and sons George Miller, Ian Milne, and Keith Hurst.)

Robert Allen Linton died at home on 3 March 1917 at the age of 75 years and was buried at Williamstown. His passing was noted in his old home town:

*"A former resident of Mortlake in Mr. Robert Linton died at his residence, St. Albans, on Saturday at the ripe age of 75 years. Deceased was for many years associated with the town as manager of Woolongoon and South Shadwell Estates. He leaves a widow for whom the sympathy of a wide circle of friends is expressed."*⁸

Jane's sister, Emma Turnley née Bunkin, died in the following year in October 1918 at the age of 65, the cause of her death being diabetes; her remains were buried at the Shepparton cemetery. Jane Linton continued to live in St Albans as a widow in her late sixties and most likely on her own. She wrote the occasional letter to Keilor Council about poor drainage, sanitation, and the state of roads. Apart from this her circumstances during the 1920s are not documented.

Robert and Jane Linton had not given birth to any children. However, they raised an adopted daughter – Eva Isabel Rickson – who was born in Carlton in 1877 to Sophia Rickson. (Sophia's family background or what happened to her is not known.) Eva's early life and schooling is not recorded, but it was most probably in Mortlake where her adoptive parents were living and working. She seems to have taken the name Gertrude and at college was known as Gertie. She attended the Grace Park Ladies' College in

⁴ Ballarat Star 8 April 1864 p2

⁵ Kerang Times 25 October 1887 p3

⁶ Footscray Independent 15 July 1911 p2

⁷ Footscray Independent 11 September 1920 p3.

George Sinclair Brodie was born at Bulla, Victoria, in 1875 to David Brodie and Fanny nee Kelly who were of Scottish heritage and trace their family history back to 1665. George Sinclair Brodie snr migrated to Tasmania c.1833. Fanny and David settled in Mickleham where he served many years as a Justice of the Peace and mayor of the Broadmeadows Shire Council.

⁸ Mortlake Despatch 7 March 1917 p3

Hawthorn and during the 1890s received accolades for her achievements in several subjects including music. She obtained her Matriculation certificate in 1894 with firsts in religious instruction, physiology, history, English and botany. She obviously had a talent for music as during the 1890s she was performing piano solos on occasions such as a presentation by the Austral Salon hosted by Madame Wendlandt, the annual ladies' night of the Brighton-Lowry Lodge of Freemasons, the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind music concert, and the Brighton Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Her occupational history is mostly as a musician and teacher. In 1903 she was working as a governess at Wannan and when she was in St Albans (1912) she was listed as a musician. In 1919 she was in Moonee Ponds working as a nurse and during the 1920s she was living in the suburbs of Kew, Malvern and Camberwell, working as a musician and teacher.

In 1926 the opportunity for tennis in St Albans was enhanced via the Presbyterian Church which built its court for "morally-appropriate recreation":

*"The official opening of the Linton Presbyterian Tennis Club was held on Saturday, October 9. After a few words from the secretary and captain, Mrs. Linton, after whom the club is named, officially declared the club open. Misses E. Batten and M. McLean each presented Mrs. Linton with a bouquet of flowers, on behalf of the club."*¹

In 1927 the tennis court was upgraded with an asphalt surface, so that was progress indeed.² The club was popular locally as a sporting activity as well as for its social entertainment by holding euchre and dance parties, American Tea and cake competitions, and annual balls. One must assume that the honour of having the club named after the family was in recognition of their support for the church in its formative years.

The Linton Tennis Club continued for two decades with its competitions and social events. There might have been a change in participation in the 1940s as in October 1947 it was reported that the constitution for a re-formed club was being submitted to the Board of Management³ and a meeting was held in April 1954 to include non-church members.⁴ The court was eventually dug up when the church hall was built over the site.

Eva Isobella (Gertie) Linton "*the loved adopted daughter of late Robert Allen and Jane Linton*" died on 21 November 1928 at Melbourne Hospital at age 52 years and was buried at Burwood.⁵

Jane Linton née Bunkin died on 18 August 1930 at age 79 years and her remains were buried at the Williamstown cemetery. She had been one of the new St Albans settlers for about 20 years. #

LUXFORD, Edward and Charlotte

Edward James and Charlotte Luxford came to St Albans in 1902 and settled in Adelaide Street with their three children and contributed to the development of the neighbourhood over the next forty years. Mr. E. J. Luxford was the President of the St Albans Progress Association from 1908 to 1938, so he was effectively the president of the unofficial town council for three decades.

Edward James Luxford was the son of Henry Luxford (1824-1899) and Emily Ann Green (1824-1902), who had migrated from England in June 1849 just before the gold rush era. They first bought land in Prahran ("Luxford's Farm" of 15 acres with a brick house) and then moved to Boroondara (East Melbourne) where they took on mixed dairy farming.⁶ A decade later they moved north to Echuca and finally in 1879 they moved south again to Sale in Gippsland.

Edward James Luxford was born in 1863 at Boroondara, one of ten siblings all born between 1849 and 1864 in greater Melbourne. In 1887 he married Charlotte Cater⁷ who was born in Sale in 1867. She was the daughter of John Cater and Charlotte Yelland who were from Newton Abbot in County Devon; they migrated in August 1857 and settled in Sale, Victoria.

Edward and Charlotte must have moved back to Melbourne in the late 1800s as their children were all born in Collingwood between 1889 and 1897. The family came to St Albans probably in late 1902 and the children started at the primary school in 1903:

- Ernest "Ern" Edward born 16 March 1889 at Collingwood, started at the primary school in February 1903 from Victoria Park, and left in February 1904. He became a civil servant and in 1949 was living at Adelaide Street, St Albans.
- Sydney was born on 28 April 1891 at Collingwood, started school in February 1903 and left in March 1904. He married Catherine Vincent Corbett in 1919 and they had five children and were living in Cohuna north-west of Echuca.
- Gladys Eliza was born on 3 August 1897 at Collingwood, started at primary school in February 1903 and left in October 1911. She joined the committee of the tennis group that played on Errington Reserve. In 1949 she was working as a housekeeper in Surrey Hills.

Luxford may have grown up with a farming background, but at St Albans he worked as a labourer, carpenter and contractor for some of

¹ Sunshine Advocate 23 October 1926 p5

² Sunshine Advocate 22 October 1927 p6

³ Sunshine Advocate 3 October 1947 p2

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 2 April 1944 p4

⁵ Argus 23 November 1928 p1

⁶ Henry Luxford was on the Boroondara District Road Board and the Mechanics Institute in 1862.

⁷ In 1883 Charlotte's sister, Mary Amelia Cater, married Edward's older brother Henry Luxford.

Keilor's road maintenance. He even applied for a position as sanitary inspector and ranger with Braybrook Council but did not get it. He sold poultry and in 1913 was advertising a house for sale, but it's not evident whether or not he had built the property himself. He devoted his spare time to community work. The Luxfords quickly became involved in the local community and this presence is more noticeable through Edward's activities as these have been better recorded by the press. Charlotte and Gladys get a first mention in 1905 for their Arbor Day efforts: Mrs. Luxford for her catering prowess and Gladys for receiving a prize for best tended tree during the year. It must have been a fairly hectic afternoon when "about 40 trees were planted, chiefly by the ladies of the district."¹

"E. J. Luxford", as he was known, supported a variety of new initiatives in the village. The Mechanics Institute was built in 1906 and both Edward and Charlotte were involved from the start. Messrs Luxford, Stenson and Porteous were elected as Trustees for the hall and stayed involved a long time.

The St Albans Mutual Improvement Society was active between 1907 and 1915 and it's possible this might have been the precursor to the Mechanics Institute and the Progress Association, though all three groups started about the same time; e.g. in 1907 the Improvement Society had sponsored a series of lectures at the Mechanics Institute promoting discussions and gymnasiums for young people, and acquired a billiard table. They also visited ANA events in Footscray for recreation purposes. In 1911 the Society members held meetings to improve the local train service, a task that the Progress Association would also tackle in the future.

Luxford was elected Vice President of the Cricket Club committee in 1912, with sons Ernest as Treasurer and Sydney as Secretary.

St Albans Progress Association was formed in 1908 and Luxford was central in its development. One of their early campaigns was to connect the town to a regular water supply, though this took many years to achieve. Luxford, Stenson and Stevens were persistent in their negotiation with Braybrook council to open St Albans Road as a direct route between the two districts and they eventually succeeded. The debate about severance from Keilor in favour of Braybrook was more controversial and did not succeed. The campaign for electricity did.

The new primary school had started in East Esplanade in 1901 and when the new parents' committee was elected Luxford took on the role of Correspondent.

When the St Albans Water Commission was formed Luxford became president. It took them and the Progress Association over 30 years to have the town partially connected in 1940.

St Alban the Martyr Anglican Church was built in 1910 and Luxford was on the Vestry.

In 1910 Alice Errington donated land for a recreation reserve and the trustees for the reserve were Fred Stenson, Edward Luxford and Claude Turnley. In 1920 there was talk of building public conveniences on the reserve, so Luxford and Alec Dickson offered to do the work as soon as materials were provided.² In 1929 when Percy Street was being paved the trustees were not able to pay the levee and therefore transferred the property to Braybrook Council in 1934 on the condition that Errington Reserve would always be kept as a recreation ground for the people.

The Silver Jubilee of the Progress Association was celebrated on 7 September 1932 and the Sunshine Advocate reported Luxford's summary of its achievements:

"The idea of the association really originated from the late Rev. Williams, a Church of England Minister. He made the suggestion that the residents of Sydenham, Keilor, Deer Park, St. Albans and Braybrook Junction combine and form a Keilor Plains Progress League. This scheme was adopted and Mr. Stansworth was elected president, and Mr. J. Stephens secretary. The area was found too large and the organisation too unwieldy, and after twelve months the scheme was dropped. Out of this grew the present Progress Association. Twenty-five years ago it was constituted, and the foundation members honored me by making me President. During its lifetime there have been five secretaries, J. Stevens, Alex. Dickson, A. Clarke, Chris McRae and A. W. Tong. ...

"Mr. Luxford described the long agitation for a direct road from Albion to St. Albans; the foundations of scheme for a Keilor-St. Albans water trust and expressed gratification that that scheme seems destined in the near future to be a realised dream. The association had many a wordy war-fare with the Education Department before the enlargement of the state school was approved. The Railway Department had been constantly approached for improvement in rail facilities. ... The association has also been a recruiting ground for the Keilor council and is regarded as the St. Albans council."³

Luxford is said to have started the Progress Association in 1908. He was the unchallenged President for 30 years until the annual meeting in 1938 when he was narrowly defeated by Tom Toby. Apparently some members did not agree with his vigorous denunciation of the policy of the water trust and his sympathy with a candidate in the last municipal election.⁴

A more auspicious event was in 1937 when Edward and Charlotte had their golden wedding:

"July 3, was the occasion for the celebration of the golden wedding of Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Luxford, two old and highly respected residents of St. Albans. The St. Albans hall, of which Mr. Luxford was one

¹ Footscray Independent 8 July 1905 p8

² Refer to *The Errington Reserve* by Alie Missen and Tom Rigg (2011) for a history of the reserve.

³ Sunshine Advocate 2 September 1932 p4

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 16 September 1938 p1

of the original committee, was very tastefully decorated, and the lay-out of the supper tables had to be seen to be fully appreciated. Approximately 50 relatives, including five grand children, and friends sat down to the good things provided, and the speech-making, whilst to the point, was at the same time reduced to a minimum. Numerous telegrams of congratulation were received and deeply appreciated. Dancing, interspersed with items by Mr. T. Luxford and Miss Daniels, occupied all the spare time of the younger set, but it appeared as if the older folk were just as happy recalling happenings of the past. The wedding cake, tastefully decorated and beautifully made, was wholly the work of Mrs. Luxford, and the glass stand which held the cake was a present on the occasion of their marriage 50 years ago.”¹

The 1940s was not a good decade for the family as several members passed away. Edward Luxford died in March 1942 at age 79 years:

*“St. Albans Loses Grand Old Man. The district lost an old and valued resident on Sunday last, in the person of Mr. E. J. Luxford, who passed away at St. Vincent’s Hospital after a short illness. One of the oldest and best liked residents of the district, for many years Mr. Luxford was President of the Progress Association, and was always keenly interested in any forward move in the town. His efforts in connection with the recently acquired permanent water supply will long be remembered with affectionate gratitude by all residents of the district.”*²

The Luxfords’ younger son Sydney passed away on 28 April 1945 at his mother’s home in St Albans. He had come to Bendigo for medical treatment for a serious illness and was convalescing in Melbourne but did not survive. He had married Catherine Corbett and their children were Kevin, Ray, Neil, Beth and Kate. Kevin had served in the A.I.F. in 1940-1945. Raymond served overseas 1940-1945 and was captured as a POW in Italy and sent to Stalag 7A in Bavaria.

Charlotte Luxford née Cater died on 6 April 1949, a St Albans pioneer for over 45 years:

*“An old and highly respected resident of St. Albans, in the person of Mrs. Charlotte Luxford, widow of the late Mr. Edward Luxford, passed away on Wednesday evening, 6th of April, at Surrey Hills, at the age of 82 years. The late Mrs. Luxford was very well known, and took a lively interest in all that concerned the district. She had resided here for about 45 years and in the early days did much for the advancement of the town. She was a very keen gardener and a loyal member of the local Church of England, which she attended until a few weeks prior to her death.”*³

The Luxfords deserve major recognition for their role as community leaders in St Albans during the post-Federation era. #

MAKIN, Henry and Marianne

Henry and Marianne Makin came to St Albans with their six children in 1904 and left in 1910, so they qualify for being new settlers of the Overnewton Estate era though they stayed less than a decade.

Henry Joseph Makin was born on 20 November 1867 in Raywood, Victoria. His parents were from England – George Makin (1818-1877) from Suffolk County, and Esther Leigh Bramble (1824-1898) from Penzance, Cornwall. They migrated to Australia independently by the mid 1850s and married in Victoria in 1855.⁴

Marianne⁵ Frances Ashley was born in 1864 in Ballarat East. Her parents were John Ashley (1826-c.1909) from St Giles, and Catherine Maher (1836-1913) from County Claire, Ireland.

Henry Joseph Makin and Marianne Frances Ashley married in 1890 in Victoria and settled around Hotham West where most of their children were born. Henry Joseph Makin may have been listed as a mail sorter on the school’s enrollment records, but his position was more senior than it sounds. A letter sorter required speed in sorting, a thorough knowledge of the city of Melbourne (or there would be a delay in the delivery of letters) and had to memorise all the post towns of Victoria. In fact Makin was the officer in charge of the mail-room at Spencer Street. He was called as a witness before the Arbitration Courts hearing of the postal sorters’ claim in 1915 and advised that:

*“... from 1320 to 1942 bags of mails were handled daily at that centre. He had nine men under him, who were not sorters but assistants. Witness was a sorter before federation at a salary of £138. His present salary was £186, and he would reach £192 in a few months. In his opinion he had been always underpaid.”*⁶

Henry Joseph Makin died on 2 July 1935 at Fitzroy. Marianne Frances Makin née Ashley died on 6 June 1952 at South Melbourne, at age 88 years. The only discovered reference to her in the press is her death notice:

*“On June 6 at her residence 91 Harold street Middle Park, Marion [sic] Frances relict of the late Henry James [sic] Makin and loving mother of Henry (deceased) George (deceased), James, Ruby (Mrs. P Scanlon), Percival and Gertrude (Mrs. A Eldering), aged 88 years.”*⁷

Henry and Marianne’s children were Henry Bramble (1892), George Leslie (1894), James Joseph (1896), Rubina May (1898), Percival Gerard (1900), and Gertrude Teresa (1904).

- Henry “Harry” Bramble was born on 8 April 1892 at Hotham West, enrolled in St Albans State school in May 1904 from West Melbourne primary

¹ Sunshine Advocate 9 July 1937 p1

² Sunshine Advocate 26 July 1940

³ Sunshine Advocate 14 April 1949

⁴ Esther had married John Leigh in Cornwall in 1848 but he died at sea in 1853. Esther married George Makin in 1855 in Victoria.

⁵ Her name has also been spelt “Mary Ann” and “Marion”.

⁶ Age 18 May 1915 p7

⁷ Age 7 June 1952 p15

school and left in June 1904 for University High School. He came to the attention of the public in 1908 as a student at University High School after an accident at the Metropolitan Gas Company in Fitzroy. Twenty students were visiting the site for a practical lesson in the manufacture of gas when a platform collapsed and Henry was badly injured and spent some weeks in hospital undergoing surgery. His father claimed £1200 as compensation on his behalf, which was awarded.¹

Henry became a public servant. He passed the Commonwealth Public Service examination for a clerical position in 1910 and was appointed Clerk, 5th Class, in the Correspondence Branch, from August, 1910.² In 1917 he received some more distinctive recognition and possibly remuneration:

*"His Excellency the Governor General in Council has been pleased to approve of authority being granted for the payment to Henry Bramble Makin of remuneration at the rate of £100 per annum while acting as Secretary to the Leather Industries Board, in addition to the amount payable to him as an officer of the Commonwealth Public Service. E. J. Russell, for the Prime Minister."*³

Henry Bramble Makin of Middle Brighton wed Essie Margaret Worthington of Moonee Ponds on 17 February 1914 at St Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Ascot Vale.⁴ He was 22, she was 23. They were a young couple but they were "old" schoolmates, as both had attended the St Albans State school in the early 1900s. Henry died some time prior to 1952.



- George Leslie "Les" Makin was born on 4 April 1894⁵ in Hotham West, enrolled in St Albans State school in May 1904 and left in March 1907. He worked as a clerk. He enlisted in the AIF in August 1914 and served with the 51st Infantry, 5th Battalion, and landed at Gallipoli on 25 April 1914. He served for four years and was promoted to Lieutenant. He marched in London on the first ever Anzac Day in 1916. He died on 8 September 1918 because of injuries received on the Western Front⁶ and his remains were buried at the St Sever Cemetery, Rouen, France. He was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. His name is listed in the roll of Honour at the Australia War Memorial. George wrote a series of letters from the front to his family starting from February 1916. These letters were transcribed many years later and form an important collection documenting

the life of a soldier at the front.

- James "Jim" Joseph was born on 22 June 1896 at Hotham West. He enrolled in St Albans State school in May 1904 and left in December 1909. He enlisted and served with the 21st Battalion AIF on 26 July 1915 at age 19 years. He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. A transcript of his war diary has also been made and is part of the Australian War Museum collection. Jim became an Australian Rules football player starting with Leopold and then South Melbourne for four years before transferring to the Melbourne Demons in 1923. He played out the season but did not appear again. James must have migrated to America because he married Madolyn Mason in California and they had two children (Bubba and Jay) but later divorced. James then married Lois Christley and they had one child. James Joseph Makin died in California on 1 May 1997, at age 80 years.⁷

- Rubina Mary was born on 9 September 1898 at Hotham West, enrolled in St Albans primary school in May 1904 and left in May 1910. She married Patrick James Scanlon who was the captain of the South Melbourne Football team in September 1923. They had at least one son, Patrick Gerard, who was born on 20 September 1926. Patrick James died on 1 January 1977, Rubina Mary died in 1990, and Patrick Gerard died on 3 October 2011.



- Percival Gerard was born on 8 June 1900 at Hotham West, enrolled in St Albans State school in January 1906 and left in May 1910. In 1926 he married Margaret Anne McGuinness and their children were Margaret, Joan, George, Perce and Anne. Perce Makin volunteered for WW2 but the details are not available. He passed away on 27 February 1986 in Heidelberg at age 84 years. Margaret "Madge" Makin née McGuinness died in 1987.

- Gertrude "Gerte" Teresa was born on 16 October 1904 at West Melbourne, enrolled in St Albans primary school in February 1910 and left April 1910. In 1932 she married Albertus Johannes (Albert John) Eldering who was a clerk from Brighton and he later became a post master. Their children included Peter, John, Leslie and Bernard. Albert Eldering died on 25 January 1968 aged 63 years. Gerte Eldering née Makin died on 12 September 1993 and was buried at Cheltenham, aged 88 years.

The Makin family may not have stayed very long in St Albans, but they contributed enormously to the nation through their contribution to the ANZAC generation and spirit. #

¹ Geelong Advertiser 254 March 1908 p3

² Commonwealth Gazette No. 22, April 1911, p1013

³ Commonwealth Gazette No.123. 9 August 1917. p1628

⁴ Essendon Gazette 12 March 1914 p5

⁵ AIF records have it as 17 August 1894

⁶ Argus 16 September 1919 p1

⁷ https://www.myheritage.com/names/james_makin

MANCY, Henry and Susanna

The Mancys were one of the railway families that came to St Albans for work and then moved on. Henry Mancey [sic] is mentioned in the directory for 1903.¹ Susanna and Henry with their daughter Emmeline are included in the 1906 Electoral Roll.

Henry Mancy was a Sunbury boy, because that's where he was born and that's where he died. His father was Henry Francis Mancy (1836–1903) who was born in Basingstoke, Hampshire, England, and his mother was Isabella Smith (1838–1911) who was born in Dublin, Ireland. They married in 1858 at the Mance of Chalmus Church in East Melbourne, Victoria. Henry Francis Mancy was 22 and Isabella Smith was 20, so they were young people who might have migrated in the 1850s. They settled in Sunbury and Henry senior worked as a platelayer with the railways. They raised eight children, and young Henry Mancy was the firstborn in 1861. A major disaster occurred in 1871 when the youngest brother was killed on the railway line:

“... intelligence came to hand of one of the most horrible occurrences that have happened of late. As the pick-up goods train from Sandhurst was leaving Sunbury on that evening, about five o'clock, a woman named Mancy, the wife of a platelayer on the railway, had crossed the line for the purpose of getting some water. Her infant child, about fourteen months old, unobserved, followed her and was crawling over the rails as the train approached. At a distance the driver thought it was a goat upon the line, but on coming nearer he saw that it was a child. Before he had time to stop the train the wheels passed over the body of the infant, and literally cut it in two.”²

At the inquest the jury returned a verdict that the child was accidentally killed, and that no one was to blame in the matter.³

Henry Mancy the son was born at Sunbury in 1861. He married Susanna Lillian Woods in 1880 at Sunbury. She was born in Gisborne in 1862 to Thomas Woods and Susan Jenkinson; their settlement history in the colony is unknown.

The Mancy family moved to St Albans in 1901. They were living in Rockbank Road and Henry was working as a ganger with the railways. They raised ten children, mostly born in Sunbury with some in Wodonga:

- Emmeline Lillian (1891-1961)
- Thomas Henry (1884-1970)
- Bertram Francis (1885-1885)
- Edith Lillian (1886-1969)
- Rupert Ernest “Rupe” (1889-1987)
- Isabella Maud (1890-1977)
- Olive Grace (1892-1972)
- Clarice Beryl (1895-1976)
- Frederick Charles (1897-1981)
- Ruby Sylvia (1901-1990)

The family must have left the district in 1905, judging by the school records. It appears that they had moved to Camberwell by 1912.

Henry Francis Mancy (the father) died suddenly in Camberwell on 11 November 1903 at 67 years and was buried in the Sunbury cemetery. Isabella Mancy née Smith died in North Carlton on 9 June 1911, at age 73.

Susanna Woods, the wife of Henry Mancy (the son) died on 22 August 1933 at Camberwell East, at age 71. Henry Mancy died on 10 October 1939 at his daughter's home in Surrey Hills.

Six of the Mancy children had attended the St Albans State school between 1901 and 1905. They were Edith, Rupert, Maud, Olive, Clarice, and Charles.

- Edith Lillian (1886-1969) was born in Wodonga. In 1919 she married Francis Henry Caldwell (1882-1956) and had one child. Francis died in 1956 at Morn Hill at age 70 years. Edith died in Surrey Hills in 1969 at age 83 years.

- Rupert Ernest “Rupe” (1889-1975) was born in Wodonga. In 1919 at Narrandera, NSW, he married Lena Margaret “Popsy” MacPherson (1896-1989) and they had two children. Rupert died in April 1987 at Wagga Wagga, NSW, at age 98 years. Lena died in June 1989 at Wagga Wagga NSW, at age 92 years.

- Isabella Maud (1890-1977) was born in Wodonga. In 1915 she married Albert Alfred Lenne who was born in 1889 in Hawthorn. Albert died in 1960 at Surrey Hills at age 71 years. Isabella died in 1977 at Surrey Hills at age 86 years.

- Olive Grace (1892-1972) was born in Sunbury. In 1916 she married Frederick Charles Burley (1890-1950). Frederick died in 1950 at Camberwell, aged 60 years. Olive died in 1972 at Diggers Rest at age 80 years.

- Clarice Beryl (1895-1976) was born in Sunbury. She married George Gutch who was from West Ham, Essex, United Kingdom. George died in 1956 at Canterbury, Victoria, at age 59 years. Clarice died in 1976 at Surrey Hills at age 81 years.

- Frederick Charles (1897-1981) was born in Sunbury. In 1937 at Lake Cargelligo, NSW, he married Anne Margaret MacPherson⁴ (1906-2001) and they had four children. Frederick died in 1981 in Miles, Queensland, and was buried in Tulligeal, NSW. Anne passed away in 2001 at Tallebudgera in Queensland.

The Mancy family were residents of St Albans in the Federation era but there is no trace of the family maintaining a connection after they had left. They have been mentioned in some of the local oral history recollections but this has not been documented. The degree of involvement of Henry and Susanna Mancy in local community activities has been long forgotten. #

¹ St Albans The First 100 Years p20

² Border Watch (Mt Gambier) 8 April 1871 p3

³ Geelong Advertiser 4 April 1871 p3

⁴ Anne MacPherson was the sister of Lena MacPherson who married Frederick's brother Rupert.

McAULEY, James and Margaret

James and Margaret McAuley came to St Albans about 1906 when they acquired a 254-acre portion of the Overnewton Estate, being block 32 on the north-west corner of Taylors Road and the railway line to Sydenham. This block had been allocated in 1905 to William Anstis of Tallygaroopna but he could not have stayed long. East of the railway line were the Boyd family and to the west were the Griffiths family and later the Colemans, so the McAuleys were amongst the new farming settlers. Their block was typical for that area which was generally clear and well grassed but with some outcrops of stone. It had a shallow depression that started on the Griffiths' land then crossed through a culvert under the railway line – it was the start of Jones Creek that wound its way along the railway line before crossing under again and flowing along the Stevens' property where the Jamieson Street Reserve was later built. Unfortunately it was not a permanent stream and the farmers from that area always ran out of water in the summer.

James McAuley was born about 1860. His father was John McAuley and mother was Margaret McConnell but other information is not available. It is not known if James migrated to Australia or was born here. In 1894 he married Margaret Ann Murphy of Murgheboluc, near Geelong.

Margaret Ann Murphy was born in Geelong and was of Irish background. Her parents were James Murphy who was born in Ireland in 1831, and Margaret Kelly who was born in County Clare, Ireland, in 1839. They had probably migrated independently in the 1850s and settled around Fyans Ford, Geelong. They married in 1858 and raised two sons and four daughters – Margaret Ann was their first daughter, born in Murgheboluc, Geelong, in 1864.

Some time after their marriage, James McAuley and Margaret Ann Murphy moved to Quambatook near Bendigo. The area was known for its wheat and sheep farms that developed in the 1870s after the gold rushes when squatters' and unallocated land became available for selection. The McAuleys were there by 1894 when James acquired the transfer of a lease for 889 acres in the parish of Quambatook.¹ They spent at least a decade in the district and then in 1906 they resettled into their new home in St Albans in the Shire of Keilor. Their children included Ambrose James (1892), John Alexander (1895), and Annabell (1901).

- Ambrose James was born in 1892 in East Melbourne. He had already completed his basic schooling in Quambatook and thus did not attend St Albans state school. He started working for his parents on the family farm and later bought 11 acres of land along East Esplanade, and leased some land along the railway line and about 90 acres on the western

side. He married Marion "May" McCauley in 1918 and they became the next generation of farmers on the family property.

- John Alexander was born on 15 August 1895 in Quambatook. He started at St Albans State School in April 1906 and left in September 1909 to work on the family farm. He probably did not stay in St Albans as he is not included in local press references. He did not marry and probably died in 1934 at Kew at age 39 years.

- Annabell was born on 5 July 1901 in Quambatook. She started at the St Albans State school in March 1908 and left in December 1915 to work on the family farm. She probably did not stay in St Albans as she is not included in local press references. She did not marry. She probably died at Macleod in 1982 at age 80 years.

James McAuley died in October 1919 at age 59 years; he had been a St Albans pioneer for 13 years. After her husband's death, Margaret Ann went to live in Footscray and their son Ambrose took over the management of the farm. Margaret Ann McAuley née Murphy died on 30 July 1944, aged 80 years. She may have returned to St Albans in her frailer years as the obituary notice refers to her having passed away "*at her residence, Taylors Road, St Albans.*"²

Ambrose James McAuley married Marion McCauley in 1918.³ Marion and Ambrose's children included Finlay Ambrose Samuel (1919), Clair Annabell Marion (1920), Harold Kevin (1924), Marion Margaret (1927), and Alma (1928).

- Finlay Ambrose Samuel was born on 25 June 1919 at Williamstown. He started at St Albans State school in August 1926 and left in December 1932 to work on the family farm. He started carting water for local residents because there was no water laid on in the neighbourhood. At first he had to go to Deer Park because there was no hydrant in St Albans. Water was laid on in St Albans in the 1930s and a hydrant was put into Biggs Street. Later another hydrant with an overhead pipe was installed in Main Road West. By then lots of people in the town had water but further out on the farms the dams would dry out in the summer and water was needed to fill the troughs for the sheep and cows. Carting water for the farms continued into the 1970s. Finlay never married. He contracted cancer in 1978 and died on 2 April 1980 and was buried at Keilor. He was 61 years old and had been a St Albans resident all his life.

- Clair Annabell Marion was born in Keilor

¹ Kerang Times 26 June 1894 p2

² Argus 1 August 1944

³ Some of the genealogical information is not clear. Marion was possibly born in Richmond about 1892 to John McCauley and Anna Finlay.

on 6 August 1920. She started at St Albans State school in August 1926 and left in December 1934. She lived in Ballarat Road, Sunshine, and worked at the munitions factory during the war and then in Albion at the Nettlefolds factory. She did not have any children.

- Harold Kevin was born in 1924. He was born with Down's syndrome and did not attend school. He was always cared for by his family at home. He died of cancer on 5 July 1962 at the age of 38 and was buried at Keilor.

- Marion Margaret was born on 14 February 1927. She started at St Albans State school in October 1931 and left in December 1934 for Sunshine Tech. In 1951 she married Kelvin Dodd¹ of Braybrook but everyone knew him as Pat. His parents had a chook farm. He ran a garage in Ballarat Road and later worked as a driver. Marion started work in a Footscray office but after some years transferred to the munitions factory during the latter part of the war because the pay was better and women were asked to help in the war effort. She later worked as a packer at Nettlefolds. They lived in Ascot Vale, Maidstone and Toolern Vale. They did not have any children. Kelvin died of a heart attack on 31 March 1999 and his remains were cremated at the Altona Memorial Park. Marion Margaret Dodd née McAuley died on 9 December 2006 and her remains were cremated at Altona Memorial Park.

- Alma was born on 2 March 1928 and started at St Albans State school in October 1933. She married and lived with her husband in Kyneton and had at least one son. Nothing else is known about her in local oral history.

Marion McAuley described her parents' property as being a mixed farm.² It was probably typical of the small-farm scenario of the era. They raised pigs, cattle, calves, cows, sheep, poultry, and also grew some crops as stock feed. With the cattle, they'd milk some and raise calves for sale. They also had chooks because everybody had chooks in those days. There were also a few ducks, geese and turkeys. Turkeys were popular at Christmas time and there were always a few orders for those. Of course there were horses – two horses were used for carting water and you needed four horses for pulling the big binder when the oaten hay was being cut.

In 1924 the Sydenham and St Albans progress associations wanted to create a monument to the explorers Hamilton Hume and William Hovell who had passed through the district a century earlier. The McAuley family agreed to have a cairn erected on their property and Ambrose assisted the cause

by carting the stone for its construction.³ The distinctive "H & H" cairn was on the corner of Taylors and Sydenham roads for many years until the intersection was rebuilt and the railway underpass constructed. The monument was relocated beside the Keilor Plains railway station.

The McAuley farm became less productive in the late 1930s when they lost control of some of the land to the PMG. Mostly they grew wheat and oaten hay as the crops on the farm. Once they lost the land to the PMG it started to fall apart, because they couldn't grow the crops. About 1938 Ambrose McAuley started working at McKays in Sunshine and consequently the farming further declined.

In those days you had the wool return, which was profitable, and the lamb sales. Marion recalls:

"In the good seasons they might have had four or five hundred sheep; in later times it might have been three hundred. In a productive season you might get two truckloads of lambs, which probably meant about fifty lambs ..."

"When my dad was working the farm they were the good times because you'd get two incomes from the sheep. Then you'd take half a dozen calves to the market, and when the piglets were big enough they'd also go in. When the bottom fell out of the wool market that put a lot of small sheep farmers out of business. As times went on the farming became less profitable. ..."

"Once Dad started working outside, and once the size of the farm was reduced, father would have been better off to have moved out altogether." ⁴

Marion McAuley senior died on 15 October 1963 and was buried at the Keilor cemetery. She'd lived a hard life devoted to her family and much of it to the full-time care of her invalid son Harold. There was no respite care in those days so it was all down to family duty. She'd been a resident of St Albans for about 45 years and living on the farming outskirts would have seen the village centre grow substantially through the post-war years.

Ambrose McAuley continued living on the farm in its reduced capacity whilst he was working at McKays. Finlay kept sheep grazing on the old farm and he established his own water carting business. Ambrose started experiencing health problems in the 1970s and ended up having a leg amputated because of undiagnosed diabetes. Nevertheless he continued his life on the farm and relied on his daughter Marion to help out on the weekends. He died on 3 October 1974 and was buried at Keilor cemetery, a St Albans pioneer for 68 years.

Finlay contracted cancer in 1978. He died on 2 April 1980. He was 61 years old and had been a St Albans resident all his life.

Marion Margaret Dodd née McAuley died on 9 December 2006. Her recollections of growing up in St Albans are included in the book "Stories About St Albans: Celebrating 125 Years" published in 2012. #

¹ Born 8 February 1919. Volunteered for the Army Citizen Military Forces circa 1939. Details not available.

² Marion McAuley's recollections of growing up on the farm are included in *Stories About St Albans*, 2012

³ Sunshine Advocate Saturday 10 January 1925.

⁴ Marion McAuley in *Stories About St Albans* 2012

McELWEE, Daniel and Ada

Daniel and Ada McElwee came to St Albans in 1904, so they were new residents at the break-up of Taylor's Overnewton estate.

Daniel Goodall McElwee was a station master and previously had been located in Gisborne (1889) and Mornington Junction (1900) before taking over as stationmaster at St Albans during 1904 and 1905. He was born in 1862 in Duck Ponds (Lara) to William McElwee (1832-1882) and Emily Elizabeth Goodall (1836-1887). William McElwee was born in 1826 in Drumachose, County Derry, Ireland, and emigrated to Australia in the 1850s. In 1859 at Duck Ponds he married Emily Goodall, who born in 1836 in Great Bedwyn, Wiltshire, England, the daughter of Daniel Knight Goodall (1801-1895) and Maria Carr (1807-1858).

Ada Maria Watson was born in Hobart on 11 September 1861 to James Colin Watson and Maria Belcher. She married Daniel McElwee at Christ Church, South Yarra, in 1888. At this time he was the station master at Gisborne. They raised four children: William Colin (1889), Edith Lillian (1891), Norman Goodall (1895), and Amy Mary (1897).

The family came to St Albans about August 1904 and left in June 1905, so they were not long term residents but that reflected the nature of employment arrangements with the railways at the time. As stationmaster, Daniel also acted as the district's postmaster, while Ada joined in raising funds for the public hall. A decade later they were living in Richardson Street, Middle Park, which became the long-term residence for the family.

William "Will" Colin was born on 31 October 1889 in East Brighton, so he had finished his schooling before the family came to St Albans, but he became friends with his sibling's schoolmates, particularly with Syd Porteous, who became a lifelong mate. William started work as apprentice tailor to Mr Watson at the Old Exchange Building in Collins Street. He enlisted in 1915 and fought at Gallipoli alongside Porteous in the 8th Light Horse. He acted as an NCO with 7th Reinforcements 8th Light Horse Regiment in December 1915, and was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal.

Will McElwee returned in April 1919 and ran his own tailoring business in Little Collins Street, Melbourne. He married Dory Webber Munckton Hartley in 1920 who died in 1937. Will then married Beryl Gladys McCarthy in 1939. He probably enlisted for the Citizen Military Forces about 1939 but the details are not available.

Will McElwee died in 1978 at Macleod, aged 88 years. His First World War experiences are recorded briefly in other people's books. There is a paragraph about him in Peter Kenny's book *We Who Proudly Served*¹ and more information about

Will and his family is included in Rob Laurent's book *Changing Horses: The Life of R.S. Porteous*. Laurent quotes excerpts for some of McElwee's letters written from the front and remarks that:

*"Will McElwee's letters also paint a graphic picture of these arduous weeks. He tells of the exhaustion of the troops who covered hundreds of miles, riding day and night with practically no sleep; the 'wild mad' charges against the Turkish positions and his wonder at how anyone survived the storms of bullets they rode into. He wrote too of his misery at seeing friends killed and of the agony suffered by dying horses."*²

Edith Lillian, known as "Queen", was born on 31 December 1891 and started her schooling in Middle Park. She was admitted to St Albans state school in August 1904 and left in June 1905. She married Henry Adam Morris in 1923, who had enlisted in 1916 and served in the 22nd Battalion A.I.F. They had three children: George, Margery and Joan. Edith died on 25 September 1930, and Henry died on 20 August 1939.

Norman Goodall was born in Mornington Junction (Baxter) on 5 March 1895. He started his schooling at Bonnie Doon before being admitted to St Albans state school in August 1904; he left in June 1905. He Married Doris Olive Planck in 1918. They had two children who died at birth and a third, Lorna May, who survived. Doris died on 2 October 1937 at Glen Iris. Norman then married Sally (Sarah) Scarff in 1940 and she died in 1964. Norman may have worked as a staff clerk with the Department of the Navy as his name is included in Commonwealth Gazettes from 1912 to 1950. Norman probably enlisted about 1940 in the Citizen Military Forces but the details are not available.

Amy Mary, known as "Babe", was born on 2 September 1897 in Frankston. She started her schooling at Bonnie Doon before being admitted to St Albans state school in August 1904; she left in June 1905. She became a typist and was living with the family in Middle Park between 1919 and 1937. She married John Moss some time before 1949 and was living in Acland Street, Albert Park. John was a bookmaker but other personal details have not been discovered. Amy Moss née McElwee left for Southampton England on 2 October 1953 and her destination address was listed as 12 Wilberforce Road, Walton 4, Liverpool. Very little is recorded about her and her husband John, so it is possible that they had settled in England.

Daniel Goodall McElwee died at the age of 83 years at his Middle Park home on 20 September 1945. His remains were interred at the Springvale crematorium.

Ada Maria McElwee née Watson of Middle Park, passed away in St Kilda on 22 November 1953, at the age of 92 years. #

¹ Peter Francis Kenny, *We Who Proudly Served*, Xlibris Corporation, 2015

² Rob Laurent, *Changing Horses: The Life of R. S. Porteous*, Blue Flyer Publishing, Highfields Queensland, 2001, pp31-32

McRAE, Farquhar and Annie

Farquhar McRae was born circa 1860 in Kyneton, the son of Flora Ann Patterson (1839-1891) and Duncan McRae (1832-1910) who were from Cobram. Duncan McRae was originally from Kintail, Ross and Cromarty, Scotland. He was born on 24 June 1832 and arrived in New South Wales on 25 November 1852 with his parents and their seven children under the Assisted Immigrant Passengers scheme. They were some of the thousands of immigrants who arrived in the colony during the gold rush era.

Duncan McRae married Flora Ann Patterson in Victoria in 1856 – she was born about 1839 in Harris, Inverness, Scotland, so she must have been in her teens when she migrated. Duncan and Flora settled around Woodend because that's where the children were born: Farquhar (1860), James (1862), John Alexander (1864), Donald (1866), Catherine (1868), Duncan (1872), Alexander (1874), and Robert Stewart (1876).

Flora Ann McRae died on 22 March 1891 at Newham, Victoria, at the young age of 52 years, a colonial pioneer of nearly 40 years. Duncan McRae died on 12 November 1910 at Footscray, at the age of 78 years, a colonial pioneer of nearly 60 years. The end of the 1800s would have been a time of major change for the family.

Farquhar McRae married Annie Ritchie in 1899. She was born about 1860 and was from Tullamarine. Her father was Malcolm Ritchie who was from Aberdeen in Scotland, and her mother was Jane Gray, also from Aberdeen.¹

The McRae and Ritchie families were early pioneers to the Colony of Port Phillip. Annie Ritchie's father was Malcolm Ritchie who came to the Tullamarine district in 1840. Her brother was Malcolm Ritchie who was one of the first members of the Keilor District Roads Board from 1863 and he remained unopposed as a Keilor councilor for at least 40 years until 1907.

Farquhar McRae took to farming at Bulla. He became a foundation member of the Oaklands Hunt Club and was in charge of the hunters at Glenara and organised their first event in 1888. The hunt or chase with hounds was a very popular activity amongst the horse fraternity and tended to be somewhat exclusive, because you had to be nominated to be considered for membership and then invited to join. This club was named in the 1880s after the place where it was established, Oaklands Junction in Bulla. They held riding and hunting events all over the region including Sunshine, St Albans, and Keilor. If there was no fox to be found on the day of the hunt they would lay a scent trail for the hounds to follow so that the day's activities could still be held. The enjoyment was not just about riding horses; it was also a social occasion for other members who would

accompany the hunters in their cars and probably carrying their picnic baskets. Such events were usually reported in the social pages of the major Melbourne newspapers.

Annie and Farquhar lived in Tullamarine before acquiring property in St Albans in 1905. It was part of the Overnewton Estate sale – Annie had Block #35 (319 acres) and Farquhar had Block #36 (251 acres), which were adjoining blocks on the corner of Taylors Road and Sunshine Avenue that stretched north to Taylors Lakes and east to the Green Gully creek. They used it for growing oats and raising horses, cows and sheep. They called their home "Lynalban" and it must have been one of the better properties because even a local reporter was impressed by:

*"... Mr. McRae's good fortune in securing two adjoining blocks on Overnewton estate. The total area was 571 acres, and the price averaged £4 10/ per acre. The correspondent states he has seen some cheap land sold in Victoria, but these blocks hold the record in his opinion in this respect, and he estimates that they would be a bargain at £8 per acre; and a flat of 60 acres is well worth £20 an acre; ... Mr. McRae has also the good fortune to have only 40 chains of fencing to erect to enclose his blocks. The correspondent had the honor of turning the first sod on the estate, and he was surprised to see the good quality of the land. There is about 250 acres in the two blocks which can be cultivated, and is very free from stones, but for the present Mr. McRae is ploughing 50 acres, using a 3 furrow disc plough, and a team of six horses."*²

Farquhar and Annie's children included Florence Annie (1900), Malcolm "Sonny" (1901), and Jean (1904), who were all born before the family moved to their new St Albans home:

- Florence "Florrie" Annie was born in Essendon on 28 February 1900. She enrolled at St Albans primary school in October 1907 from Tullamarine and left in May 1914. She was occasionally mentioned attending a social event but other than that seems to have led a quiet life and died in 1967 aged 67 years. Her daughter Jean married Cliff Butler of Sydenham who worked for Croftbank Dairies in St Albans. They had three children. Jean died in 1966 at only 33 years of age.
- Malcolm was born on 23 November 1901 and enrolled at the primary school in October 1907. He left in February 1916 and took up farming on his parents' Keilor selection. He wed Eileen Nellie Darmody in 1935 and they became horse breeders and hotel proprietors.
- Jean was born on 1 February 1904 and enrolled at the primary school in January 1911. She left in December 1917 and took up home duties, i.e. she worked on the family farm. She married Roy Missen of Rockbank and their sons became long-term residents of St Albans.

¹ Refer to chapter in this manuscript.

² The Bacchus Marsh Express 2 December 1905

Jean Macrae, second daughter of Annie and Farquhar McCrae, married Roy Missen of Rockbank on 27 November 1926.¹ They had three sons: Mervyn (1927), Colin (1929) and Kevin (1931). Mervyn has said of his grandfather that:

*"He had a lot of horses on his farm and would treat a lot of horses; he probably taught himself how to be a vet because he was constantly involved with horses. He was also a judge at the Royal Melbourne Show in the early days. He was always doing something with horses. I liked horses too and one time rode with granddad in the Royal Show. He bred horses such as Clydesdales and race horses. He used to import Clydesdale stallions from Scotland. He would then ride on horseback and lead the stallion to the various farms where they'd wanted the mares served."*²

Despite his good husbandry of cattle and horses, Farquhar was occasionally confronted with typical farmers' problems. In 1910 he was fined for being the owner of horses that were "cruelly used" by their driver. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had charged the wagon driver with having used a pair of horses in circumstances involving cruelty in that the horses' shoulders around the collars had red raw sores:

*"Farquhar McCrae, owner of the horses, said he looked at the shoulders after defendant came home. The sores were only skin deep and the mares seemed soft skinned. Otherwise they were in good condition. It was the last load of hay they had to cart and the road was terribly bad. Defendant was using a soft spongy collar. Had he known the sores were there he would not have allowed the horse to be used. Malcolm Ritchie, farmer, said he did not think much of the sores. A fine of 20/- was imposed with 21/- costs. Farquhar McCrae as owner, was charged with knowingly permitting the horses to be used in circumstances involving cruelty."*³

Perhaps karma in the equine world was restored in 1925 when Farquhar was pulled over by a horse and dragged while holding it by the head and as a result was confined to bed with a septic knee. Involvement with and care of horses was undoubtedly part of the McCrae lifestyle. John Perrett recalls that:

"Every Sunday it was open house at the McRaes' place – like a gymkhana – a gathering place for people interested in horses and they would put on a good Sunday spread and hold activities like horse jumping."

In 1927 Farquhar was fined for the lesser offence of allowing stock to wander, a problem that was experienced by many farmers but which in this case had been caused by a government instrumentality:

"Inspector Wallis told the court that the Railway Department was making a line through Mr. McCrae's property, and its servants left the gate open, with

*the result that the stock strayed. Mr. McCrae said that the facts were as stated by the inspector. The Department had been seen, and it had promised to close the gate, but the promise had not been kept. The P.M. said that ... It was hard, but a fine would have to be imposed."*⁴

Such appearances before the courts at least confirmed that old principle that even the "better off" folk were not above the law.

In 1923 a major tragedy occurred when a family connection, Mrs. Joanna Ritchie, drowned in the underground water tank on the Lynalbyn property. Apparently she had been in bad health and came to stay for a few days in St Albans. Her husband, John Ritchie of Surrey Hills, said that his wife had been in bad health for two months before her death and on one occasion had said that she wished she could drown herself. Jean McCrae and Farquhar McCrae said that at times she behaved very queerly but never threatened to take her life. Her body was found in the water tank by a constable and the coroner recorded a verdict of death by drowning while of unsound mind.⁵

In 1924 a potential threat to routine farming operations occurred when Tarsene Pty Ltd of Fitzroy applied for a mining lease on part of the McCrae property, the nominated location being at "Green Gully, Keilor, 500 yards upstream from existing bridge".⁶ They were proposing to establish an open cut mine to extract Haematite, a mineral that is the main ore of iron. It is clear that there is no mine established along Green Gully, but a McCrae grandson, Colin Missen, remembers there were sandpits and a tunnel along the Gully near the road bridge and perhaps some of this may have been the remnants of mine explorations.⁷ Some sand mining was done in that locality and the area was later used as the local garbage tip.

1927 turned out to be a difficult year for the McRaes. Annie McCrae née Ritchie died at her home on 5 September 1927. There was a very large congregation at the St Albans Presbyterian Church when an "In Memoriam" service was held by Rev. Colin Robertson, who referred to:

*"... the high esteem in which the late Mrs. Mcrae was held, to her gentle and unselfish disposition, to the patient and uncomplaining way in which she bore her last sufferings, and to her life-long devotion to the work of the church."*⁸

On the positive side, St Albans exhibitors did rather well at the Royal Show in September 1927. Peter Anderson won six firsts, one champion, and several seconds with his team of ponies. Miss Coleman won a couple of prizes for cooking, and

¹ Sunshine Advocate 27 November 1926

² Recollections of Mervyn Missen

³ Footscray Independent 6 August 1910 p1

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 18 June 1927

⁵ The Argus Friday 24 August 1923

⁶ Argus 30 April 1924

⁷ *St Albans: The Way It Was And The Way We Were;*

2001. Some people mention there being what was assumed to be Aboriginal caves at the site. Sand mining was carried out in the area.

⁸ Sunshine Advocate 24 September 1927

Malcolm McRae rode winners in the arena.¹

In 1927 Farquhar decided to give up farming and to sell all his cattle, sheep, horses, furniture, and implements, etc, and was also submitting his property to auction. He was 67 years of age, in poor health, and probably thinking of retirement. He held a clearing sale on 26 November 1927 with the up-market trappings of a luncheon provided and a char-a-bane leaving the office of the auctioneers in Bourke street as an incentive for potential buyers to attend. The auctioneers sold most of his stock and machinery but McRae kept the land, having refused offers of £22/10/- per acre.² That was an interesting offer because it was five times greater than the original purchase price of £4/10/- per acre that was paid twenty years earlier in 1905.

In 1928 he had an operation at St Margarets Private Hospital in Sunshine and spent about three months recuperating from his weakness. Farquhar moved to his new property on the Pinnacle Estate about 1930. Mervyn Missen was a 3-year-old at the time and recalls:

"When my grandfather retired from farming he had people by the name of Dunstan who were renting the farm but grandfather at that stage was living on the corner of Walmer Avenue and Station Street. There were no houses beside him or behind him so it was very open."

In 1938 it was rumoured that Farquhar and Sonny McRae were returning to work their farm at St Albans³ and this may have happened as in 1941 someone by the name of "M. R. McRae" of St Albans was selling sheep at the Flemington stock sales.⁴ However, this would not have lasted for long as by the late 1930s Malcolm Ritchie "Sonny" McRae was developing a career as a horse breeder, trainer and racer, which was "noted with pleasure" when he was successful with his horse Welcome Stranger in the steeple-chase at Warnnambool in January 1931: *"This dashing horse-man showed that he could more than hold his own with the professional riders in jumping races."*⁵

Sonny McRae married Eileen Nellie Darmody in 1935. They developed business careers in horse racing, and hotel proprietorship. Their business companies included "M. Darmody Pty Ltd" and "M.R. and E.N. Macrae". In 1938 Eileen McRae was the licensee at the Commercial Hotel in Lancefield. In 1942 they obtained the licence for the Macalister Hotel at Maffra. Naturally enough, they raced their horses in their home territory – in October 1944 the main event in the War Comforts Cup Fund *"resulted in a win for Macalister, owned by the popular Maffra sporting folk, E. N. and M. R. Macrae"*.⁶

Sonny held a clearing sale at Lynalbyn in 1940 for their stock and machinery. A local recollection is that Gilberston later bought the farm and that Keilor council bought about 160 acres of the property in 1966 for a recreation reserve and a municipal tip, and they allocated a portion of the reserve to the Green Gully Ajax Soccer Club.⁷

Farquhar McRae died on 30 June 1944 at the age of 84 years:

*"The death occurred recently at the Austin Hospital after a long and painful illness, borne with much fortitude, of a very old and respected resident in the person of Mr. Farquhar McRae. He was the son of the late Flora and Duncan McRae, of Cobram, and brother of Catherine (Mrs. Gibson), St. Albans, James and Robert, also Chris, John, Donald, Duncan and Alee (all deceased), and had resided in St. Albans for over 30 years. His wife, who was much loved in the district, pre-deceased him 17 years ago, and he is survived by a family of three, Florrie, Jean (Mrs. R. Missen), and Mr. Malcolm McRae. The funeral, which was largely attended, took place from his home in Taylor's Road to Footscray."*⁸

Farquhar's sister, Catherine McRae was born at Woodend in 1868 and married William John Mansfield of Tullamarine in 1899, and they are also linked to St Albans. Their children were William John (1899-1906), Flora Ann Mansfield (1901-1978), and Eliza Mona (1903-1994). William Mansfield and his son William drowned tragically while trying to cross the river at Bertram's Ford, Arundel, on 15 October 1906:

*"William Mansfield a farmer of Tullamarine was a brother-in-law of Farquhar McCrae of Keilor. William and his 7-year-old son William drowned in October 1906 while crossing the Deep Creek ford at Keilor on their way to visit McCrae."*⁹

Catherine Mansfield née McRae re-married in 1910 to Albert Edward Gibson and they were living at 10 East Esplanade, St Albans; he was a carpenter. They did not have any children of the marriage but it seems that they had sponsored several children including Herbert Burrows, Albert Newman, Phillip Edward Townsend¹⁰ and Walter Trevor Baulch.¹¹ Albert Edward Gibson died on 28 July 1955 at St Albans, aged 84 years. Catherine died on 2 December 1957 at St Albans, aged 89 years. They are both buried at the Melbourne cemetery.

Jean McRae, second daughter of Farquhar Macrae, married Roy Missen of Rockbank on 27 November 1926, at the Presbyterian Church in Footscray.¹² They had three sons:

- Mervyn Keith was born in 23 September 1927 and transferred from Rockbank to St

¹ Sunshine Advocate 24 September 1927

² Sunshine Advocate 3 December 1927

³ Sunshine Advocate 25 March 1938

⁴ Argus 26 November 1941

⁵ Sunshine Advocate 23 January 1931

⁶ Gippsland Times 23 October 1944

⁷ Age 24 May 2003

⁸ Sunshine Advocate 14 July 1944

⁹ Keilor Historical Society Newsletter No.11 March 1991 p3

¹⁰ Served in WW2 as 1st Class Stoker.

¹¹ Became a permanent resident of St Albans and served in WW2 and worked at Keilor Council.

¹² Sunshine Advocate 27 November 1926

Albans Primary in April 1942. He left school in December of 1942 and started working at Mochrie's Cabinet Works while training in cabinet making at the Sunshine Tech night classes. He was also a keen footballer and played with the St Albans Football Club in the late 1940s. He wed Maria Patricia Anderson of Braeside, Keilor, in September 1953. He worked for Keilor Council for 30 years from 1958 to 1987.

- Colin Malcolm was born in 1 October 1929 and transferred from Rockbank to St Albans Primary in April 1942. He remembers that *"There were four teachers at the school, Mr. Lam, Mr. O'Brien, Mrs. Paul and Miss Bailey. There were about 100 pupils. The school was the proud owner of one football and one cricket bat and one basketball. The pupils' main game was marbles."*¹ Colin left in December 1942 for University High School. He was a good athlete and was always among the winners. In 1945 it was bike race from St Albans to Deer Park, Albion and return. He played as a centre man with the St Albans football club, won best and fairest in 1947, and topped the competition in the Footballers Gift and the 440 yards footrace in 1948. He was a recruit for League football with the Footscray club in 1949. He was also a good cricketer and in 1953 was judged the best clubman. He married Catherine Theresa McGarry of Keilor about 1955 and they later moved to Gisborne.

- Kevin Lindsay was born on 18 September 1931 and transferred from Rockbank to St Albans Primary in April 1942. He left in December 1945 to work on the family farm and then went to work at George Mochrie's Sunshine Cabinet Works while also training in cabinet making at the Sunshine Tech night classes. He married Aaltje "Alie" de Vries about 1960 and they lived in Leonard Avenue. Alie worked as a typist and Kevin as a labourer. Later he worked for many years as the manager of the liquor section at Self and Goddards.

Jean and Roy Missen took over the running of the Lynam property after Farquhar McRae died. Kevin Missen recollects that he and his father did the sheep dipping:

"This was done firstly at Overnewton but later they had a sheep dip built on the farm. All the milking was done by hand, twice a day, seven days a week and finished about five or six in the late afternoon. Once weekly a sheep was killed for meat, although often the time the meat would last a fortnight. It all depended on how many visitors and workers had to be fed. At harvesting time a lot of cooking had to be done. They would make apple pies, scones, biscuits and the like and cook a daily roast. Every

*morning and afternoon they had a tea break and the days were pretty long, from dawn working to dusk. Kevin claimed their cooking must have been pretty good for Sunshine policemen, local Members of Parliament and Councillors used to call in for a meal or sometimes for morning or afternoon tea."*²

There was also some land across the other side of Taylors Road towards Green Gully in that area now known as Kealba. That property used to go down to what they called the camp paddock. Farquhar's brother, Bob Macrae, died there in 1960 in the old train carriage that he was using as a hut when it burnt down. He was said to be a well-educated man and worked locally as a shearer.

Malcolm "Sonny" McRae passed away on 25 December 1982 in Alexander, Victoria. He was remembered for his love of horses and that his horse Welkin Sun almost won the Melbourne Cup in 1952. Sonny was great mates with Eric Perrett and they took part in show jumping and events like that. The story is that Perrett had a colleague named Watkins who had a property on the south side of Boundary Road, opposite Dale's Piggery. Watkins had horses on his land and recommended Welkin Sun as a good investment to Perrett who was interested in buying racers. Perrett referred the horse to the Macraes and Sonny bought it. This horse came second in the Melbourne Cup in 1952 and won many races after that.³

Malcolm Ritchie "Sonny" McRae had inherited the family property that is now identified as the suburb of Kealba. Wikipedia now informs the world of the McRae connection and that during the 1960s the land was sold for sub-divisional purposes with the first land auction taking place on 22nd of March 1969. Thus the grazing paddocks and oat fields of the 1950s were converted to residential purposes.

There were other family connections in the district. One of Farquhar's brothers was John Alexander McRae who married Euphemia Elizabeth Giggins and their children were Christopher, John, David Flora and Gladys. John Alexander McRae died in Sydenham in 1932 and Euphemia Elizabeth McRae died in St Albans in 1953. Their daughter Flora Euphemia married James Garfield Stevens, who was the son of James and Agnes Stevens (q.v.) who came to St Albans in the early 1900s and were well known as farmers and respected community leaders.

Of course there is a McRae Street in St Albans and a McCrae Boulevard at Green Gully, which some local historians assert should really be McRae Boulevard.

The McRae family and their descendents have been St Albans residents for well over a century and have contributed to its development over three generations. Some of the extended family are still living in St Albans. #

¹ Colin Missen *St Albans: The Way It Was And The Way We Were 1939-1950*; 2005, p1

² Quoted in Allie Missen's *Just a Little History*.

³ Recollections of John Perrett in *Stories About St Albans Celebrating 125 Years*, 2012

MENESDORFFER, Alexander and Esther



Alexander and Esther Menesdorffer came to St Albans in 1900 and settled in Elizabeth Street. Though they did not buy any farmland through the Overnewton Estate, they were of the era. Alexander Ladislois Menesdorffer was born in Gollnetz, Hungary, on 26 January 1856.¹ His

father was Tobious Menesdorffer and mother Ellen Norah Nedecky. He had two older brothers: Charles born in 1842 and Thomas born in 1848. Alexander trained in the manufacture of dyes and that became his lifelong career.

Alexander immigrated from Hamburg on the sloop *Friedeburg* and arrived in Napier, New Zealand in August 1875. He stayed for a year occupied in mining enterprises and the treatment of ore by chemical processes and he also went prospecting for minerals. Some of the exploratory mine shafts that he dug are still there and these days they are often explored by hikers taking in the scenery. He then immigrated to New South Wales in 1876 before settling in Geelong, Victoria, in 1877.

Esther Jane Farmer was born on 18 June 1857 in Richmond and grew up in Essendon. Her father was Thomas Stafford Farmer from Leicestershire, England, and her mother was Margaret Jane Cartmill from Co. Armagh, Ulster UK (Ireland). Thomas had emigrated to NSW in 1850 at the age of 20, and Margaret had emigrated to Sydney in 1844, also at age 20. They married in 1853 at the Scots Church in Pitt Street, Sydney, and within a few years they had moved to Richmond, Victoria. Esther became a dressmaker and dyer.

It is not known when Esther Jane Farmer became acquainted with Alexander Menesdorffer but they married on 12 November 1888 at the Church of England in Moor Street, Fitzroy. In 1888 Alexander was working as a tobacconist in Geelong and their daughter Bertha was born there in 1889. They were living at Mooroolool Street when Alexander applied for a "Colonial Wine Licence" for a wine shop that he was trying to establish near the Free Library. There were a number of objections to his application² and it seems that he did not get the licence because they did not stay. They then moved to Dally Street in Northcote and their son Alexander Gustave was born there in 1891. They finally settled down in St Albans where the family was living in Elizabeth

Street, according to the 1903 electoral roll for St Albans. Alexander must have become restless again because in 1903 he went back to New Zealand, but it is not known if this was before or after the family had moved from their Northcote home. Alexander was searching for platinum:

*"Prospecting for platinum started in the Kahuterawa area circa 1875. A German geologist, Alexander Menesdorffer with George Brown and Williams, had two fifty-acre claims in the Kahuterawa Valley. He came to the Hardings Park area in 1903 from Melbourne to search for minerals (platinum), and returned twice more, the last time at the age of 70. Traces of platinum were confirmed in 1906, but mining was never commercially established in the ranges."*³

It's interesting that Menesdorffer's exploits are still remembered in New Zealand, because another current blog states:

*"Alexander Menesdorffer travelled from Melbourne to Palmy and set off to Hardings Park in the Tararuas. He was searching for something to feed either his family or his ego. He found Platinum. Enough for the Wanganui Herald to report in October, 1906 that there had been 'A Valuable Find - Platinum Discovered Near Palmerston'. Menesdorffer had taken rock samples from his first visit to Hardings Park back to Melbourne where they were lab tested. Three of them apparently yielded 'undoubted indications of platinum in payable qualities'. Menesdorffer then returned to Palmerston North, bought 100 acres of land, and in 1907 applied for a prospecting permit. ... it's fair to say that if he had found something decent we would know about it. Apparently he left dejected and then came back a third and final time to search when he was in his 70s. But what is one man's almighty fail is an entire region's gain. Because today, you can walk up a hill and check out the mines for yourself."*⁴



Alexander Menesdorffer (L) and colleagues, NZ c.1903.

The Menesdorffers were not afraid of litigation and both experienced it. Esther must have been a feisty woman while at Northcote because in 1892 she sued the Clifton Hill to Northcote and Preston Tramway Company for £500 damages for injuries

¹ There are discrepancies in the documentation. The marriage certificate states he was born in Austria but the naturalisation papers of 1904 state that he was born in Goellnitz, Hungary.

² Geelong Advertiser 28 June 1889 p3

³ "Sledge Track - Kahuterawa Valley 24th August 2014" in *Parawai Pathways*, Parawai Tramping Club Newsletter; New Zealand, September 2014.

⁴ "Mining for Platinum on the Tararua Range" 2/4/2013

and lost earnings – the jury awarded her £75.¹ In 1893 she also sued her doctor, claiming £1,000 for slander and negligence. The case was to be heard in the Supreme Court before a Chief Justice and jury of six. However, she did not turn up for the hearing and therefore the action was dismissed.²

Alexander and Esther were creative people and they took out numerous patents on their innovations. Alexander lodged patents in his own name or with others for such diverse inventions as improved window fasteners (1892), improved means for raising sunken vessels (1893), improved means of ventilating mines, ships, sewers and other enclosed spaces (1897), improved fastening for boot and shoe laces and the like (1897), the combined amalgamating and concentrating apparatus (1897), improved band driving gear for transmitting power (1897), a rotary riffle-tube gold saving apparatus (1900), the manufacture of an improved coriaceous material (1903), composition for the destruction of codling moth, thrip and like parasites and method of manufacture (1929), etc. In 1898 Esther lodged a patent for a removable lid or cover for jugs. Occasionally, Alexander would take legal action against someone whom he believed was breaching his patent rights. One wonders if they ever made any money out of these smart ideas.

Did they suffer financial problems? because in 1904 Alexander was claiming to be an engine driver and spruiking the benefits of “Warner’s Safe Cure” for kidney problems, and presumably that was for the advertising fee; that was a regular newspaper advertisement that ran for many weeks.³

They also had their own family problems:

“A claim of a rather uncommon character came before the Footscray court on Monday, when Esther Jane Menesdorffer, of St. Albans, sued her husband, Alexander Menesdorffer, for £49, representing balance of purchase money due on land at St. Albans. Mr. Secomb, on behalf of complainant, stated that defendant had been ill-treating his wife and deserting her for months at a stretch. Now he had finally deserted her and could not be traced. Defendant owed complainant this money, and though defendant could not be found he owned certain assets in this State which could be attached in satisfaction of the claim. ... After expressing some doubt about the matter the Chairman of the Bench intimated that an order for £49 and £4/4/- costs would be made against defendant.”⁴

The information indicates that they had bought land in St Albans and it might have been their home site in Elizabeth Street. Esther leased her dressmaking shop because in 1908 she was being sued by the liquidator of the Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company “to recover £2 14/6 for occupation of a shop at St Albans.”⁵ The Cosmopolitan company became insolvent in 1893 and it is

interesting that fifteen years later the company liquidators were still in operation.⁶

They may have separated briefly but they later reconciled. Esther was listed in the St Albans voters’ roll of 1906 but Alexander wasn’t, probably because he wasn’t a British subject and thus not entitled to vote. In July 1907 Esther was sued for goods sold and delivered and her defence was that it was a debt for which her husband was responsible at law. In August 1907 he advertised in the Footscray Independent that he would not be accountable for debts contracted by his wife.⁷ However, he applied for naturalisation in 1907 and listed his wife and three children as being his family. At this stage he had lived in Australia for 30 years so he obviously had decided to become a permanent settler. Between 1912 and 1914 the family was living in Nicholson Street, Essendon, but by 1917 they were back in St Albans and living at Main Road.

In 1918, Alexander Menesdorffer and Mr. J. W. Fraser, chemist of Bendigo, discovered a process by which the liquid by-product from eucalyptus distillation could be used for dyeing fabrics and other substances. This was a breakthrough as it could provide a cheap dye and open up great possibilities for industries, especially in the manufacture of fabrics. The discovery was important for Bendigo as it had established an extensive eucalyptus industry. When the Acting Prime Minister of Australia (Mr. William Alexander Watt) was visiting Bendigo he was appraised of the research findings and was much interested.⁸

Esther was in serious trouble in September 1926 when a lamp exploded at her home. The house was soon in a terrific blaze and was totally destroyed with its contents. Esther was alone in the house at the time and was lucky to escape serious injury as she was 69 years old and practically an invalid.⁹

Esther Jane, the “beloved wife of Alexander Menesdorffer” died on 28 September 1927 at her home in Victoria Crescent, at age 70 years. She had seen her doctor a couple of days earlier and there had been no problems, but she died suddenly of a heart attack at home in her daughter’s arms. Her remains were interred in the family burying ground in the Melbourne General Cemetery. Her living relatives are noted as being her husband, two sons Alexander and Charles (living in Adelaide), and daughter Bertha who was at home.¹⁰ Her other children, Gladys and Thomas, had already passed away.

Alexander Ladislois Menesdorffer of St Albans passed away at Mont Park Hospital on 17 January 1935, at the age of 78 years, and was buried in the

¹ Argus 27 September 1892 p5

² Argus 14 June 1893

³ Argus 6 August 1904

⁴ Footscray Independent 22 June 1907

⁵ Footscray Independent 11 April 1908

⁶ Alfred Padley’s Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company subdivided St Albans’ farmland into suburban housing blocks during the late 1880s.

⁷ Footscray Independent 10 August 1907

⁸ Bendigonian 19 September 1918

⁹ Sunshine Advocate 18 September 1926

¹⁰ Sunshine Advocate 1 October 1927

Church of England section at Melbourne General Cemetery. He was one of the districts' oldest residents and a St Albans pioneer for 35 years. The local newspaper reported that his tastes were artistic with a preference to literature and music.¹ The funeral took place at Fawkner and the service was conducted by Rev Evans of the Presbyterian Church. Charles Menesdorffer may have had responsibility for clearing out the property as he was advertising the sale of two corrugated iron buildings and water tanks from Main Road West – at this time Charles was living at Albert Street, East Brunswick.

When the Menesdorffers came to St Albans it was a minor village of 120 people. The only public amenities were the railway station that also served as the post office, and a small schoolhouse that also served as the church hall. When Alexander Ladislaus died in 1935, the population had grown to about 600 people, there were several small stores, two churches and a public hall had been built, and electric trains provided a regular service to the industrial and commercial centres of Melbourne. St Albans was still a village, but it was a bigger one than at the turn of the century.

The Menesdorffer children included Gladys (born c.1888), Bertha Malvina (1889), Alexander Gustave Benjamin (1890), Thomas Victor Stafford (1894), and Charles Henry (1901). The middle children attended St Albans Primary School from 1901 and Charles started in 1906. Someone must have had an aversion to schooling because in 1902 and 1903 Alexander was fined for failing to send children to school for 75% of the school-days in a quarter, and Esther was charged in 1907 for failing to send a child aged 6 years and 5 months to school. These were serious issues and for the 1903 offences Alexander's details were published in the Victorian Police Gazette:

*"Five warrants of commitment have been issued by the Footscray Bench against Alexander Menesdorffer for 48 hours' imprisonment in each case, in default of payment of 10s. fine in three cases, and 15s. fine, in two for breaches of the Education Act. Description - Hungarian, commercial traveller, about 50 years of age, 5 feet 8 or 9 inches high, medium build, dark complexion, large full eyes, black hair mixed with grey, inclined to curl, black whiskers, beard, and moustache, cut short, and pointed at chin, large head, round features, heavy eyebrows, straight nose, holds his head down when walking, strong foreign accent; wore black clothes, may wear a light-grey coat, and a light felt hat. May go to Port Fairy."*²

Gladys Menesdorffer was born about 1888. It is not known what happened to her but she may have died in infancy or early childhood, because she does not appear in the school enrollment records and when Alexander applied for naturalization in 1907 she was not listed as a child of the

family in his documentation.

Bertha Malvina was born on 30 December 1889 in Geelong. She was enrolled at St Albans primary in March 1901 and left in October 1902. Her life in St Albans is undocumented, the few available references suggest she was living at home with her parents and helping them in their latter years. In 1931 she was living in Essendon along Mt Alexander Road and in 1937 in Blyth Street, Brunswick. She appears to have worked as a music teacher because there is a reference to one of her students passing their theoretical presentation at the London School of Music exam in 1938.³ By 1963 she was living in Baker Street in Cockatoo, which might have been her retirement home as she would have been aged over 70 at this stage. It appears that she had never married. She died in 1975 at Ferntree Gully and would have been about 86 years of age.⁴

Alexander Gustave Benjamin Menesdorffer, the older son, was born on 29 November 1891 and went to the St Albans primary school in 1901 and left in 1906. In 1914 he was working as a wood machinist and was operating a wood shaping machine for Cox and Co. of Racecourse Road, Newmarket, when he severed the tips of two fingers and sued for damages. He was awarded £150.⁵

He enlisted in Victoria for service in WW1 but was rejected because of the missing fingertips, so he went interstate and tried again. He enlisted in October 1916 in South Australia under the name of Alexander Gustave Menesdorff and was accepted. He embarked overseas in December 1916 and served with the 10th Infantry Battalion in France where he received shrapnel wounds to his hand resulting in losing a couple of fingers. He returned to Australia in May 1918 and was discharged in July 1918 in South Australia. He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal for his service to his country. His return to Australia had been listed in the Adelaide Observer.⁶



After returning from the war Alexander Gustave Menesdorff married Myrtle Alice Selway on 10 June

¹ Sunshine Advocate 25 January 1935

² Victoria Police Gazette 24 September 1903 p372

³ Argus 26 January 1938 p2

⁴ Age 31 October 1975

⁵ Argus 3 December 1914

⁶ Adelaide Observer 15 June 1918 p39

1919 at the Church of St Mary Magdalene in Moore Street, Adelaide. Their children included Clive Thomas George¹ (1918-2010), Cavaliere Mary (1921-2012),² Dorothy Myrtle³ (1924-2012) and Stella (1926-1927). Clive and Mary attended the St Albans primary school between 1925 and 1927. At this time Alexander was working as a mechanic. He is probably lucky to have survived the 1920s, because in November 1925 he went to hospital for treatment after feeling a severe pain in his leg and suffering from heart trouble – he was told that he had been bitten by a snake.⁴

In the 1930s he became the Secretary of the St Albans Unemployment Committee and wasn't afraid of being outspoken. It was the 1930s and the Depression was impinging on many people's lives – there was very little government support available for the many people who lost their jobs. In April 1931 Alexander openly criticized the Keilor Council:

*"The St. Albans Unemployed strongly object to the proposal of some Keilor Shire Councilors to hold the Presidential dinner this year. In the opinion of the committee they consider it a disgrace in times such as these to spend money on one hilarious night when there are hundreds of children within the Shire of Keilor half starved, half clothed, bootless and in general misery. I come across cases that it makes the heart bleed to see them. The unfortunate are not unemployable – they were formerly men who had banking accounts and were buying homes, but through circumstances not of their own making are forced to accept sustenance. I publicly appeal to the President of the Keilor Council, (Cr. Stevens)."*⁵

In June 1931 he took a further stand against alleged criticism from Cr Stevens⁶ of St Albans, and the local newspaper reported that:

"We have received a letter from Mr. A. G. Menesdorffer, secretary of the St. Albans Unemployment Committee, advocating a better understanding of the ideals and aspiration of the Association. A good deal of misunderstanding has arisen on account of a published statement in the daily press attributed to Cr. J. H. Stevens, President of the Keilor Shire Council. Mr. Menesdorffer said that 90 percent of the bitterness in the district is due to a lack of knowledge of the facts. The unemployed are prepared to do everything possible to assist in the alleviation of their own misfortune, and to assist those who are willingly shouldering the burden of

*helping these unfortunate people. The appeal for closer unity between the unemployed and the relief organisation appears to be genuine, and for humility's sake it is hoped that good will come out of it."*⁷

Alexander Gustave Menesdorffer might have a special place in St Albans history because he is the only serviceman whose name is remembered as being included in the St Albans Avenue of Honour. Records of the Avenue of Honour have been lost and the details almost completely forgotten, but it was a row of trees planted along the western side of Victoria Crescent. George Power, who grew up on the Victoria Crescent, remembers there being trees with picket guards and plaques commemorating local soldiers who served in World War I. He remembers Menesdorffer's name, perhaps because at the time it was unusual for an Australian avenue of honour to include a German-sounding name.⁸ Residents kept the trees alive for decades and they were still there in the 1960s but no one remembers when the memorial name plaques disappeared.⁹ Alexander Menesdorffer's name is included in the Keilor Old Shire Hall Honour Roll (First World War).

Alexander Gustave Menesdorffer died on 16 January 1974 aged 83 years at the St Vincents Hospital in Adelaide and his body was cremated at Centennial Park, Pasadena. His wife, Alice Myrtle Menesdorffer née Selway, had worked as a teacher and had been active with the Red Cross society. She retired to a nursing home in the mid 1970s and died on 12 September 1980 aged 85 years. She was buried at Torrensville in Adelaide.

Thomas Victor Stafford Menesdorffer was born on 24 December 1894 in Northcote. He was admitted to St Albans Primary school in March 1901 and left in June 1910. At age nineteen he applied to join the Australia Imperial Forces but it is not clear what happened consequently, apart from the fact that he died suddenly in Sunshine on 23 February 1916 at the age of 21 years.¹⁰

Charles Henry Menesdorffer was born in Essendon on 13 May 1901 and went to St Albans primary school in 1906. He left in 1916 and went to the University High School in Melbourne. In 1926 he was involved in real estate through Shallard Bros of Footscray and was advertising properties for sale between Main and Elizabeth streets:

*"14 Home Sites for absolute sale. Quarter Acre Lots. Best position. Handy to station. Fast electric trains. Splendid terms, £5 deposit, £1 per month. Six per cent interest."*¹¹

¹ Clive Thomas George enlisted at Noarlunga SA : service number S17465, place of birth – Elsternwick, Vic. Details not available. Died 22 March 2010.

² Known as Mary. At age 20 she married Murray Fitzpatrick at Newcastle in 1941; he was in the Air Force. She was a seamstress and he was a painter. Her war work was repairing parachutes. Refer to article by her son Stephen at <http://cagdianao.com/Mums Eulogy/Eulogy.html>

³ Dorothy Myrtle born Lismore 25 November 1924, enlisted at Adelaide 30 November 1942. Details not available.

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 7 November 1925 p7

⁵ Sunshine Advocate 24 April 1931

⁶ James Henry Stevens initiated the St Albans Unemployed Committee which operated in conjunction with the Keilor Public Assistance Committee. Various problems occurred.

⁷ Sunshine Advocate 5 June 1931

⁸ The German-Australian Aliens of Militarism website identifies him as being born in Austria. Wilhelm Frederick Stein of St Albans experienced a reaction to his German background and his brother-in-law Hermann George Schieferdecker changed his name to Henry George Decker when he enlisted in the Navy.

⁹ Brimbank Leader 25 March 2010

¹⁰ Argus 28 February 1916 p1

¹¹ Sunshine Advocate 24 April 1926

In 1927 he was still selling real estate but extended his directions by taking over Town Hall Pictures in Sunshine and running that for years.¹ He applied for a three-year lease from the Braybrook Shire Council for the municipal town hall. Some councilors wanted to charge him £4/4/- per night while other wanted a reduced rate of £3/3/- as an encouragement to the picture people and in the interests of the ratepayers. There was debate about the right to display photos in the portico. When Charles first started he got about 23 people at most to a session, but once the cinema was established each Saturday's entertainment was largely attended.

The Council agreed to grant the request,² so in 1926 Charles secured the lease of the Sunshine Town Hall for picture entertainment. The Sunshine Theatre was started about March 1925 and Mr. Charles Menesdorffer became the Director. For some time it operated in tandem with Town Hall Pictures before the latter venue was discontinued.³

As well as showing films, Charles supported other activities; e.g. he was a patron of the Sunshine Swimming and Life Saving Club and assisted in fundraising for the benefit of returned soldiers. He also assisted with some local stage presentations and occasionally would put on special shows for special occasions:

*"... arrangements have been made for the appearance of the Melbourne Lyric Choral Society, of 50 voices, to appear in conjunction with a complete picture program, at the Sunshine Theatre, on Wednesday next. The choir will sing Mozart's 'Gloria' and 'Hymn to Music' and 'Gather Ye Rosebuds'. This choir won the silver cup at the Kurri Kurri Eisteddfod. The ladies, who were awarded second prize at Ballarat and Adelaide, will sing Fletcher's 'Dream, Baby, Dream'. The male choir, successful both at Ballarat and Adelaide, will sing Gounod's 'Soldiers' Chorus' from Faust, and the 'Hallelujah Chorus'."*⁴

Charles moved to Gippsland about 1948 and worked as an auctioneer in the furniture trade. On 28 March 1953 he married Peggy Garth McNae at St James Church of England, Traralgon.⁵ He had been conducting Morwell Auctions for some years one day a week at the Paramount Theatre. In May 1953 he announced that the opening of Morwell Furnishers' showroom would be held at the same premises but on a full-time basis.⁶ He was probably still there in 1963 when he was living in Loch Park Road, Traralgon. Charles Henry Menesdorffer died at Traralgon in 1982 at age 82 years.

Menesdorffer's venture into furniture auctions from 1948 was the start of the family business

¹ Started by N J Vernon and taken over by C G Menesdorffer in late 1925. Prue McGoldrik; *When the Whistle Blew*, Gippsland Printers; Morwell, 1991

² Sunshine Advocate 9 October 1926

³ Sunshine advocate 14 April 1927

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 30 April 1927

⁵ Morwell Advertiser 2 April 1953 p4

⁶ Morwell Advertiser 14 May 1953

dynasty, because his son John Charles grew up working with his father and learning the trade from the floor upwards. John then took over the running of the company, expanded it and then opened a Melbourne branch. After his father retired, John managed both the Melbourne and Morwell stores. The firm was renamed as Northcote Auctions in 1982. In turn, John's son Andrew John Charles Menesdorffer took over the store and expanded it. Northcote Auctions is still operating from High Street, Thornbury.

John Charles Ladislois Menesdorffer, the son of Charles, was born on 7 March 1931 at Castlemaine and served in World War Two. He joined the Navy in February 1949 and served for twelve years mainly on the HMAS Penguin and HMAS Australia.⁷ In 1963 John Charles and Elaine Ann Menesdorffer were living at Breed Street in Traralgon. John Charles died on 29 August 2009.

What a wonderfully idiosyncratic, industrious and patriotic family the Menesdorffers turned out to be. They suffered life's hardships and they prevailed. Is there any other St Albanite who is still remembered in New Zealand for exploits that happened back in 1875? They were true pioneers and the family name is surviving still, apparently irrepressible as ever.

Postscript by David

Alexander Ladislois Menesdorffer was my great-grandfather and Alexander Gustave Menesdorff was my grandfather. My father was Clive Menesdorff (we don't know when the name change happened). Alexander Gustave married Alice Myrtle Selway. Their son, Clive Thomas George Menesdorffer, was born on 16 December 1919 at Elsternwick, Victoria, and went to the St Albans state school from 1925 to 1927. The family moved to South Australia and adopted the Menesdorff surname.



Clive became a fisherman and an electrician. He enlisted for WW2 in October 1940 at Noarlunga, South Australia, and by 1944 was serving with a tank unit in Darwin about the time that it was bombed by the Japanese. Clive was injured in one of the Japanese bombing raids. Apparently

(but not confirmed) he was the sole survivor of his platoon.

He spent approximately two years in the Repatriation Hospital recovering, where he met a friend George Terrel who he went commercial net fishing with. Dad also held an A Class electrical license and did the electrical wiring in a lot of SA fishing boats in the 1960s.

⁷ Information courtesy of Cheryl Baulch, 2016.



Clive Menesdorff with tank unit at Darwin 1942 © D Menesdorff

was “the family matriarch and was very much in control but was also a very kind and loving person”.

In 1941 Mary Menesdorff married Murray Fitzpatrick who was from Woodlands Park and had joined the Air Force. They moved to Strathmore in Sydney and Mary worked with a group of women repairing the parachutes of Australian airmen. After the war Mary and Murray moved to Fitzroy in Melbourne where Murray worked as a painter with the Aeronautical Research Laboratories at Fisherman’s Bend. They later moved to Reservoir in Melbourne’s north. They raised three children: Keryn, Brendan, and Stephen. Mary died in 18 May 2012 at the Maffra Hospital at age 90 years.¹



Mary Menesdorff & Murray Fitzpatrick © D Menesdorff



In 1947 Clive married Audrey Ruth Tugwell who was from Victoria Harbour in South Australia. They had three children: Lynette, Daryl, and David. Audrey Menesdorff, died on 6 March 1998 at age 73 years. Clive Menesdorff died on 22 March 2010 at Kingscote, Kangaroo Island, South Australia, at age 90. They are both buried at the

Kingscote Cemetery.



Clive’s younger sister, Dorothy Myrtle, was born at Lismore 25 November 1924. She enlisted at Adelaide on 30 November 1942 but her war work is not documented. She married Frans Passinier who was of Dutch nationality, born in 1917 in Den Helder, Holland. He had been a prisoner in the Far East in the Japanese Sendal POW camp during 1945. Dorothy and Frans married in

1946 at the St Johns Church in Toorak. They lived in Elsternwick and later in Elwood. Frans worked as a commercial traveler for Astor in Flinders street, Melbourne. Dorothy remarried in 1952 to Alexander Payson Gregory in New Brunswick, Canada; his family were Canadian for several generations but were originally from Ireland in the early 1800s. Dorothy had a daughter, Diane, from her first marriage and two sons, Hugh and Charles, from her second; they all resided in Canada. Dorothy died in New Brunswick, Canada, on 14 January 2012, at age 86 years. Her husband, Alexander Payson Gregory, died on 7 January 2014 at St John, New Brunswick, Canada, at age 90 years. #



Audrey & Clive Menesdorff 1988 © D Menesdorff

Clive’s sister, Cavaliera Mary known as Mary, was born on 31 October 1921 at Elsternwick. The family was in St Albans in the mid 1920s but Mary grew up around Adelaide and went to Unley High School. She followed in her Menesdorffer grandmother’s footsteps by becoming a seamstress. On the other hand her other grandmother, Mary Selway, was the greatest influence on the young Mary – she

¹ Mary’s eulogy was written by her son and is available at <http://cagdianao.com/Mums Eulogy/Eulogy.html>

MILLETT, Thomas and George

Thomas and George Millett were father and son and had connections with St Albans since June 1906 when Thomas moved into the district and George (with other siblings) was enrolled at the St Albans Primary school. They were from a large family headed by George Millett senior and Susanna Fitzpatrick, who were well known in Gisborne and Sunbury and, through their children, were associated with lots of hotels in country towns and around the Melbourne suburbs. The family origins in Victoria go back to the 1830s.

Susanna Fitzpatrick was born in 1834 in Enniskillen, Fermanagh, Ireland. She came with her parents to Port Phillip at age 3 months, and thus grew up as an early colonial pioneer. Her father worked as a contractor in Melbourne and made a lot of money in the early days.

George Millett was born in 1821 and was from Convent Garden, London, the son of a Church of England clergyman. He was a book binder by profession and in his youth was an accomplished singer and chorister in St Paul's Cathedral. He came to Australia about 1834 or 1836 and some reports state that he was in Tasmania for about 9 years before coming to Melbourne and becoming a publican and farmer. There is some ambiguity in the information available on the published genealogical websites. George arrived as a young teenager but there are no traces of other family members. The George Millett that websites refer to was a 13-year-old convict who was transported for stealing a handkerchief, which could explain the Tasmanian sojourn. The ship surgeon's notes indicate: "*Conduct uniformly good, a very diligent scholar, possesses considerable knowledge of the scriptures.*"¹ Of course it's possible that two lads of the same name arrived about the same time and in the same place, but that is not clearly documented in the references.

Susan Fitzpatrick and George Millett married on 29 November 1847 in the St Frances Church, Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. Susan was 16 and George was about 26. They bought the Elephant and Castle Hotel in Little Bourke Street and ran that for a year before selling it and buying more property in Elizabeth Street that they retained and later valued at £30,000. How could they have amassed such assets so quickly? One must assume that Susan's parents helped them get established. In 1853 they moved to the country and bought a small block of land at Buttlejork. They were early settlers in the area and established the Bald Hill Hotel, which was the first staging stop out of Melbourne on the road to the goldfields at Mount Alexander and Bendigo. The gold rushes brought lots of people to the colony and the hotels along the main roads could make fortunes. The Milletts'

Bald Hill Hotel was licensed from 1853 until 1907:

*"The hotel cost £80,000 to build, which would be considered an enormous amount now, but did not seem excessive in these times when material was expensive and had to be carted from the city by road, and all kinds of labour were at a premium. Mr. Millett, though not adapt for it, took to farming, renting 200 acres at the rear of the hotel, and later the large area with the Bald Hill and Mr. Beattie as a boundary, from the late Sir William Clarke's father. Their farming ventures were not successful – in fact they lost heavily by them, Mr. Millett afterwards stating that he brought £60,000 in hard cash to the Gap, but had lost a great deal of it farming."*²

Susan and George raised twelve children: Caroline, George Gabriel, Mary Anne, Thomas Patrick, William Henry, Frederick, James John, Patrick Daniel, Elizabeth, Margaret, Francis, and Susan Helena.

The family's list of holdings between 1850 and 1875 include the Elephant and Castle (their first hotel) and Smithers Wine and Spirits in Melbourne, then came Bald Hill Hotel (the Gap), Mitre Hotel (Melbourne), the Greyhound and the Village Bell (St Kilda), the Brickmakers Arms (Essendon), the Clarendon in South Melbourne, Gasometer in Fitzroy, the Imperial in Prahran, McCallister (Maffra), Monegetta Hotel, Lancefield Road Hotel, Newmarket, Preston Arms, two hotels on Ballarat Road, the Royal Hotel, Rupertswood and the Railway Hotel (Sunbury), Monmouthshire (Diggers Rest), and the Cricket Club in Morwell.³

George Millett snr died on 4 April 1890 and was buried at Sunbury. He'd been a "licensed victualler" and a farmer for 47 years. Susan Millett continued operating the family business:

*"Susan ... embraced her husband's faith in property and continued to make large investments after he died. A few years later, however, she was severely hit by the failure of the banks after the land boom of the early 1890s and lost a great deal of money."*⁴

Susan Millett née Fitzpatrick died in December 1899 at the 'advanced' age of 67 years, and she was buried at the Sunbury cemetery alongside her late husband.

Thomas Patrick Millett was born in 1858. He ran a butchering business in Station Street, Sunbury, possibly in conjunction with the slaughter yards and piggeries that were connected with the family. By 1903 he had followed the family tradition by joining the hospitality trade and taking over the Rupertswood Hotel in Sunbury and was advertising his "*superior accommodation, good fishing and shooting, terms moderate*". He had married Mary Ann Anderson about 1890. Their connection with St Albans is confirmed through the primary school

¹ http://www.founders-storylines.com/mugsheets/convicts/profile/ai49619/george_millett

² Sunbury News 16 December 1899 p3

³ Phillipa Butler; *Haystacks & Hellfire : European Settlement in South Gisborne*; Half Moon Press, Gisborne, 2009.

⁴ Phillipa Butler; *Haystacks & Hellfire*.

enrollment records, where Thomas is at first described as a publican from Sunbury (1906) and later as a farmer of St Albans (1911).

The location of their farm has not been confirmed but it was probably Block #30 of the Overnewton Estate on Taylors Road that their son George Henry Millett later acquired. The farm was in an area of clear land that was generally well grassed and interspersed with stony areas of varying extent. They grew crops, raised poultry and sheep, kept cattle for the dairy and horses for the farm work. Their neighbours were Mr. Fox to the west, Henry Griffiths to the east, and John Coleman to the south.

Thomas and Mary's children included:

- George Henry, born on 31 January 1890, enrolled at St Albans in June 1906 from North Melbourne, left in August 1906. He bought the family farm at St Albans and stayed there until 1938.
- Constance Hilda born in 1891 at Sunbury. She wed James Patterson and became the hotelkeeper at Monegetta.
- Mary Anne was born in 1893 at Sunbury. She married Walter Williams in 1923 and ran the Royal Hotel. She died in Melton in 1961 at age 68 years.
- James Patrick born 1895 at Sunbury.
- James Francis born 16 December 1897, enrolled at St Albans in January 1911 from St Mary's in Sunbury, left August 1911. He married Delia Frances Farrell of Sunbury.
- Ernest Thomas was born 19 May 1898, enrolled at St Albans in January 1911 from St Mary's in Sunbury, left in May 1911. He married Norah Moloney in 1934 and had two children. He died in 1952.
- Eileen Ethel "Dolly" was born 31 August 1899, enrolled at St Albans in January 1911 from St Mary's, Sunbury, and left in May 1911. She died on 16 February 1924 at age 24 years.

Thomas Patrick Millett died on 5 December 1918 at the Royal Hotel in Sunbury and was buried at the Sunbury cemetery. This is probably when his son George took over running the family farm – he was 28 years old at this stage with a young family to support.

George Henry Millett jnr was the oldest child of the family, born on 31 January 1890 in Sunbury. He attended St Albans Primary School in 1906. Later he acquired the 309 acres north of Taylors Road (Block #30 in the Overnewton estate) that may have been his parents' farm. He married Catherine Mary Hooton in 1915. Their children went to the Sydenham primary school, which was the closest to their home. The farm was on Taylor's Road about a mile from the Sydenham railway station and 2¼ miles from the St Albans station. Their children were:

- John Henry was born in 1915 at Keilor.

- Nancy Jean was born in 1917 at South Melbourne. She married William Edward Murphy in 1941.
- Thomas George was born 28 October 1923, and enrolled at Sydenham in January 1929, left in December 1937 for Sunshine Tech.
- Dorothy Lorna born 13 November 1926 enrolled at Sydenham in January 1932, left in March 1938 for St Johns in Footscray.
- William Joseph was born 28 March 1930, enrolled at Sydenham in August 1935, left in March 1938 for St Johns in Footscray.

George and Catherine paid off their St Albans property and received the title in 1933. They sold their St Albans farm in 1938 and moved to Barkly Street in Footscray. George was now 48 years old. The clearing sale was held on 1 April 1938:

*"Farming implements: two 6 ft. Massey-Harris binders (one new), McKay sundercut (new), McKay sundercut (reconditioned), McKay, spring tooth cultivator (25 tyne), also 15 tyne of same make, McKay Suncog 4-f plough Mitchell seed drill (15 hoe) set of drill harrows, set of stump Jump harrows spike roller (10ft), Chaff cutter (3 blades), elevator, petrol engine (3½-hp McKay), table-top wagon (Bunting) light lorry with hurdles, farm tip dray with hay frame 500-gallon water wagon (4 wheels), rubber-tired Jinker, light spring-cart, Cliff and Bunting crusher and winnower combined, horse and sheep troughs (30ft), 8-horse set pulleys and chains 8-horse set swingle bars 4 and 3 horse bars, horse chains, hay ropes and forks, 10 tons of 2ft wood, grindstone, barrows, ladders, fencing posts and wire, separator (30 gallons Pera), cream cans. Furniture: sundries, and tons of scrap iron. Poultry: fowls chickens and ducks. 100-egg incubator and brooder, 108 bags of seed wheat, 20 tons of prime oaten hay, 10 tons of green wheaten hay. Cattle: 7 cows, milking, on 2nd and 3rd calves. Sheep: 40 comeback ewes 12 fat lambs. Horses: 9 draught horses, 7 and 8 years old, one 3-year-old, with collars and hames (all sound and proved workers); spring-cart pony, child's pony."*¹

Horace and Keith Anderson most probably bought the farm though the date of purchase has not been determined. They were sons of Fred and Hannah Anderson who had a farm in Taylors Road on the eastern side of the railroad track. The Andersons were also pioneers of the district because they came from Campbellfield in 1910 and became successful crop farmers.

George Henry Millett died on 4 January 1947 at Williamstown Hospital, aged 57 years, so he died relatively young. Catherine Mary Millett née Hooton passed away in 1977 aged 78 years.²

The Millett family were hardy survivors who acquired their St Albans property in 1906 and disposed of it in 1938, so they were local farming pioneers for over thirty years. #

¹ Argus 19 March 1938 p19

² Born at Melbourne South in 1899 to William Charles Hooton and Isabella Kiniburgh

MURROWOOD, George and Sabina

George Thomas Murrowood and Sabina Dillon were home-grown Australians from the 1870s. They came from Newmarket to St Albans in 1906 after they had acquired two properties in the Overnewton Estate land sale. Sabina had been allocated 81 acres (block 46) and George 47 acres (block 47) on the north-east corner of the Boundary Road and Station Road. Their selections had patches of stone throughout. This would have been a problem for soil cultivation but was adequate for grazing. Each block had a gully running through it and one had a water hole so there might have been some hope of a basic water supply for stock.

George Thomas Murrowood, who was known as Thomas, was born on 1 August 1870 in Victoria. He was the son of James Murrowood and Sarah Evans who had migrated from Birmingham and Sheffield, England. They settled at Lake Charm in Kerang and became graziers. Late in life they moved to Princess Hill in Melbourne where James died on 5 December 1906, aged 72 years.

Sabina Scantleton was born in Kerang in 1876, the daughter of John Scantleton and Mary Ann Bax who were publicans at Lake Charm. Sabina was a one of ten siblings who were born between 1869 and 1890. She married George Thomas Murrowood and their children included:

- Horace John born 21 April 1900 in Kerang. He was admitted to St Albans primary school in May 1906 and left in August 1907. Married Ivy Pye and had three children. He died on 16 March 1967 and was buried at the Sherwood Cemetery, in Queensland.
- Thomas Percival was born 1901 at Lake Charm; married Evelyn Yates and had two children; died at Caulfield in 1966.
- Gladys Maude born 1904 at Lake Charm; married Herbert Barratt and had a son; died at Blackburn in 1975.
- Albert James was born in 1908 at Essendon; married Alice Lardner; died on 9 July 1969 and was buried at the Springvale Cemetery.
- Nancy Victoria born in 1916 in Queensland; married Douglas Farquhar and had two children; died on 5 November 1981.

The connection between Thomas and Sabina was through Lake Charm which is near Swan Hill, Kerang, and Quambatook. It had a hotel called the Kangaroo Inn (or Scantleton's Hotel) which was built as a changing station for Cobb and Co. It was run by John Scantleton who was Sabina's father. Life at Lake Charm was not as bucolically idyllic as the name implies, and it illustrates the realities of life that Sabina was confronted with as a juvenile. Her grandfather was William Bax who was the oldest resident in the district. He probably came to Australia in the early 1840s and married Sabina Dillon in 1843. They moved to

Lake Charm about 1849. In January 1889 he died quite suddenly in unusual circumstances and young Sabina at age 13 was one of the witnesses at the coronial inquiry. The unusual nature of his death was that he had been threatening suicide and there was a lot of angst in the family because they believed he had taken arsenic. The post-mortem results showed no trace of poisoning and concluded that he died from heart failure.¹

Thomas also experienced the workings of the legal system after his brother James reported that a horse valued at £12 had been stolen from one of his paddocks and an old worn out animal left in its place; a rabbit trapper recently camped in the vicinity was suspected. Constable Docking went to investigate a camp site. There were wheel tracks leading from the camp, which he followed for 50 miles and caught up with the accused horse thief. The accused was arrested and put on trial at the Bendigo Supreme Court where the jury returned a guilty verdict. As it was the prisoner's first offence, he was given the comparatively light punishment of six months imprisonment.² It shows you just how tenacious the police were in the late 1800s but these days the judge's sentence might be seen as relatively harsh and would probably be the basis for an appeal.

Sabina also became a material witness in another case against Joseph Halliwell, an officer of the Education department, who was charged for drinking, absenteeism, poor performance as a teacher, and other unsatisfactory behaviour. George Thomas Murrowood was the chairman of the school's Board of Advice and Halliwell had also been arguing with him which would not have helped. Sabina deposed that Mr. Murrowood was her affianced husband and that:

*"Halliwell had a dispute with my sister and had hold of her trying to kiss her. I said 'Let her go you big ass.' I smacked his face. He hit me three times and I called him a coward. I took some very hot water and threw it in his face. He afterwards apologised and we all made up. He was very friendly with us two sisters."*³

The defence included argument that "the trouble with the Misses Scantleton and Mr. Murrowood was merely a boyish and girlish lovers' quarrel" and that Halliwell was "a young man of rather weak will and unfit for encountering the hardships and associations waiting for a teacher in a small wayside place."⁴ The determinations of the Public Service Board were not reported.

In 1902 Thomas was working as a sheep grazier at Kangaroo Lake near Lake Charm. He became insolvent in April, which was due to two adverse actions in the Kerang County Court, losses of sheep, and bad seasons. His liabilities

¹ Kerang Times 22 Jan 1889 p2

² Kerang New Times 17 July 1903 p3

³ Kerang Times 30 Aug 1898 p2

⁴ Kerang Times 30 Aug 1898 p2

totalled £514 and assets were £330, leaving a deficit of £184.¹ In July his 164-acre farm in the parish of Bael Bael, county of Tatchera, was advertised at auction for absolute sale on cash terms. He had lost his farm and the family ended up in Newmarket in Melbourne.

St Albans in 1906 was a village. It's population had declined from 200 in 1895 to 120 in 1900. In 1906 when the Murrowoods arrived there would have been about 48 households in the district. There were positive developments with the establishment of a small general store and the Mechanics hall, and talk of forming a progress association. The Murrowoods' new start in St Albans lasted only fifteen months. Not all selectors survived their initial years as small farmers, sometimes due to lack of financial capital and sometimes because of unforeseen seasonal circumstances, which might have been the problem in this case:

*"Taking possession of their holdings in 1906 the Overnewton farmers erected fences, built houses, excavated tanks, removed stones and broke up the land preparatory to cropping it. Seeding was general early in 1907, and in the ordinary course of events there would have been a fruitful harvest at the end of the year. The bad season that ensued, while disastrous in itself, was rendered more disastrous by the fact that, in the general shortage of all kinds of produce which it caused, everything needed on the farm was about double its usual price. Horse feed had to be purchased at exceptionally heavy rates, while seed wheat and oats were much above normal prices. Financially unprepared for such an experience, the new settlers were almost to a man greatly embarrassed."*²

Thomas and Sabina Murrowood must have left St Albans in August 1907 because that is when their son Horace left the primary school. They moved to Essendon and later to St Kilda. Their selections must have been taken over by the Closer Settlement Board, because in 1908 James Henry Stevens bought both their blocks from the Board and they became the southern half of his "Edenhope" farm that stretched from the Boundary Road (Main Road) in the south to Taylors Road on the north. In 1921 George and Sabina were living in Lovely Banks, Geelong as farmers. By the mid-twenties that were back in Melbourne at Caulfield

and George was working as a wool buyer. Their son, Horace John Murrowood, enlisted in 1918 and again in 1941. He served in Singapore in 1943 and was taken as a prisoner of war in Java. He was awarded the 1939-45 Star, Pacific Star, Defence Medal, War Medal, and Australian Service Medal.#



¹ Argus 23 April 1902 p5

² Melbourne Leader 21 February 1914 p6

PARRY, Anne and William Henry

Little is known about the Parry family's life in St Albans apart from the fact that they lived in Arthur Street and were Anglicans. William Henry Parry and Anne Parry née Davies came to St Albans in the 1890s, so they arrived in the Alfred Padley era. They bought several blocks of land adjacent to Padley's "Keighlo" homestead, on the corner of Winifred and Arthur streets, including the site where the Sacred Heart Catholic Church and Primary School were built in the 1950s. Their chosen properties included the triangular block north-east of the intersection (where the Grow Church is now located), the southeastern block below Clara Clark's property (where the Buddhist Temple is now located), and the larger, south-western block where the church, convent and primary school were built in the 1950s.

Anne and William bought these properties in July 1895 from Edward N. Brown who had been appointed liquidator of the Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company Ltd.³ The Victorian Municipal Directory estimated that the population of St Albans was about 200 people and that settlement was proceeding steadily with principal streets planted with trees; there was a state school and a post office with two mails daily.

William Henry Parry had been born about 1846 and was the son of Henry and Pheobe Parry of Bromsgrove, England. William became a draper by occupation. He married Anne Davies about 1874 and they had two sons who were both born in Kington, Herefordshire, England: Frederick Archibald was born in July 1875 and Herbert Henry was born about 1878.

It is not known when the family emigrated to Australia. Their first mention in the local newspapers was in 1894 after William had a verbal altercation about council rates with Mr. Richard Porteous that led to a court hearing:

*"R. Porteous summoned W. H. Parry for indulging in insulting language, to wit, calling, him a d---fool, and the son of one, likewise saying something about head punching. The litigants are dwellers on the plains by St. Albans, which circumstance may have something to do with the strong words."*⁴

The result was a fine of 10/- with 27/- costs in default a week's imprisonment. The next mention of William Parry in the media was in 1900 after an accident:

"While driving in a buggy along the Flemington-road last evening two men, named William H. Parry, aged 54 living at St Albans, and Alex. McMasters, aged 69, living at Grace Darling Hotel, Smith-street, Collingwood, met with a nasty accident. They were turning a sharp corner, when one of the wheels of the buggy ran into a groove on the tramway line, overturning the vehicle. The men were severely

³ St Albans The First Hundred Years, St Albans Railway Centenary Committee, 1986, p18

⁴ Footscray Independent 15 December 1894 p2

shaken, Parry having one elbow dislocated while the other occupant received a cut over the eye. They were taken to the Hospital, where Parry was admitted.”¹

The first press article to appear about Anne Parry was her death notice in 1903:

“On the 20th March, suddenly, at her late residence, St Albans, Anne, the dearly beloved wife of William Henry Parry, and beloved mother of F. A. and H. H. Parry, aged 65 years.”²

The 1903 Sands & McDougall Directory had 38 households listed for St Albans and the Victorian Municipal Directory estimate from 1900 was about 120 people in the district, so the population had decreased since the early 1890s.

The circumstances of William Henry Parry's death are unclear except that it was some time between 1903 and 1914. (The suicide of a man named William Henry Parry was registered in 1907 but there are no details of next of kin so it's not possible to confirm if he was the St Albans selector.) In any case, the sons do not appear to have retained any connections with the district.

The older son, Frederick Archibald Parry, was born in July 1875 in Kington, Herefordshire, England. Like his father, he worked as a draper. He married May Rhoda Heales at Northcote in September 1902. May was born in 1881 and was the daughter of Samuel Thomas Heales and Mary Elizabeth Minnie Yewers. Frederick and May had seven children born between 1897 and 1915. There is no indication that the family had ever lived in St Albans. Frederick Parry died in Kew in 1943 at the age of 68 years and was buried at Kew cemetery. May Rhoda Parry née Heales died in 1958 at the age of 77 years and was also buried at the Kew cemetery.

The younger son, Herbert Henry Parry, was born about 1878 at Kington, Herefordshire, England. He settled in St Albans with his parents and is listed as a labourer in the 1903 electoral roll. In 1914 at the age of 37 years he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces and served with the 6th Battalion, 1st Australian Division. His application papers show that he had previously served overseas with the 5th Victorian Contingent volunteer forces for two years (South Africa - Boer War).

Private Herbert Henry Parry embarked from Melbourne on 2 February 1915 and was killed in action at Gallipoli on 18 July 1915. His remains are buried in the Shrapnel Valley Cemetery, about 400 yards southeast of Anzac Cove. He was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal. His name is located at panel 48 in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial.

Herbert Henry Parry had served his adopted country well and made the ultimate sacrifice, for which he should be remembered with honour. #

PFANNENSTIEL, Hugo and Emily

Hugo Pfannenstiel was Swedish. He was born on 12 June 1853 and his parents were Carl and Ketty “Christina” Pfannenstiel. Hugo married Miss Emilia Baumgardt who was born about 1868; her parents were Marie Loui Lathangue and Theo Baumgardt. Hugo and Emily with their daughter Ketty sailed from the port of Göteborg, Sweden, on 12 April 1890 and headed for Sydney.

Hugo and Emily were in Robb Street Moonee Ponds in 1893. In 1894 they settled into their St Albans home that they had named “Manhem”. It was in Albert Crescent on the corner of Gertrude Street – this was some of the 1868 Closer Settlement land that was acquired by Dr. Louis Lawrence Smith who then sold it to the Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company prior to their liquidation in the mid 1890s.

Hugo Pfannenstiel is included in the 1902 listing of St Albans in the Melbourne Directory but not in the 1906 voters roll, so he must not have been a naturalized citizen at this time. In Sweden his occupation was listed as engineer, but in Australia he worked as a draftsman. In 1912 he was working with the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works in their House Connections and Survey Branch.³ His biggest contribution to St Albans' architecture is that he designed the Presbyterian church that was built on the corner of Elaine Street and Circus East:

“A new Presbyterian Church was opened on October 17 at St. Albans by the Rev. W. Fraser, of Ascot Vale, assisted by the Rev. G. S. Brodie, minister of the parish. There was a large attendance including many visitors from Sunshine. The Sunshine choir provided the music. The services were continued in the evening when the Rev. A. W. Butler, of Footscray, preached to a good congregation. The church is a fine, roomy building, and is a welcome addition to St. Albans. It has been chiefly built by members of the committee, assisted by Mr. H. V. McKay, of Sunshine, and other friends. The design is by Mr. H. Pfannenstiel, a committee-man.”⁴

The Pfannenstiels had two daughters. Ketty (named after her grandmother) was often called Kitty. She was born in Sweden on 19 January 1887 and enrolled in the St Albans primary school in July 1894 and left in October 1897. She re-enrolled in January 1901 and left in April 1901. The second daughter, Marie Louisa, was born in Keilor in 1897 and died on 21 July 1901, aged 3 years 8 months, and was buried at the Keilor cemetery.⁵

The family were members of the St Albans Presbyterian congregation and took part in the various activities and social functions that were organised through the church.

Ketty had a talent for music and put that to

¹ Argus 2 August 1900 p7

² Leader 28 March 1903 p43

³ Punch 18 July 1912 p22

⁴ Weekly Times 24 October 1914 p8

⁵ The Argus 23 July 1901

good use in supporting charity events and social functions at the church and other venues. She went to Melbourne University and passed her first year diploma in December 1909. In 1911 she passed the examination set by the Council of Public Education in the practical teaching of music and thus was entitled to registration as a music teacher. It is interesting to note that Ketty of St Albans was listed as being one of their "country students".¹ In 1914 she obtained her full Diploma in Music from Melbourne University and had private students by 1916.

Not much is recorded about her locally except for some examples of her performances. In 1924 she was an organiser and artist in the appeal to support the recently widowed Mrs. Magee. In August 1933 she was the piano accompanist at the kitchen tea for the coming marriage of Effie Hughes and Eric Perrett.² In December 1936 she was the joint organizer and accompanist with Mrs. Agnes Stevens for a concert at the Presbyterian Church:

*"With a heartening display of kindness and devotion the ladies of St. Albans Presbyterian Church brought to Sunshine on Wednesday last a large company of artists and friends, who gave entertainment and greetings to the local congregation. The event, which was organised and directed principally by Miss Pfannenstiel and Mrs. Stevens, deserved a much better attendance, and the hope was expressed that the visit might be repeated with a result more worthy."*³

In November 1939 she was one of the artists at the fund-raising concert for the Red Cross society. In January 1940 she was the accompanist when the St Albans Presbyterian congregation held a public tribute to Miss Annie Ball for her years of support with the Sunday School and Christian Endeavour. In 1943 she was accompanying the state school students on the annual speech night and presentation.

Hugo Pfannenstiel died on 24 July 1933 at 80 years of age and was buried at the Keilor cemetery. Emily Pfannenstiel née Baumgardt died on 8 April 1958 at Bacchus Marsh at 90 years and was also buried at Keilor.

Ketty Pfannenstiel left St Albans but her later life is not documented through the local media. The electoral rolls record her as being in the Bamawm Extension during the 1950s and 1960s, and her occupation is listed as "home duties". Bamawm Extension is near Echuca on the Murray River in the Rochester irrigation district. In the 1970s she had returned to Melbourne and was living in Tooronga Road, Glen Iris.

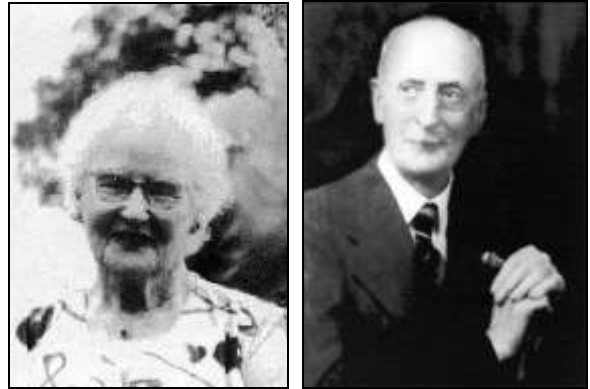
Ketty Pfannenstiel, music teacher late of St Albans, died on 10 December 1974 at the age of 87 years, and is buried at Keilor. They were all St Albans pioneers from the 1890s. #

¹ Ballarat Star 16 December 1911 p4

² Sunshine Advocate 11 August 1933 p5

³ Sunshine Advocate 18 December 1936 p3

PORTEOUS, Richard and Lillie



Richard Porteous was from County Cork, Ireland, and was listed in the 1902 electoral roll for St Albans as being a photographer in Station Avenue, but he might have come to the district as early as 1894 when the first local press reference about him was in a sarcastic article referring to St Albans as "Little Pedlington."⁴ The story is that:

*"R. Porteous summoned W. H. Parry⁵ for indulging in insulting language, to wit, calling, him a d--- fool, and the son of one, likewise saying something about head punching. The litigants are dwellers on the plains by St. Albans, which circumstance may have something to do with the strong words. Some saints would say cuss things if so situated. Anyway, they met in a train on the 1st inst., and Parry asked plaintiff to join in a general appeal against the rate struck, the latter declined to accede or be dictated to, hence the sultry sequel. A solicitor for the defence appealed to the bench not to record a conviction against his client who, he alleged, was one of the leading residents 'of that important and rising City of St. Albans,' whereat the bench and audience smiled. It was apparently one of those neighborly affairs which occasionally occur in densely packed centres of population like the City of St Albans. If you go into a bush township where there are only three families and a stray dog, you won't find any two of them on speaking terms. A fine of 10/-, with 27/- costs in default one week's imprisonment, was the order, and there will be an eternal feud out that way."*⁶

Richard was described as a tall and handsome man with a whimsical Irish charm and talents in photography and art. He had married Lillie Alice Short in 1891 in South Melbourne; she was from Coatbridge, Scotland. They were living in South Yarra and three children were born in the district:

- Lillie Clarice was born on 31 May 1895 at Armadale and started at the newly-built St Albans State School in October 1900 and left in December 1908. In 1905 she had the distinction of receiving first prize in the Arbor

⁴ From a satire by John Poole referring to a village of quackery, cant, humbug, and egotism.

⁵ William Henry Parry and Anne Parry had land on the corner of Winifred and Arthur streets where the Sacred Heart church and school were built in the 1950s.

⁶ Footscray Independent 15 December 1894 p2

Day celebrations for the best tended tree at the school. In 1915 Clarice married Leslie Noel Connell of Brighton and they went to live in Western Australia. They did not have any children. She died of tuberculosis on 20 December 1925, at age 29 years. Leslie Connell died on 21 April 1940.

- Richard Sydney was born 12 August 1896 at Armadale, started at St Albans primary school in June 1901 and left in March 1911. He became good mates with the McElwee children who'd arrived in 1905 with their stationmaster father and they stayed friends for life.¹ After leaving school Syd worked as a labourer and jackaroo before enlisting in 1914 and serving in the Middle East. After the war he became a popular author in the 1940s and died in 1963, at the age of 66.
- Sylvia Doris was born on 18 May 1898 at South Yarra, started at St Albans Primary in November 1902 and left in November 1912. She married Ernest Lionel Timson in Brisbane in June 1925 and they had a son, Ernest Richard, and a daughter. Her parents joined them in the 1930s. Doris died in 1967 in Mornington at 69 years old. Ernest died in 1975 in Mornington at age 75 years.

According to her son, Lillie Porteous was the daughter of an army chaplain in the Black Watch regiment and had been brought up in barracks with officers, officers' wives and children:

*"Mother was small and pretty with a fresh Scottish complexion that, even in later years, needed no make-up. My sisters and I regarded her as frail and delicate, a delusion she took pains to foster. Years later, we were to realize she was as hardy as the heather in her own Scottish hills. When it came to the point she had all the drive and tenacity of purpose that Dad lacked and she was to outlast him by many years."*²

Lillie's initial decade in St Albans was no doubt less genteel than her upbringing and had its particular hardships. According to the Victorian Births' Register, there were two daughters born while the family was living in St Albans but they are not mentioned elsewhere so they must not have survived; they were both born at Footscray, Alice in 1905 and Martha in 1909.

Dick Porteous's professional life as a photographer has not been documented locally, but he worked from the Vandyk Studios at 274 Collins Street, East Melbourne, next to the General Post Office in Bourke Street; they were a large and very well established concern. Dick's specialty was tinting black and white photos with oil paints and transforming them into coloured photos. Some photographs of local people would be done from

his home, such as wedding snaps. At other times he would arrange a special session at his city office, such as the presentation portraits of the players and officials of the St Albans Cricket Club in 1913.

Porteous received good press coverage for his entertaining lectures and lantern shows; e.g. a lantern lecture on "A Trip through India" at St John's Church in Deer Park (1903), and at St Alban the Martyr Church he used the beautiful pictures he took while on a yachting cruise in Tasmanian waters (1904). Dick Porteous was a vestryman with the St Alban the Martyr Church and for a time was President of the St Albans Mutual Improvement Society.³ He was a Vice President of the St Albans Cricket Club in 1913.⁴

Mrs. Lillie Porteous was a community-spirited volunteer. She would play the organ at the church and lead the young choir as well as training and accompanying young members in their musical and singing presentations. In 1907 she trained some of the "juveniles of St Albans" to sing in a grand concert in aid of the Church of England funds.⁵ In 1916 one cause was in aid of the Blinded Soldiers' and Sailors' Fund and the Tobacco Fund "*for the lads on active service*". As with many ladies of the town, Mrs. Porteous did her duty in preparing and managing the refreshments at social events. The Mechanics Institute was often the venue for such occasions; e.g. when the St Albans Improvement Society gave a return social to the Ladies' Club. The family's connection with the hall was strong because Dick Porteous was one of the elected trustees along with Edward Luxford and Frederick Stenson. Dick was there at the official opening of the hall in 1906 when townspeople acknowledged the £100 government grant that had subsidized nearly half the cost of the building.

"Miss Porteous" was known to take part in pianoforte duets at some events, such as in aid of the Wounded Soldier Fund, but the reports do not say which daughter was the pianist.⁶

Sometimes special fundraising occurred in response to the European conflict and one such event was the patriotic concert organised in aid of the Belgian Relief Fund. Activities included a variety of group performances such as singing, recitation, and dancing the Highland Fling that delighted the audience: "*some of whom came to sniff and remained to praise, and a few have gained a local unassailable reputation.*" Local councilor James Henry Stevens moved a vote of thanks to those who had arranged or assisted with the concert, and particularly thanked Mr. and Mrs. Porteous "*who had originated the idea and not only had they done a large share of work and contributed a sum of money, but they were sending to the front an only son.*"⁷

¹ William Colin McElwee served overseas with Syd Porteous in the 8th Light Horse and was awarded the 1914/15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.

² Quoted in Rob Laurent's *Changing Horses* p4

³ Footscray Independent 17 September 1910

⁴ Footscray Independent 1 November 1913 p2

⁵ Footscray Independent 2 March 1907 p2

⁶ Footscray Independent 29 April 1916 p2

⁷ Footscray Independent 5 December 1914 p4

With regard to their son, in May 1917 they received word from the Defence Department that Trooper Sydney Porteous, 8th Light Horse, had been mentioned in despatches for conspicuous services rendered while in action in Egypt.¹

The Porteous family was still resident in St Albans in 1917 but left about 1919 and returned to live in South Yarra. Apparently Dick Porteous and a business colleague had established a specialist portraiture studio in Melbourne targeting high society clientele but the partnership went bust and the St Albans home was lost in the process of debt repayments. The family ended up in Middle Brighton because in 1927 it was reported that:

*"...four persons staying at the Healesville Golf House were the victims of thieves. Richard Porteous, photographer, Middle Brighton, left jewellery in the pockets of his clothes when he retired at 12.30. When he awoke the jewellery was missing."*²

The best-referenced member of the family would undoubtedly be the son, Richard Sydney Porteous, known as Syd. After leaving St Albans State school he worked at various odd jobs before enrolling to study art with Fred McCubbin and Bernard Hall at Melbourne's National Gallery Art School. Between 1911 and 1913 he was studying drawing, anatomy and composition and in the meantime he was developing his powers of observation by studying the characters around him:

*"Old Frederick McCubbin was too polite, too easy going and too genial to make a good teacher. He tended to flatter the good points of a pupil's work rather than point out the mistakes. Bernard Hall was just the opposite. Ruthlessly rude he cared nothing for a pupil's feelings."*³

Syd was there for three years but didn't finish the course and ended up working as a jackaroo on a Riverina sheep station.



Syd Porteous enlisted in 1914 and served with the 8th Light Horse Regiment in the Middle East. He was shot in the jaw during the advance on Jerusalem and spent time in the hospital with malaria. He was promoted to squadron quartermaster sergeant in May 1919 and discharged in October 1919. He was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal. He married Marion Maclaren Paterson in 1927. She died during childbirth on 2

¹ Argus 10 May 1917 p6. He was mentioned three times in despatches; the mention in April 1917 was for distinguished services rendered during the period of General A. J. Murray's Command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Forces.

² Healesville and Yarra Glen Guardian 8 Jan 1927 p4

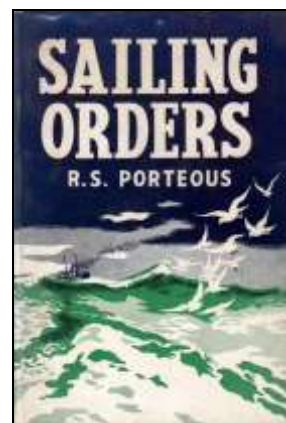
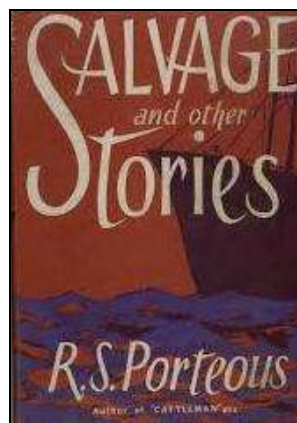
³ Porteous quoted in Rob Laurent's *Changing Horses* p9

August 1930 having delivered a daughter. Syd remarried on 23 August 1932 to Elizabeth Madge Archer in St Paul's Anglican Cathedral in Rockhampton. There were three daughters from the two marriages: Marie, Sue, and Prue.

During the Second World War, Syd served as a merchant marine. When the U.S. Army assembled a fleet of small ships to carry supplies to troops in Papua and New Guinea, he signed on as a second mate in December 1942 but was discharged a year later due to health problems. The Sydney Morning Herald wrote of him that:

*"During the New Guinea campaign he was Chief Officer in the M.V. Kurrimaru, carrying troops and supplies from Milne Bay to Oro Bay, Buna, Lae, and Finschhafen."*⁴

Syd began writing stories about his maritime experiences and "Little Known of These Waters" was published under the pseudonym of 'Standby' with stories about "the complex pattern of Allied victory in little-known islands of the South Pacific and their reef-toothed waters".⁵ Because of wartime censorship, he disguised his stories as letters to his wife Betty who sent them to the Bulletin for publication.⁶ He also wrote "Sailing Orders" based on his experience in New Guinea. The Sydney Morning Herald gave him the bold headline of "Grand Old Man of the Sea" and thus applied a sobriquet appropriate to both the author and his main character who is "old and tired and gruff and he has a stiff leg and false teeth, but each succeeding crisis works like a rejuvenating agent upon him."⁷ (Predating the better-known celebrity and narrative of Ernest Hemingway.)



Syd's later publications appeared in his own name and he became known as 'Skip' Porteous. His output was quite extensive and his better-known grand sagas include *Brigalow* (1957) and *Cattleman* (1960) which received the Courier-Mail's £1000 Centenary Novel award. Overall, he

⁴ Sydney Morning Herald 18 January 1947 p12

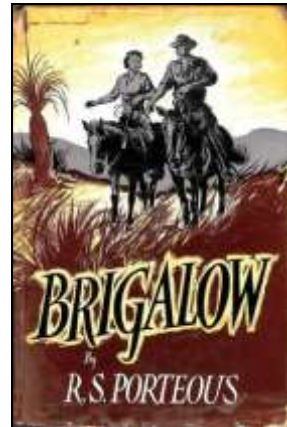
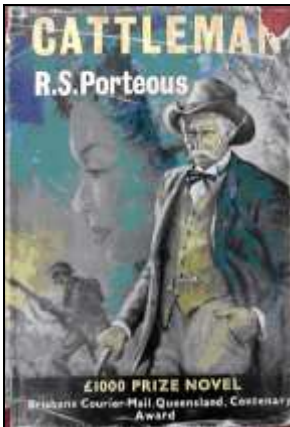
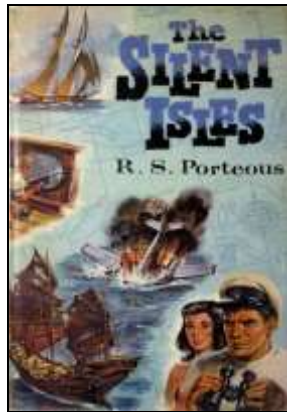
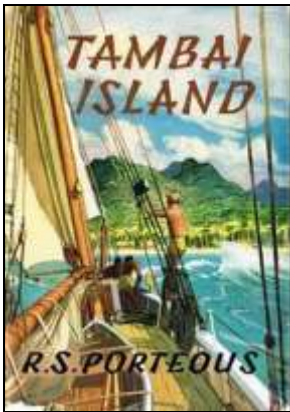
⁵ Courier-Mail 23 February 1946 p2

⁶ Robert Dixon, *Porteous, Richard Sydney (1896–1963)* <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/porteous-richard-sydney-11445>

⁷ Sydney Morning Herald 18 Jan 1947 p12

wrote several books, and about 130 short stories and articles by the 1960s. He was even published in London. Not bad for a St Albans village boy.

In summary, Skip Porteous lived a very adventurous life. He had worked as a labourer, jackaroo, soldier, commercial artist, station manager and part owner, sailor, charter fishing operator, and finally as a well respected author, playwright and director. He settled in Mackay and his literary output became significant in Queensland writing. He became a contributing member of the Mackay Community Theatre for whom he wrote and directed several plays. His broad life experience was no doubt the basis for many of his stories.



In the thirties Dick and Lillie Porteous moved to Brisbane and were living with their daughter Doris and her husband Ernest Timson. Back in St Albans at the Silver Jubilee of the Progress Association they still remembered Dick Porteous for the service he had rendered to the community.¹ In Brisbane, Dick was working in photography and Lillie ran her own tea rooms. In the fifties they had moved to Sydney where Dick was still working in photography and is remembered as being:

“... a tall, quiet, elegant, dignified gentleman who seemed to be far removed and disinterested in the commercial world, preferring to live quietly with us, earning a little now and again with a preference for artistic pursuits.”²

¹ Sunshine Advocate 2 September 1932 p4

² Quoted in Rob Laurent's *Changing Horses* p177

Later they moved to Newcastle where Dick died of pneumonia in 1954 at the age of 85 years. Lillie Porteous née Short died on 25 May 1960 of heart failure at the Newcastle hospital.

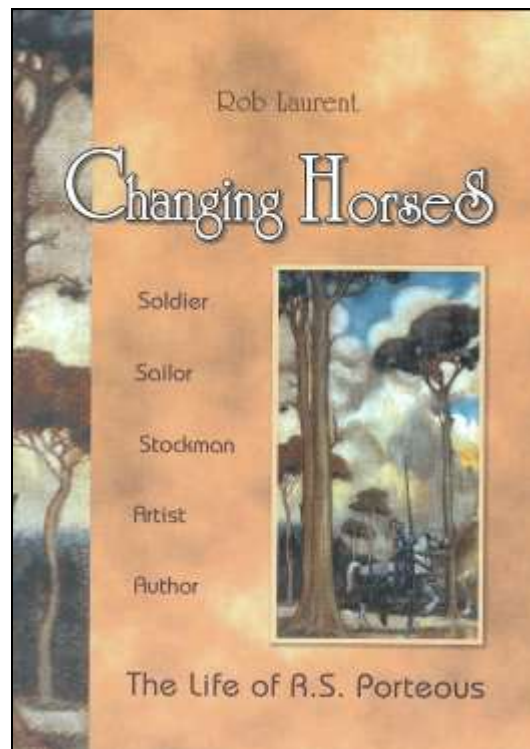
Skip's second wife Madge Elizabeth Archer died in 1957 and in 1961 Skip married Jessie Mary Boden née Archer in St John's Anglican Cathedral, Brisbane. His failing health necessitated radiation treatment and surgery for cancer in the left eye and in his latter years he wore an eye patch. He died of cancer on 10 April 1963 at his Mackay home at the age of 66 years and was buried at the Mount Basset cemetery with an accompanying War Service plaque.³



Skip's biography has been written by Rob Laurent and is titled *“Changing Horses: The Life of R. S. Porteous”*. It should be compulsory reading for all St Albans historians to remind us just how a young lad from St Albans at the turn of last century could live such a grand saga and write about his

adventures in a world that was enormously bigger than his little boyhood village.

The Porteous family had been pioneers of St Albans for about 20 years and deserve to be remembered for that. #



³ Biographic material by Robert Dixon <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/porteous-richard-sydney-11445> from Dictionary of Biography, Volume 16, (MUP), 2002

RITCHIE, Malcolm and Jane

Block 21 of the Overnewton Estate was acquired by "M. Ritchie" of Overnewton in 1905, and that was probably Malcolm Ritchie – but which one? because there were three of them: father, son and grandson. The name "Overnewton" is also somewhat ambiguous in this context but it most likely refers to the township of Overnewton that was renamed as Sydenham.¹ Most probably the Overnewton Estate settler was the son, Malcolm Ritchie of Sydenham, who obtained 241 acres south-west of the Sydenham railway station. It was an area of flat tussocky volcanic formation that was well grassed and included a dam. Malcolm and his brother James had farmland at Sydenham in 1868 and Malcolm was listed as a resident in 1911,² which fits the timelines nicely. This property was outside the St Albans district, but the Ritchie family was related to the McRrae family of Taylors Road in St Albans, and that's probably where Malcolm moved to in later life.

The Ritchie family were early pioneers in the Keilor-Bulla-Tullamarine area. Their ancestors were Malcolm Ritchie and Elizabeth McHardy, farmers in Milton of Aucholzie, Glenmuick, Aberdeenshire, Scotland. Mr. Ritchie is said to have arrived in Port Phillip on the *Himalaya* on 30 September 1840³ and died in Bulla before 1885. His wife Elizabeth McHardy also migrated in the 1840s and died in Keilor in 1882.⁴ The lives of Malcolm and Elizabeth in the colony are not documented locally. There is a reference to the family included in Alexander's *Victoria and its Metropolis* of 1888 but it is about the son Malcolm and his family.⁵

The Ritchie children migrated in the 1840s or 1850s and became involved in the new phase of colonial settlement in the gold rush era. The sons included Alexander, Malcolm, James, John and Charles. They became graziers and were mostly associated with horses and cattle with some sheep. There were at least three sisters: Jane had married James Robertson, while Annie married William Peters of Mount Macedon, and Elizabeth married James Peters of Mt. Macedon – for the latter two it was a case of two sisters marrying two brothers at the same place and time.⁶ Malcolm, John and James established a business under the name Ritchie Brothers and named their farms after

places in Scotland from where the family had come, such as Aucholzie, Ballater, and Gowrie. Alexander died in 1859, Elizabeth in 1862, Anne in 1874, John in 1878, James in 1883, and Charles in 1891. Malcolm was the longest-lived of the family as he survived into his eighties and died in 1913.

Malcolm Ritchie the son was born in Scotland about 1828 and migrated to Australia in 1849 at the age of 21 years. He started working for George Coghill at Bulla but left to become a gold prospector in New South Wales. He must have been successful because he came back a couple of years later and bought land in the Tullamarine district. They must have felt "almost at home" because of the number of Scottish families around them, and it seems quite a few were from Aberdeen. This did not preclude the normal neighbourhood rivalries, and one tale is about the competitiveness of the Ritchies and Mansfields in land acquisition in the Tullamarine-Bulla area, when David Mansfield (who was from Suffolk, England) once disguised himself as a swagman to outbid Ritchie at a land auction.⁷

In the 1850s, 98% of the population in the Parish of Maribyrnong (Keilor district) were British subjects, and mostly they were from England (28%) Ireland (27%), Scotland (23%) and one-fifth were Australian-born (18%). The biggest of the non-British groups were seven Germans (1%) and one could hardly call them a significant minority.⁸

By the mid 1880s Ritchie either owned or leased about 1,000 acres where he bred horses and cattle. He also had the Overpostle property on Tullamarine Island.

Malcolm Ritchie married Jane Gray on 26 September 1856. Her parents were Donald Gray (from Aberdeen, Scotland) and Agnes Gray, of Bellno at Deep Creek in Bulla.⁹ Malcolm and Jane raised nine children including: Elizabeth (1857-1930), Jean (1859-1940), Annie (1862-1927), Malcolm (1864-1949), John (1865-1946), James (1868-1879), Alexander (1871-1956), Charles (1874-1941), and William (1876-1881).

Malcolm was involved with municipal politics very early and *Melbourne and Its Metropolis* confirms it was the son and not the father who became the councilor. The Keilor Roads Board was formed in 1862 under the direction of William Taylor and the first election for the Board occurred on 23 March 1863 by a show of hands. Nine candidates were elected to represent Keilor village, Sydenham, and St Albans.¹⁰ The elected candidates were George Dodd, Dugald McPhail, James Robertson, Patrick Phelan, John McNab,

¹ Proclamation on 1 August, 1907 rescinded the Township on the Overnewton Estate. The Township of Sydenham was proclaimed in 1953. Keilor Historical Society Newsletter October 2002 p4

² Alie Missen *Sydenham Memorial Moments: A Discovery Tour of Local Places and People*, 2008 pp113-114.

³ Alie Missen *Sydenham Memorial Moments*, Prahran Mechanics Institute Press, 2008, p16

⁴ One obituary states that Mrs. and Mr. Ritchie senior arrived in Melbourne in 1846.

⁵ Alexander Sutherland, *Victoria and its Metropolis Past and Present*, 1888

⁶ Argus 19 October 1855 p4

⁷ Neil Mansfield *The David Mansfield Story: A Genealogical History of his Descendants in Australia*, 1999; p41

⁸ http://hccda.ada.edu.au/pages/VIC-1854-census-06_16

⁹ Argus 2 October 1856 p4

¹⁰ The three Keilor "ridings" were Maribyrnong (St Albans and Sydenham), Dousta Galla (east of Keilor village), and Tullamarine (north of the village).

Malcolm Ritchie, William Taylor, John Eagling, and John Grant.¹ The longest-serving members of the Keilor Road Board and later Keilor Shire Council were Taylor and Ritchie. Ritchie was involved until 1907 and Taylor until 1911.

In the 1860s Ritchie was a member of the Port Phillip Farmers' Society which was the forerunner to the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria. He often served as a judge of horses at their annual show and some of the ploughing competitions in the district. In the 1870s he was an office bearer of the Field, Fence and Chattel League and one of their aims was "to repress the aggression of the Melbourne Hunt Club."² One wonders if that put him at odds with his future son-in-law, Farquhar McRae of Bulla, who was a strong supporter of the Oakland Hounds. Ritchie was a member of the Board of Advice for the Keilor School District with colleagues such as John Grant, Crawford Harvie, David Millburn and Henry Seuling.³

In the 1880s the Ritchie Brothers comprised of James and Malcolm, but the partnership was terminated by mutual consent in August 1883. Gowrie Park was sold in 1885, and Aucholzie and Springs Estate in 1886. The Aucholzie Park sale might have fallen through as Ritchie was offering it for sale again in 1899.

Malcolm Ritchie already had connections with Sydenham when he acquired his new Overnewton selection and he became involved in negotiations on behalf of other selectors:

*"At a well attended meeting of settlers on the Overnewton Estate which was held at Mr. Ritchie's house, Sydenham, it was decided to ask the Government to suspend payment of the second installment of rent, due on 31st May, pending the adoption of the amendments of the Closer Settlement Act promised by the Government. A petition was drawn up and signed and a deputation was appointed to bring the matter before the Government."*⁴

Ritchie was still a Keilor councillor so his voice must have given some weight to the district's concerns. However, he remained on council for only another year, until August 1907 when his term expired. At the election Ritchie was outpolled by Mr. L. G. Woods,⁵ who was one of the settlers from the Arundel Estate. Interestingly, William Taylor lost his position on council in a similar fashion not long afterwards, in 1911, when he was outpolled by Henry Coleman, who was another new settler on the Overnewton Estate in St Albans.

In 1912 Malcolm Ritchie left his Sydenham

home and moved to St Albans with one of his daughters. It is not known where he was living in St Albans, but it might have been with his daughter Anne Ritchie who had married Farquhar McRae and had property in Taylors Road that was also part of the Overnewton Estate. Anne Ritchie had been born in 1862 at Tullamarine and married Farquhar McRae in 1899 – they became successful farmers.

St Albans in the early 1900s was a small farming village and so was the district in which it was centred. Keilor shire had 145 dwellings and 613 people; the population had been static over the last decade. Braybrook shire had 286 dwellings and 1,430 people; it had had a decline in population over the decade. St Albans had 48 households and about 120 people, so it was a village with a fairly static population.

Malcolm Ritchie died at St Albans on 4 May 1913 at the age of 85 years and his remains were interred in Bulla cemetery. He had been a colonist of the district 64 years.⁶

Jane Ritchie née Gray died on 5 July 1913, at St Albans, at the age of 83 years.⁷ She had been a home-grown Australian and resident in the district for 66 years.

The third Malcolm Ritchie in the district was the son of Malcolm Ritchie and Jane Gray. He was born in 1864 in Keilor, so he could not have been involved in the municipal activities of the 1870s. He married Ada Bonney in 1895 and most of their children were born around Lang Lang south-west of Melbourne, so it's unlikely that they had much involvement in St Albans. Their children were David William (1896-1896), Myrtle Emma (1897-1902), Clement Augustus (1898), Charles Malcolm (1899-1900), Ellen Margaret (1901-1924), and Arthur Ernest (1902-1976). Malcolm died at 196 Pilgrim Street Footscray on 20 January 1949, aged 85 years.⁸

There was a fourth Malcolm Ritchie and that was Malcolm Ritchie McRae who was the son of Anne Ritchie and Farquhar McRae and grew up in St Albans with his sisters Florence and Jean. This Malcolm was born in 1902 and inherited his father's and grandfather's love of horses. He rode with the Oakland Hounds and in 1933 was awarded the first prize for the best rider at the Royal show. He married Eileen Nellie Darmondy and they became hotel proprietors with a special interest in horse racing and breeding. Probably one of their best racing stories was when their horse Welkin Sun ran second in the 1952 Melbourne Cup. This Malcolm was known as Sonny McRae and after his parents died he inherited much of the land in the eastern part of St Albans that was later developed as Kealba. The Ritchie family had definite connections with St Albans. #

¹ John Grant and Malcolm Ritchie were neighbours and in 1880 Angus Grant married Elizabeth Ritchie.

² Age 28 June 1870 p2

³ Argus 23 June 1873 p8

⁴ Age 19 May 1906 p12. Ritchie's role as advocate for Overnewton settlers was later taken over by James Henry Stevens who also became a Keilor councillor.

⁵ Did not stand for re-election when his term expired in 1910. Possibly Lewis Grant Woods who died in 1910.

⁶ Bacchus Marsh Express 17 May 1913

⁷ Argus 7 July 1913

⁸ Argus 22 January 1949 p15

ROBINSON, James and Catherine

James Robinson was a British immigrant born in Strickland Kettle, Westmorland, England, one of sixteen children born to George Robinson (1823-1897) and Isabella Barns (1830-1916). James came to Australia as a young man and ended up working with the railways department in country Victoria. In 1888 James Robinson wed Catherine Louisa Stewart and they came with their children to live and work in St Albans. This was the era of William Taylor's Overnewton Estate being subdivided and sold to a new generation of aspiring farm selectors. James had been working with the Victorian Railways near the town of Ararat and was appointed as the new stationmaster at St Albans in 1905. The district was mainly pastoral and agricultural and the population was probably only about 100 people.

Prior to James Robinson's appointment, the stationmasters at St Albans had served for brief periods of two or three years at a time. The new century started with the appointment of George Newstead who was transferred from Cowwarr in Gippsland. He was then replaced in 1904 by Mr. McElwee from Bonnie Doon near Mansfield but he also didn't stay long. When Robinson started in 1905 he and his family ended up staying for more than twenty years and thus he was one of the longest serving stationmasters that the district has ever had.

The Robinsons must have arrived in June 1905 because that's when the younger children were admitted to the St Albans Primary School.

James and Catherine Robinson had at least five children, these being:

- George Edmund was born 19 September 1888 at Glenorchy and he married Ada Burton of St Albans. He enlisted on 21 April 1942 and is registered as a Private with service number V362296 but without any other information being published.
- John Henry was born 27 August 1890 and started at St Albans Primary School in June 1905 having transferred from Dobies.¹
- Isabella Catherine was born 9 September 1892, started at St Albans Primary in June 1905 and left in December 1907. She wed James Knuckey of Newport in 1915.
- Frances Alice May was born on 9 July 1896 and admitted to the primary school in June 1905; she left in October 1911. She married Edward Mottram of St Albans.
- William born 27 September 1896 and was admitted to the primary school in June 1905 and left in August 1909.

¹ The township of Dobies or Dobies Bridge is about eight kilometres south east of Ararat. The area was named after Jack Dobie who was the manager of the Langi Ghiran sheep station in the 1850s. The Dobie railway siding consisted of a station and two houses.

The Robinsons arrived at a time of gradual change for a small semi-rural village, where in the 1880s establishing the railway station had been seen as the key to its development as a desirable urban location – the railway line would provide the connection to Melbourne and this would attract the property developers. The dreams of quick fortunes crashed with the 1890's land bust. Despite this setback the community's physical and social infrastructure started growing along the railway line: the new primary school (1900), Aylmer's general store (1903), the Mechanics Institute Hall (1906), the St Albans Progress Association (1908), and St Alban the Martyr Anglican Church (1910). The Presbyterian Church was built a bit later, in 1912.

Postal authorities had proposed opening a post office at the railway station in October 1888 and so between 1905 and early 1908 James Robinson was the also local postmaster. Then in May 1908 James Stevens as Secretary of the Overnewton and District Progress Association petitioned the Postmaster General's Department for the postal service to be transferred to the local general store in Main Road West and that's what happened. Mr. Robert Aylmer thus became the village postmaster and storekeeper.

In 1907 there had been talk of relocating the railway station a mile further north past Biggs Street to be nearer to the Overnewton settlers, but at that stage the railway department had just completed re-decking the existing platform, which strengthened their commitment to the existing location and unsurprisingly there was no change. Other improvements were taken up however and in particular upgrading the living conditions for the station master's family. A local press report in 1910 highlighted:

*"The stationmaster's house at St Albans is very defective and requires immediate attention on the part of the Department. The two main rooms are badly ventilated and the three skillion rooms at the rear are, in my opinion, not fit to be used as dwelling rooms. In addition to all this the building is some feet below the level of the platform and is thus exposed to the dangers of infective dust blowing into the rooms through door and windows from the platform. The offensive odors from the closets permeate the whole building. This convenience should be removed to a more suitable site and deodorants should be supplied the stationmaster."*²

This proposal was eventually adopted because the new residence was completed in 1912, and a small goods shed and loading platform were also erected in the station yards. Eventually there were at least three railway house built opposite the station to house extra families.

Train disasters did occur occasionally even in relatively unpopulated areas. On 20 April 1908 the biggest ever "local" rail disaster occurred at Sunshine (previously known as Braybrook Junction)

² Footscray Independent 14 May 1910 p1

when the Bendigo train coming through St Albans collided with the Ballarat train – 44 people were killed and 431 were injured. However, unwary pedestrians are always at risk at railway crossings and one such local incident was in March 1913 when Sarah Butler and Walter Davies were killed through being knocked down by the Bendigo train outside St. Albans. They were walking along the tracks when two trains approached from opposite directions. While trying to escape from one they were knocked down by the other.¹ Another type of disaster occurred in 1917 when thieves burgled the station and damaged it substantially when they blew up the safe.²

1915 was an important family milestone for the Robinson family because two of their children were married by the end of the year. Their elder son, George Edmund, married Annie “Ada” Burton on 28 September at St Alban the Martyr Church. Ada was the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Burton of “Bayview” St Albans. Thomas James and Anna Burton were sheep farmers and the family settled at Taylors Road, Overnewton, in 1909. They were breeding comebacks and merinos. Their older son was Percy and their younger children (Annie and Jimmie) started at the Sydenham primary school before transferring to St Albans.

On 9 October 1915, Isabella Robinson married James Knuckey of Newport at St Alban the Martyr Church. The reception was held in the “prettily decorated” Mechanics’ Institute and Cr Frederick Stenson, the unofficial mayor of St Albans, proposed the toast of the Bride and Bridegroom. Afterwards, *“Amidst showers of confetti, the wedding party motored from the church to Richard Porteous’ residence, where they were photographed.”*³ The newly married couple went to live in Kaneira (now known as Culgoa) in the Mallee region of Victoria.

Five years later, on 4 September 1920, the younger daughter Frances Robinson wed Edward Mottram also at the St Alban the Martyr Church. He was the elder son of Maria Bingham and Edward Mottram who were local residents in George Street. (The Mottram brothers had taken over the general store when Robert Aylmer retired in 1912 and thus they also took on the role of local postmasters. Edward jnr was later working as an explosives worker at Bendigo.)

In 1921 the electric train came to St Albans, which provided regular access to the suburban rail service to Melbourne; previously there was only the country steam train service. Wooden railway gates were placed on the crossing, not because of the road traffic, but to save the wandering stock from being killed. A new station platform and signal box were built on the north-west side of the crossing, opposite the old one. The location of the

platform on the northern side of the crossing became a problem as rail and road traffic increased because the gates had to be opened and closed every time a train arrived and departed. This problem extended for many years and became more evident as the population grew. By 1925 the populace had increased to about 200 people because of the industrial development in Sunshine, such as McKays and Nettlefolds, bringing in more people to the region, some of whom settled locally.

James Robinson retired from the railways in 1926 after having given 20 years of service at St Albans. In November a well-attended function was held at the Mechanics Institute Hall to celebrate the family’s contribution to the district. Mr. Luxford⁴ made reference to Mr. Robinson’s long service at St Albans and stated that he had assisted the travelling public to the best of his ability, while Mrs. Catherine Robinson had always taken a leading part in all local activities. The presentation was a gala event:

*“During the evening some splendid items were rendered by some young artists brought from Sunshine by Miss Feeney; and also items by Mrs. Moseley and Mr. Read. Supper was provided by the ladies, and dancing was indulged in between times. Dad and Mum were dancing alongside their sons and daughters, and several grandfathers and grandmothers were noticed showing the younger generation how the circular waltz, Valetta, Alberts, first set, barn dance, and Royal Irish were done many years ago. It was a regular old-time night, and, as we wended our way homeward on all sides could be heard: ‘I’ve never had such a good time for years’.”*⁵

Unfortunately James’s retirement did not last very long because in November 1928 he became seriously ill and was admitted to hospital. He died on 17 December 1928 at the age of 66 years:

*“Another of St. Albans’ old residents passed away when Mr. James Robinson died on Monday morning. Mr. Robinson was born in the Lakes’ district of England but came to this country when a young man and entered the railway department. He was stationmaster at St. Albans for over 20 years and continued to reside here after his retirement about two years ago [1926]. Mr. Robinson was widely known and highly respected. There was a large attendance at his funeral, 17 cars taking the cortege. There was also a large number of wreaths and the family received numerous expressions of condolence.”*⁶

Catherine Louisa Robinson née Stewart died at Bendigo in 1951 at the age of 87 years. She was born about 1864 to George Stewart and Frances Phillips. She had married James Robinson in 1888, and they had undoubtedly settled as long-term residents of St Albans. #

¹ Mildura Cultivator 26 March 1913 p3

² Footscray Advertiser 17 November 1921 p2

³ Footscray Independent 20 November 1915 p3

⁴ Edward James Luxford was President of the St Albans Progress Association.

⁵ Sunshine Advocate 27 November 1926

⁶ Sunshine Advocate 22 December 1928

SCHWARZE, William and Evelyn

Friedrich Gustav Wilhelm Schwarze was born in 1861 in Leipzig, Sachsen, West Germany, before moving to London where he worked as a wood artist and engraver. In 1878 at the age of 18 he left London on the *Aconcagua* and landed in Adelaide in 1878 and arrived in Melbourne on 5 May 1880. He'd come from London to work as an artist on the old "Illustrated Australian News" which was a popular monthly magazine published in Melbourne by the Syme family between 1837 and 1889.

Wilhelm "William" Schwarze applied for naturalisation in Melbourne on 6 August 1883 and thus became a British subject at the age of 22. His occupation was listed as wood engraver and he was living at George Street in Fitzroy. In 1884 he was working from 80 Elizabeth Street in Melbourne as a draughtsman and engraver in wood. He wed Evelyn Fishley in 1884; she was born in 1852 to George Yeo Fishley (1807-1882) and Elizabeth Cornish (1814-1867) who were from Lancashire and Devon in England and emigrated to Australia in 1856.

Wilhelm and Evelyn raised a son and two daughters. Walter Phillip Schwarze was born in 1886 and became known as Walter Phillip Fishley. Linda Elizabeth Schwarze was born in Hawthorn 1889, and Friedrica Muriel Schwarze was born in 1891, also in Hawthorn.

Evelyn Schwarze née Fishley died at Hawthorn on 25 June 1897 at age 45, so she had a relatively short life and her children lost their mother at a tender age.

In 1896 William Schwarze was working from 108 Elizabeth Street Melbourne but his home was most probably in Hawthorn. In February 1900 he was living in Ruby Street, North Brighton, and he must have moved to St Albans later that year because the younger daughter, Frederica Muriel, started at the local primary school in September 1900. William was listed in the electoral roll of 1906 as being a photographer in Winifred Street.

The older daughter, Linda Schwarze, is not listed in the St Albans Primary School enrollment register – she would have been aged 11 years in 1900 and should have been at school, so maybe she was staying with relatives elsewhere. The younger daughter, Frederica Muriel Schwarze, is recorded as being born on 29 July 1891, starting at St Albans primary school in September 1900 and leaving in December 1903.

William Schwarze remarried a decade after his first wife died. On 26 December 1906 at Williamstown, Frederick Gustav Wilhelm Schwarze married Charlotte Tabitha Rogers, the daughter of John Rogers and Sarah Dawson of Coburg.

The son, Walter Phillip Schwarze-Fishley, married Kathleen Duffy in 1916. She was born in 1893 in Warrenheip near Ballarat, Victoria, the daughter of Patrick Duffy and Mary Oloughan. Walter and Kathleen settled in Rupert Street,

Newport, and raised five children: Mary Evelyn (1917-2000), Kathleen Linda (1919-1995), William Patrick (1921-1990), John Joseph (1924-1992), and Leo Francis (1924-1987). Walter Phillip Fishley worked as a wharf labourer at Newport and died on 4 April 1954 at Newport, aged 68 years. Kathleen Fishley née Duffy died in 1962 at Newport, aged 68 years.



Little is known about William and Evelyn Schwarze's daughters' lives in St Albans. Linda Elizabeth Schwarze married Eric Francis Fethers in 1913. They settled in their home 'Kaleno' in East Malvern and had two sons: Richard Francis and Lloyd Edward. The family became successful in business and social circles. Eric Fethers had studied at King's School in Melbourne and then worked with Hogarth & Co before joining John Darling & Sons, the big grain company. The family moved to New South Wales and then in 1924 they settled in 'Kaleno' in Mounts Bay Road, Crawly, Perth. Eric became the state manager of John Darling & Sons. He was elected President of the Chamber of Commerce (1936) and President of the Perth Rotary Club (1939). By 1941 he was superintendent of the Western Australian Branch of the Australian Wheat Board, based at Victoria House in St. George's Terrace, Perth.¹ He was appointed as honorary Consul for the Netherlands in 1937 and held that role for many years until a permanent Consul was appointed in 1954.² Eric Fethers was awarded a knighthood by Queen Wilhelmina in the Order of Oranje-Nassau which is somewhat similar to the British OBE.³

Their older son Richard enlisted and became a Flying Officer in New Guinea with the "Jungle Jumpers" and took part in 32 strikes against the enemy and even survived a crash landing.⁴ He married Bonnie Dryburgh of Randwick, Sydney.

Eric and Linda Fethers became financially "comfortable" and in 1937 they took a half-year world tour, meeting up with their son Richard who had been on the continent for over two years. Linda Fethers née Schwarze was interviewed by

¹ West Australian 15 December 1941 p12

² West Australian 6 May 1943 p1

³ West Australian 3 September 1942 p4

⁴ West Australian 14 October 1943 p4

the West Australian newspaper on her return and discussed her observations about people, fashion, and public entertainment such as bands playing in town spaces:

*"In England ... military and other bands played regularly in the various parks of London and in the larger cities; also on the Continent a similar practice was much appreciated. Sunday afternoon music in every park in Perth might not unreasonably be desired. However, a start could well be made at the earliest possible date in King's Park, where programmes of good popular music would surely attract, delight and benefit greatly many thousands of visitors each week."*¹

Their younger son, Lloyd Edward Fethers, went to Hale school in Perth and did rather well in the rowing. He became a dental surgeon, joined the Royal Australia Army Dental Corps and achieved the rank of Captain (1951). He later established his practice at 220 St George's terrace Perth (1952). In 1944 he married Miss Margaret Isaachsen, younger daughter of Major and Mrs. Eric Isaachsen, of Peppermint Grove.²

Eric Francis Fethers died in Crawley, Western Australia, on 13 June 1973, aged 83 years. Linda Elizabeth Fethers née Schwarze died on 10 December 1974 at Perth, Western Australia, aged 85 years.



The younger daughter of the Schwarze family, Frederica "Rica" Muriel was born on 29 July 1891 at Hawthorn. She started at the St Albans state primary school in September 1900 and left in December 1903. She married Marcus Hyland Ogrady who was born in Albany Western Australia on 23 February 1905.

They initially settled in Glenferrie, Kooyong, and later moved to Shepparton. Frederica Ogrady née Schwarze died in 1970 at Mooroopna at age 79 years. Marcus Ogrady died in 1971 at Shepparton, aged 66 years. They do not appear to have had any children.

Friedrich Gustav Wilhelm Schwarze, known as William Schwarze, late pioneer of St Albans from 1900, died of pneumonia at his home in St Albans on Wednesday 28 September 1927, at the age of 82 years.³

Charlotte Tabitha Schwarze née Rogers, William's second spouse and sometime resident of St Albans, died on 22 June 1943, aged 88 years. She had been living in Brighton North from where she was admitted to the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum in Cheltenham. #

SHORTELL, James and Rosina

James and Rosina Shortell came to St Albans about 1904 and established a poultry farm. Poultry farming was a popular business at the time but with a few larger ventures already in the district the competition might have been a problem. James is listed in the Melbourne directory for St Albans in 1904 and both James and Rosina are listed in the electoral roll for 1905. Unfortunately their background history has been difficult to ascertain.

James Shortell was born about 1861 to John Shortell and Eliza Mulroney. He was living in Northcote during the late 1890s.

Rosina "Rose" Miller was born about 1863 in Moonambel and was the eldest daughter of eight children born to John and Ann Miller.

Rosina Miller married James Shortell on 1 October 1890 at St John's Roman Catholic Church in Clifton Hill.⁴ It's unknown where they first settled. They are not listed in the Sands & McDougal Directory for 1895 but are listed in 1904 for St Albans. They established their poultry farm though no references to them or their farm have been discovered in the digitised local media of the time and there were no children named Shortell enrolled at the local state school. They stayed a few years and by 1909 had moved to Hereford Street Maidstone where they were farming poultry. They later moved to Norfolk Street Maidstone.

James and Rosina became involved in some of the community activities connected with the Braybrook Council and Braybrook Hall. In 1910 James was one of several people who complained to council about noxious trades and regarding the sanitary conditions at Pennell's Fertilizer Works and noxious fumes and filthy drainage in Burke Street.⁵ In 1919 he complained of damage done to his property by wandering stock.⁶

It appears that in 1924 Rosina was the joint secretary for some fund-raising activities promoted as Feeney & Young's Band Waltzing Competitions:

*"A very enjoyable and successful dance was held in the Braybrook Hall last Saturday night. The hall was crowded with joyous and merry dancers, and much enthusiasm was displayed right up to the time of closing. The success of the evening is due to the organisation, of which Mesdames Shortell and Dempster had full charge. ... The proceeds are in aid of the bazaar for Sunshine Catholic School."*⁷

James Shortell died in 1934 at Williamstown at the age of 73 years and his remains were buried at the Footscray Cemetery. Rosina moved to Henry Street in Prahran and by 1949 she was living in College Parade in Kew North.

Rosina Shortell née Miller died in Hawthorn on 21 September 1951, aged 88. She was buried at the Keilor cemetery. #

¹ West Australian 24 September 1937 p6

² West Australian 6 January 1945 p1

³ Age 30 September 1927 p9

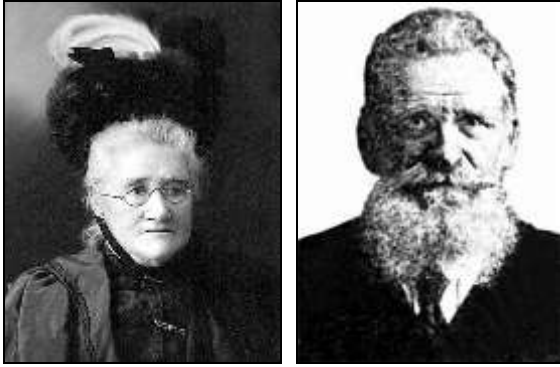
⁴ Argus 15 October 1890 p1

⁵ Footscray Independent 16 July 1910 p1

⁶ Footscray Independent 13 September 1919 p4

⁷ Sunshine Advocate 19 July 1924 p5

STANWORTH, Samuel and Sabina



Samuel Thomas Stanworth was born on 20 October 1836 in Maidstone, Kent England. His parents were James Stanworth (born in 1810) and Sarah Jones (born in 1815).

Samuel Stanworth emigrated to Australia in 1858, which was during the gold rush era, but he started with working on the construction of the Bendigo to Melbourne railway line – this was a future link with St Albans as it was the development of the Bendigo rail connection that brought the train service through the district.

Stanworth next turned to mining at Amherst, near Maryborough, but he was probably not a fortunate prospector as by 1861 he was working for the pound keeper at Amherst.¹ He continued in that position at least until 1865.² It's interesting to note that the Amherst pound keeper in 1851 was Ebenezer Benjamin Stanworth,³ who one might assume could have been a relative of Samuel's.

In 1865 Samuel Thomas Stanworth married Sophia (Sabina) Egan. She was born about 1841 to Bernard Egan and Sabina Condron, who were from Kings County in Ireland.

Samuel and Sabina's children were born in Amherst, including Bernard James (1866), Mercy Elizabeth (1867), Harry Arthur (1869), Albert James (1871), and Louisa Ann (1880).

Samuel applied for land and was allocated licenses for 160 acres at Koyuga (in the Goulburn Valley) and 40 acres at Burrumbeet. Some of these licenses may have been forfeited in 1878,⁴ though the Koyuga lease was probably approved in 1878⁵ and renewed in 1879. The family became graziers on their "Park Farm" and were selling bullocks, cows and sheep through the Bendigo and Melbourne stock markets.

In 1880 Sabina also applied to the Land Board for 200 acres at Jeruk, south of Glenloth⁶ but it is not known if this was approved. Nevertheless, they were successful in selecting land in the Goulburn Valley because they stayed there for 35 years

before selling the land back to the Government for closer settlement purposes.⁷ In 1900 they were still grazing stock on their Park Farm and Prairie Farm.

The family must have moved from their farm in the 1890s because in 1903 they were enrolled in Tongala near Echuca. They moved to St Albans soon afterwards, with Louisa, Sabina, and Samuel Thomas Stanworth being included in the Electoral Roll in 1906. Samuel Stanworth was identified as a "gentleman" while Sabina and her daughter Louisa worked at "home duties". The family farm was about a mile and a half from the railway station. At this stage Samuel was aged 70 years and probably proud to be considered as a retired gentleman. It seems one of his leisure pastimes was reading the Weekly Times – in October 1907 his photograph was published in recognition of:

*"Mr. S. S. Stanworth, (St. Albans, near Braybrook) who has been a constant subscriber to The Weekly Times since its first issue, 38 years ago."*⁸

Sabina Stanworth was aged 65 years so she also was probably looking forward to retirement.

The family must have retained some of their rural property. In 1905 there was a report of a bush fire spreading to Stanworth's property in Echuca⁹ and in December 1911 a bushfire at Tongala destroyed about 610 acres of grass and 23 acres of crop, the latter being more of Stanworth's property.¹⁰ The principal damage was caused on the property of the Closer Settlement Board, on which a four-roomed house with outbuildings was completely destroyed.

The youngest son, Albert James, continued working the Park Farm Koyuga property after his parents left, and "Stanworth Bros" were also active in Koyuga with livestock and fat sheep. Albert James Stanworth died at his home Koyuga on 1 February 1929, at the young age of 58 years. The family's grazing business continued under the care of James Bernard Stanworth.

Louisa Stanworth's daughter, Olive, was born at Echuca on 23 October 1905 and started at the St Albans primary school in 1912. In 1914 she attended what must have been a delightful ceremony for the young participants:

*"St Albans Mechanics Institute was the scene of a bright and pleasant evening with the children when the annual distribution of prizes to the scholars of St. Albans Sunday school took place ... [with] the presentation of prizes to all the scholars of the State school who attended religious instruction not fewer than 30 times during the year."*¹¹

Olive's classmates included Jessie, Gladys and Keith McKechnie, Alice and Ruby Stenson, and Doris, Gordon and Allan Calder, whose families were all long-term pioneer residents.

¹ Ballarat Star 24 August 1861 p4

² Ballarat Star 29 March 1865 p4

³ Argus 17 June 1861 p4

⁴ Bendigo Advertiser 19 March 1878 p3

⁵ Bendigo Advertiser 23 September 1878 p2

⁶ Kerang Times 21 May 1880 p3

⁷ Weekly Times 25 April 1925 p61

⁸ Weekly Times 5 October 1907 p33

⁹ Argus 17 January 1905 p6

¹⁰ Australasian 16 December 1911 p11

¹¹ Footscray Independent 28 February 1914 p3

In 1914 the St Albans primary school held the triennial meeting of residents interested in the work of the school, and the chief business was the election of a school committee. Ten persons were nominated for membership, and the ballot resulted in the election of Messrs. Anderson, Connell, Harrison, Luxford, Macrae, Stanworth, and Cr. Stenson, J.P. On realising that the local school was one of the few in the State to have no flagpole or flag, Stanworth promised to give a pole and have it erected.¹

Stanworth was also supporting the provision of a local water supply through the St Albans Progress Association. In 1914 he was part of a deputation with Frederick Charles Stenson, Edward James Luxford, and Richard Porteous in discussion with the Sunbury Water Trust.²

Louisa Stanworth married Frederick Clifton of St Albans in 1909. He was born in Maffra in 1869 and was the son of Martha Lyell and William Clifton who were from Lincolnshire, England, and migrated to Australia in 1862. Martha Clifton bought land on the corner of Victoria Crescent and East Esplanade after the time of Alfred Padley's Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Co.³ The Cliftons were poultry farmers but Frederick worked as a carpenter from Adelaide Street. Frederick and Louisa had at least two sons: Albert Stanworth (1910) and Victor Arthur (1915). Victor enlisted with the Royal Australian Air Force in 1943 and served as a leading aircraftman. He married Mavis Florence Seidel. She died in 3 December 1993 and was buried in the Mornington Cemetery. Victor Arthur Clifton died on 3 May 1994 and he too was buried in the Mornington Cemetery.

As well as having their farm, in 1913 the Stanworths of St Albans acquired a new house near the railway station, which they advertised for lease⁴ so they were secure enough financially to increase their real estate holdings.

The family was resident in the Maribyrnong electoral district in 1915 but by 1919 they had moved to "The Pines" in Spring Street, Preston. Samuel Thomas Stanworth, retired grazier, died in 1927 in Preston at the age of 90 years. He had bequeathed real estate valued at £2575 and other personal property valued at £1242 to his widow and children, so they evidently had become quite successful farmers. Sabina Stanworth née Egan died the following year, 1928, in Preston at the age of 87 years.

Louisa Ann Clifton née Stanworth died in 1977 at Frankston at the age of 96 years. Her husband Frederick Clifton had died in 1940 at Frankston at age 71 years.

The Stanworth family had been residents of St Albans for over a decade, from 1904 to about 1919, so they were pioneers of the Federation era, even though they did not stay permanently. #

¹ Footscray Independent 14 March 1914 p1

² Flemington Spectator 5 November 1914 p3

³ *St Albans The First Hundred Years* p18

⁴ Age 24 May 1913 p8

STENSON, Frederick and Eva



Eva Leah and Frederick Charles Stenson © Gwen Kratiss

Frederick Charles Stenson was born at Yanton Somerset, England, on 16 April 1870. He had an older brother and six sisters. Frederick went to school until he was twelve years old, then worked with his father on the farm. Then in 1888, a century after the first fleet landed at Botany Bay, Frederick migrated to Australia. He came to help his uncle, Charles Stenson, who had established an orchard on the Saltwater River near Keilor. As an eighteen-year-old, Frederick was joining the challenge of confronting a strange land on the other side of the world. The colony of New South Wales had been declared a century earlier but life in the colonies was still a great unknown. Frederick intended to help his uncle for two years but ended staying permanently. His mother had died young and his father had remarried, so perhaps Frederick Charles saw the new township of St Albans, a name that had been adopted only recently, as his possibility for a challenging future.

In 1889 the Shire of Keilor was quite small. There were 133 ratepayers on the municipal roll and the total population was 689. Keilor village had been established in the 1850s as a major stopping point on the way to the goldfields at Ballarat. The township had services such as a post office and money order office, a savings bank, a state school, general store, two hotels, two insurance agencies, a black-smith, a police station, a courthouse, and three churches. There was some notoriety because of a couple of murders in the district and occasionally there were disputes about cattle trespass on the Common, but apart from that life was fairly staid. The municipal directory states:

*"The neighbouring country is known as the Keilor plains, which are not cultivated, only a few chosen spots on the bends of the river being used for cultural purpose. There have been no pastoral tenants for nearly twenty years; most of the land that did not then belong to private owners has been granted for selection and is used for grazing purposes, with the exception of the small portions demanded for cultivation by the Land Act."*¹

This was hardly the picture of green fields that might fire the imagination of a young farmer, and whereas land speculation may have given a false sense of optimism, farm work was about the only opportunity in the district available for a young immigrant. In fact, at the time there were few other possibilities as there were no other industries. The get-rich-quick-through-gold days were over, and the get-rich-quick-through-speculation days were about to crash. Frederick Charles probably arrived late enough not to be caught up in the speculation bubble, and his decision to stay despite the coming financial upheaval shows tenacity for perseverance and survival.

Little is known of the details of Frederick's first decade in the district, other than that his uncle's first venture into viticulture had not been successful and the vineyard had been converted to an orchard. Their main crop was apricots but they are said to have also planted apples. By all accounts it appears that Uncle Charles and Frederick did most if not all of the hard work on the farm.

Alfred Padley's land sales had brought in new people to the area while a number of the selectors from the 1870s had become important in the social and political life of the district. Frederick Stenson would naturally have met and interacted with families such as the Luxfords, Andersons, Opies, Delaheys O'Neills, Foxes, Erringtons, Furlongs, Hasseds, Milburns and Eaglings, to name a few. These associations continued for decades and no doubt were important in Stenson's future role as a local councillor with the Shire of Keilor.

On 10 May 1899, Frederick Stenson married Eva Leah Shiner at St. James Old Cathedral, Melbourne. Eva was the only daughter of the late Samuel and Mary Ann Shiner of Peel Street, Hotham. How and where did they meet?² That would be interesting to know.

Eva's mother, Mary Ann Shiner, was born in 1842 and died in 1878 at the relatively young age of 36 years. It appears that Mary's father, Samuel, later remarried. He was one of the pioneers of the business strip in Elizabeth Street North, Hotham (or North Melbourne as it was later known). Samuel Shiner ran the Hotham Iron Foundry as a partnership for many years. He died in August 1893 after a few weeks of illness. The business

¹ Victorian Municipal Directory, 1889.

² It may have been through Alfred Padley, who was from Hotham and was in St Albans in the 1880s. The Stenson's first home was built by Padley's company, and they bought his former home, Keighlo, in 1907.

then continued under the guidance of Mrs. Shiner and the foundry manager, Mr. R. Lawrence.

Eva and Frederick set about establishing their new life together at 202 Biggs Street, St Albans. This was one of the first six homes built by Padley's Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company obviously meant as show-pieces for their land sales. Frederick continued to support his uncle on the farm as well as working as a dealer, but no details of this remain.

Between 1900 and 1904 Frederick's wife, Eva Stenson, gave birth to three daughters: Alice Eva in 1900; Mary Ruby in 1902; and Emily Leah in 1904. Uncle Charles and Aunt Emma were thus able to enjoy the company of grandchildren in the twilight of their lives.

Charles Stenson died on 26 November 1905, aged 71 years, a colonist of 51 years; he was buried at the Keilor cemetery. Frederick and Eva then moved with their children to the farm homestead in order to keep Aunt Emma company and to take care of her as she grew frailer.

Frederick continued farming on his uncle's estate but introduced a number of changes. In 1908 he installed an irrigation plant on the farm, which was designed to pump 50,000 gallons or water per day from the Saltwater River. Having now been farming in the area for twenty years, he was aware that the volume and quality of the water was quite variable. Sometimes, especially in times of low rainfall, the water was highly mineralised and in 1909 his crop of French beans³ was completely ruined. Several other farmers along the river were applying for water pumping licences. David Millburn⁴ of Keilor was the original pioneer to introduce the practice in 1857 and he was very successful. He won prizes for the best-kept orchard in the state. In 1908 Michael Fox of Tullamarine had also applied to pump 80,000 gallons per day for irrigation purposes. Jose Borrell might have been another farmer involved. There must have been some concern about potential problems as *"It was stated in a general way that if the stream were unduly depleted any ratepayer deprived of water had a redress through his riparian rights."*⁵

After the financial crash of the 1890s, the twentieth century had started with a decade of optimism. Locally, the population had grown to the extent that a larger school was required, and in 1901 the new school building in West Esplanade

³ Peas were another alternative crop experimented with locally. James Stevens tried it in 1912 and reported it was a success: *"Peas are doing well. Calder has some very early ones and is starting to pick. He is getting 28/- per cwt. and says 12/- would pay well. So we shall have to put in a larger quantity next year."* Letter to A. Stevens, 6 October 1912.

⁴ Gary Vines; *Farm and Dairy: the agricultural and dairy farms of Melbourne's West*; Melbourne's Living Museum of the West Inc, 1993.

⁵ Footscray Independent, 11 April 1908.

was occupied. The debate about national federation and its final adoption had created a wave of patriotism. Women in Victoria were "given" the right to vote in 1908. The land sales that occurred in Keilor in the early 1900s were a boost in confidence and farming activity around St Albans when the Closer Settlement Board bought sections of William Taylor's large estate and resold it for farmlets. The Overnewton Estate was thus divided into blocks of 200 to 300 acres and these were offered for selection. This attracted new families to the area, who extended the civic efforts of earlier pioneers in the progress of the district and provided the next generation of community leaders. New families included the McAuleys, Boyds, Andersons, Stevens, Griffiths, McRaes, King and others. The already established families included the Hounslows, Erringtons¹ and the Lewises.

Then things started to happen: a progress association was convened; shops, churches and a Mechanics Institute² were built; and agitation started for improving roads and the water supply. Stenson became involved with these progressive thinkers in furthering the cause of the area. The start of a new era at the local level had begun.

In 1907 the Stensons moved to Keighlo, Alfred Padley's former grand home in Winifred Street, which they had purchased from John Ellis. This was more central in relation to the growing village and provided the base for Frederick's work with the church and other groups. It was also much closer to the school for the children. In August that year he was elected as a councillor for the Maribyrnong Riding of the Keilor Shire and continued serving in this role for the next forty years; he was elected President of the Council on four occasions. By all accounts he was a conscientious and industrious representative.

It was undoubtedly his farming experience that made him such a strong advocate for a reliable water supply for the township. His involvement in groups such as the Progress Association, the Mechanics Hall Institute, the Anglican Church, the school committee and several other groups, meant that he was able to represent and promote the interests of ratepayers in a comprehensive way. Water, roads, electricity and housing became his chief concerns for the next four decades. These were traditional parish pump issues, but they were important for a developing community with a limited physical infrastructure.

In 1910 he was instrumental in having the pedestrian railway crossing installed adjacent to the primary school, linking East and West

esplanades. Perhaps a small achievement at the municipal level, but a fantastic shortcut for the thousands of students over the years who went backwards and forwards in their daily trek between home and school. He also had the road crossing at the railway gates surfaced to provide safer access.

Stenson was made a Justice of the Peace in October 1912, which is a necessary function in the witnessing of signatures and so on; a J.P. was seen as a person of some importance and authority in the community. Stenson's specific tasks as a JP have not been recorded, though perhaps some of his volunteer duties may have been related. For example, it had been a practice for the rate collector to attend St Albans, but one year this was stopped and Stenson was expected to help: "*Ratepayers were not enthusiastic over having to pay their rates at Keilor this year. In previous years the rate collector attended St Albans on a set date to receive the rates. But Mr. Sinclair has no means of transport and ratepayers had to be assisted by Crs. Evans and Stenson.*"³

The problem of developing a reticulated water supply spanned several decades and included many disappointments, but opportunities were also taken. In 1913 Stenson drove a number of residents to the Maribyrnong River Konagaderra dam site, which was one of the schemes where St. Albans was to get their water, but this idea was abandoned when war broke out as the money needed was set aside for the war effort.⁴

In 1912 the Progress Association discussed the possibility of buying the small local reservoir. Alfred Padley, who was a trustee, had offered the dam to the Keilor Shire, who refused to consider the offer. Stenson raised the issue with the Progress Association and members decided to take up negotiations for its purchase. Frederick Stenson, Jonathan Boyd and Peter Anderson were appointed as the trustees. Half of the purchase price was soon collected from members because possession of the dam was a matter of great importance to residents. The trusteeship of the water reserve was later offered free of cost to Keilor Council but a decision was postponed for a fuller council meeting. They took over responsibility for the dam some time prior to 1929.

In recent years there has been some uncertainty about the previous ownership of the dam in Theodore Street. One recollection is that it was there for the exclusive use of the Padley family for their homestead, and later by the Stensons when they took it over. This is not correct, because the Stensons have never owned the reservoir site.

¹ In 1932 Edward James Luxford, who was the President of the St Albans Progress Association, stated that Alice Errington was "*foremost in all movements for the advancement of the district.*"

² The St. Albans Mechanics' Institute and hall, was established by local people in 1906. A typical event was a Shakespeare night held in June 1907, but there were also concerts and dances.

³ Sunshine Advocate 12 June 1926

⁴ The Konagaderra water scheme had been talked about since the 1880s. The proposal was to build a dam on the Jackson and Deep Creeks on the Upper Maribyrnong River. One idea was to irrigate the Keilor plains, Melton, and parts of St. Albans, and divide the area up into blocks for settlement.

When they bought Keighlo in 1907 the dam was not included in the title certificate but remained under Padley's control, with two other trustees.

Alfred Henry Padley, Percy Oakden and John Horsfall were the trustees for the reservoir, which was intended to supply water for the residents on St Albans Estate but not for the whole district. In 1905, after he'd already left the district, Padley wrote to The Hon. Thomas Bent,¹ complaining that the "Overnewton Closer Settlement folk" were trespassing on the St Albans Estate and deliberately stealing water from the dam. Padley claimed that the government was ultimately responsible as it had sold the land.² A.H. Padley was never shy in promoting his business or personal interests.

But having taken on the local reservoir as a communal interest, Stenson and his colleagues were confronted with unexpected problems, such as the practice of using the reservoir as a swimming pool. Residents complained when newcomers started using the dam for recreational purposes and that all of them:

*"... disregarded every claim by the inhabitant to having the one and only water supply within a distance of more than a mile kept clean. Evidently these swimmers have never felt the pang of being short of water, and of having to pay a big price for getting some carted from far away or they would have known better."*³

The issue was raised in Keilor Council in December 1928. Cr. Stenson said that when the reservoir was under the control of the trustees they had stopped the practice, and now that it was under the control of the council steps should be taken to prevent the water being polluted. He moved that notice be erected warning persons against bathing in the water or contaminating it in any other way. Cr. Evans seconded the motion, which was carried.⁴

Stenson and colleagues were confronted with complications even after the reservoir was transferred to council. For example, in 1936 the St Albans Progress Association reported that the dam had become:

*"... a favourite deposit of defunct animals ... several dead dogs and cats had been seen floating on the placid surface of the public water supply, but attempts to drag them out only made matters worse, as they were partly decomposed."*⁵

The reservoir was eventually filled and used as a children's playground, but that came later.

The Stensons were devout Anglicans and had much to do with the St Alban the Martyr Church in East Esplanade, of which Frederick Charles became the secretary for over fifty years. He was

also a diocesan lay preacher⁶ with the church. The 'old' church was built in 1910 and became a hub for parishioners. Sunday school was a regular activity for the young folk and Stenson must have been proud to see his own children taking part. In 1914 he officiated at the annual distribution of prizes to the scholars of St. Albans Sunday School. The vicar of the Parish was Rev. R. McCoy and the Sunday school instructress was Mrs. Alice Errington, who had donated many of the prizes.

Fred Stenson and Alice Errington, another strong community leader, co-operated on other local ventures. When Mrs. Errington donated land for a recreational reserve, Frederick Stenson was one of the first trustees to be appointed, the others being Edward James Luxford and Claude Turnley, who was later replaced by Alexander Dickson. Stenson's role would have been a logical extension of his support for the sporting fraternity, because at that stage he was also the President of the St Albans Cricket Club, which became one of the main beneficiaries through its access to the ground. Errington Reserve became the focal point for sports in the district, particularly for tennis, cricket, and football, as well as the place for other youth activities and many fetes and bazaars. Stenson's stewardship of the reserve continued until 1930, but when the trustees were unable to meet the road construction costs levied by council, the property was transferred to Braybrook Shire.⁷

Stenson's church-related activities targeted the older as well as the young members. In 1925 he was one of the elders who established the St Albans branch of the Church of England Men's Society. The first annual social was held at his home, where: "A large number of members were present, also visitors from Footscray and elsewhere. Musical items were rendered throughout the evening by Mesdames Anderson and Moseley, and Messrs. Ball, Read, R. Kerdell, E. Blount, Rev. Kerdell, Rev. Batten, and several visitors."⁸

1914 had been a mixed year for the Stenson household. Frederick and Eva's fourth child, Winifred Jean, was born on the 17th March. However, the birth celebrations would have been constrained by the illness of Aunt Emma, who died on the 17th April, at St Aidan's Private Hospital in Moonee Ponds. Emma Stenson née Ashton had died at the age of 77 years, a colonist of 60 years, one of the earliest settlers in St Albans. She was buried with her late husband at the Keilor cemetery. As they say, one life replaces another, that perspective that links life and death in the continuation of society. and so life went on.

Stenson was constantly supporting good causes. In 1916 he was President of the St Albans Repatriation Committee in aid of the Australian

¹ Thomas Bent was a politician and land speculator. From February 1904 until January 1909 he was the Premier and Treasurer of Victoria.

² St Albans, The First Hundred Years; p46.

³ Sunshine Advocate 17 November 1928

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 8 December 1928

⁵ Sunshine Advocate 7 February 1936

⁶ A person who is not ordained but is appointed to lead Church services in a religious denomination.

⁷ For details refer to *The Errington Reserve*; Alie Missen & Tom Rigg; St Albans History Society, 2011.

⁸ Sunshine Advocate 1 August 1925

Soldiers' Repatriation Fund, which was created by the Commonwealth in the expectation of raising private donations through patriotic endeavours to supplement the Commonwealth's contribution. Locally, this meant holding more bazaars at the Mechanics Institute, which no doubt the ladies of the district conducted with their usual efficiency.

The first approach made to the Braybrook Shire Council about a direct road connection along the railway line between St. Albans and Albion occurred in 1914. Mr. H V McKay made an offer to the Braybrook Council of some land along the railway line to St. Albans, so as to enable a direct road from Sunshine. Cr. Opie proposed that the council accept the offer as the road would be a boon to the district and the neighbouring Shire of Keilor. Cr. Stenson who was present with a deputation from Keilor and the township of St. Albans said the land offered by Mr. McKay would allow for a direct road along the railway line from Sunbury to Ballarat road. Unfortunately, Cr. Opie's motion was lost by six votes to one.

This matter was raised again fourteen years later, in 1928, when Stenson, accompanied by James Stevens and Edward Luxford, of the St. Albans Progress Association, asked Braybrook council to acquire a small piece of land, which was not owned by anyone, so that a connecting road could be completed. Luxford mentioned that he was now making his sixth appearance asking for direct communication. This time the proposal was approved, so the orphan land was acquired, but it still took a long time for a through road to be built.

Another important area with which Stenson became involved was the local building code, especially with regard to housing in St Albans. Generally speaking, building only part of a house and living in it was not permissible under the building regulations. However, Keilor Shire Council adopted a flexible approach to this requirement, which had a major influence over new housing developments in the district. This became especially noticeable in the 1950s when thousands of European displaced persons came to St. Albans because building a part house – the St. Albans bungalow – was an affordable proposition for them. But the origins of this started much earlier.

The first easing of regulations occurred in March 1924, when Cr. Stenson, the President of the Keilor Shire Council, brought before the members a matter that was agitating residents of St. Albans. He said that Mr. Alexander Dickson was contemplating the erection of a shop in St. Albans that was to be built for a green grocery. Another contractor had in view a butcher's shop, but both would be unable to proceed with the work if the council's by-law, compelling only brick or concrete buildings, was enforced. He thought the council should assist the contractors in the matter. Mr. Andrew, the shire secretary, read the by-law and building regulations, and advised the council

that they had power to vary, and suggested that he be empowered to give the necessary permission for the contractors to erect the buildings in wood.¹ The authority to give that power to the secretary was then carried unanimously.

Then an even more important decision was made in March 1938, when Stenson supported "the progressive construction" of a house at St. Albans. This would allow the owner living in a portion of the building for 12 months while he proceeded with the completion of the whole. The application was by Mr. Robert Francis Sulman, and the proposed building was in Gertrude Street. It was mentioned that Sulman had a wife and two young children. A plan was submitted, revealing that two rear rooms were to be erected first. Cr. Stenson said the council had refused similar applications in recent months as those to whom permission had been granted to erect houses on a progressive basis previously had not come up to scratch. In this case, however, the owner had given him the assurance that the building would be completed in 12 months, and he consented to put this promise before the council.²

The proposal was debated, but generally there was much sympathy for it. Cr. Stevens argued that council should encourage people who were struggling to make a home. Cr. Dickson stated that in the building boom, tragedies occurred when people built houses and later found out they could not pay for them. Cr. Stenson said he would be prepared to amend his motion so as to require three rooms to be completed before the house was occupied: two front rooms and the kitchen. The motion was then agreed to.³ This was the start of a flexible building code, which continued to evolve, because in the bungalow boom of the 1950s many houses started with only one or two back rooms, which were gradually extended.

1924 was an interesting year for its historical connections, because the Progress Association held a public meeting to organise the Hume and Hovell centenary celebrations. It was decided to erect a memorial cairn between St. Albans and Sydenham on the probable route that the explorers would have taken through the district back in 1824. Messrs. Stenson, Sheridan, Keidell, Dickson and Perrett formed a committee to arrange this. The ceremonial event occurred on 10 January 1925:

"On Friday afternoon the Hume and Hovell centenary memorial, situated at the corner of Taylor's and the Sydenham roads and at the railway crossing between the towns of St. Albans and Sydenham, was unveiled before a large gathering of residents and visitors. The unveiling was performed by Ellen McDonald, the youngest pupil of St. Albans State school, and Master Hume, a descendant of the explorer, while appropriate speeches were made by Sir James Barrett, Dr.

¹ Sunshine Advocate 8 March 1924

² Sunshine Advocate 11 March 1938

³ Sunshine Advocate 11 March 1938

Leach and Messrs. White, Stenson, Sheridan, Hume and Luxford. Much of the credit for erection of the memorial is due to Mr. A. Dickson snr., for the amount of time he put in and the running about he had in connection with it. Thanks are also due to Mr. A. McCauley for allowing the memorial on his property and carting the stone for the building, and to Mrs. Boyd for providing afternoon tea for the visitors. The memorial consists of a very neat bluestone cairn capped with white quartz, with the initials of the explorers worked in white quartz on either side of a brass tablet containing an inscription.”¹

It's interesting to note that the other famous colonial explorer, John Batman, who came through the St Albans area in 1835, has never received the same recognition in local history.

In 1926, Stenson experienced a period of illness and was confined to his bed for several weeks, which was described in the local paper as: “*Cr. Stenson has been working very hard in connection with practically every local affair for over 20 years, and, in the last few months, has had a lot of work and worry in connection with some of them, and the strain has told its tale.*”² However, this did not prevent Stenson from attending to his private concerns when he bought an extra seventeen acres of land near St Albans. This was probably more farmland, as there was never any mention of him taking on property development. People have mentioned Stenson being a farmer-grazier but his overall land holdings do not appear to have been very extensive.

In 1927 Cr. Stenson's efforts for an electricity supply were looking more positive after he and the shire engineer interviewed officials of the Electricity Commission regarding the proposed lighting of St. Albans. As a result, a definite scheme was prepared for submission to the council. This came to fruition the following year when fourteen houses on the west side of the railway line were due to be connected and the lighting of Boundary Road as a joint task with Braybrook Council was agreed to. However, it was noted with some disappointment that the Railway Department was refusing to have the station properly lit.³

Meanwhile, the hopes for a permanent water supply also looked brighter. In July 1932, Cr. Stenson, in his role as chairman of the Keilor-St. Albans Water Trust, reported to the Council that Mr. White, MLA, had presented the latest water scheme before the Premier, Sir Argyle, who promised to use his influence to have the scheme adopted under the unemployment relief schedule. Cr. Parsons moved a vote of thanks, saying Cr. Stenson had spent over 25 years advocating this

scheme, which looked nearer to success than at any other time. Cr. Stenson had spent half a lifetime working for what seemed now to be achieved. The motion was carried, and as the President passed it on to Cr. Stenson, he said that he hoped he would live long enough to be privileged to turn the water on.⁴ (However, the water was not connected until 1940.)

1932 was special because that it was Stenson's silver jubilee as a councillor. Representatives from the Church of England, the Mechanics Hall Committee, the School Committee, Keilor Council and the Progress Association organised a celebratory evening. This was held at Keilor at a specially invited supper, where Stenson was presented with a medal in the form of a Gold Albert⁵ to commemorate his 25 years' service as a member of Keilor Council. He was praised not only for his work as a councillor in general but also as a delegate to the municipal association and the water trust, the progress association, the church and the school. The speakers also referred to the great assistance that Mrs. Stenson had given to her husband throughout his public career.⁶

During the 1930s Stenson was also involved with the Keilor Public Assistance Committee. Apparently Mrs. Agnes Stevens had proposed in March 1930 “*to form an organisation to raise money to help the unemployed in each Riding.*”⁷ This was then raised in council by her husband, Cr. James Stevens, and was later taken up by Cr. Evans and Mrs. Turner, who formed the St Albans Relief Committee.

As a result of these initiatives, “*Keilor shire council decided to cooperate with the St. Albans Relief committee and provide pound for pound with that body for its efforts to relieve unemployment problems in the area.*”⁸

The Keilor Public Assistance Committee was formed to oversee the administration of unemployment relief in the shire. The purpose of the group was to support the unemployed through material aid or vouchers (food, some clothing and shoes, and maybe firewood, etc) rather than with cash. Frank Farrugia recalls: “*I can remember going down to the Mechanics Hall about once a month for a basket of goodies; and sometimes, if your shoes were worn out, you might get them replaced.*”

Unfortunately the affairs of the Assistance Committee became a bit of a political hot potato because of bruised egos and competing ideas. Some councillors wanted to provide employment rather than handouts. Others were disillusioned because relief seekers left the committee once

¹ Sunshine Advocate Saturday 10 January 1925. The cairn was originally built on the north-west corner of the railway line and Taylors Road intersection. It was relocated to the south-west corner when the railway underpass was reconstructed.

² Sunshine Advocate 23 October 1926

³ Sunshine Advocate 14 July 1928

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 8 July 1932

⁵ This was probably in the form of a gold chain and medallion rather than the Gold Albert Medal *per se*, which was a war medal.

⁶ Sunshine Advocate 28 October 1932

⁷ Sunshine Advocate Friday 24 July 1931

⁸ The Age 9 June 1930

they found a job.

The infighting about the Assistance Committee was partly about the kudos of claiming the initiative and partly about the mechanics of setting up administrative structures. As one person asked:

*"Why was it now necessary to have a Public Assistance Committee of 17, a sub-committee at North Essendon, and another at St. Albans, when previously a man in each centre (except for the ladies' auxiliary at North Essendon) was sufficient to carry out the work."*¹

The answer was that it was done according to the Unemployment Relief Administration Act.

Some locals recall the depression as being a particularly hard time when "*nearly everyone in St Albans was on the susso.*" Perhaps it wasn't quite as bad as that, because in December 1933 there were 36 men in the Shire of Keilor working for sustenance but more were assisted over time. The "susso workers," as they were known, were put to work around the municipality in digging trenches and repairing roads: "*It was only a gravel road and you would have a gang of men going up and down the road filling up the holes and tamping it down. It was like working for the dole.*"²

Perhaps such activity encouraged more of the same, because in 1935 there was an unusual proposal for improving the roads, and that was for residents to do the work themselves. Stenson, on behalf of some of the residents in Biggs Street, said they wanted permission to put down the foundation of a road, and when this was done all the council would be asked for was a few loads of material for surfacing, and if the council would not give them a few loads of metal they would supply it themselves. Several councillors were not happy with the proposal because it was not clear what responsibilities the Council would carry as a consequence. A motion that all action by the council regarding Biggs Street be temporarily abandoned was agreed to. This debate was continued at a later meeting when Cr. Stenson and Cr. Stevens supported the motion, saying the people were worthy of all the help the council could give them. The street was the worst in St. Albans. This time there was no argument brought against the proposal, which was carried. In fact there had been precedents where council delivered loads of screenings onto roadsides for residents to fill up holes.

The unmade roads in St Albans were a big problem in winter when the low lying areas became impassable quagmires. Mary Smith remembers her father with a shovel and wheelbarrow tackling a pile of road metal to fix their patch of Millawa Avenue.

St Albans was in celebratory mode in July 1940 because it was finally connected to the Board of Works water scheme! A "turning on the tap" ceremony was organised by members of the Board and Keilor Council held to celebrate the event:

*"Before a large and representative gathering, the first water under the new Board of Works reticulation scheme at St. Albans was drawn by Mrs. Hilbert, mother of the president of the Keilor shire (Cr H Hilbert) on Tuesday evening last. After assembling in the Mechanics Hall the party of ladies and gentlemen proceeded to near the corner of Boundary Road and The Esplanade, where a hydrant had been set up in readiness for the ceremony. As the tap was being turned by Mrs. Hilbert, the president of Keilor shire said he rejoiced that St. Albans at last had the water for which they had fought over the past 32 years."*³

Mr. Harry Owen White, M.L.A. paid a special tribute to Cr. Stenson and Mr. Luxford, saying that if ever a monument was raised at St. Albans, it should be in honour of these two gentlemen for their success with the water supply. Luxford was a long-term member of the Progress Association⁴ and had been working with Stenson for many years about the water supply problems.

In 1942 Keilor Council finally took over the responsibility for the St Albans Hall. The Mechanics Institute hall and library had been managed for many years by a local committee and Frederick Stenson was the trustee for the building and had been a committee member for considerable time. The committee wanted council to take over the hall as it was proving to be a burden, especially concerning the maintenance and repairs. There was still a small mortgage outstanding. The land was valued at £75, the hall at £300, piano £75, furniture £30 library £50, a total of £530. It was stated that if there were a foreclosure on the mortgage that St. Albans would have no public hall. Council agreed to take over the mortgage and thus also the responsibility for the hall.⁵

After a long illness Eva Stenson passed away on 29 May 1945 at the age of 75 years; the body was interred at Keilor cemetery. It is unfortunate that her involvement in the community was not as well documented as her husband's. Her background support role had been acknowledged to some extent at her husband's silver jubilee celebration, when "*Each speaker also paid a high tribute to the great assistance which Mrs. Stenson had given to her husband during his 25 years, for, without a sympathetic wife in these affairs, no man could get anywhere, they said.*"⁶

Apart from this rare acknowledgement, almost nothing had been reported in the local newspapers about Eva Leah Stenson's work and achievements in the district, which is a similar fate to that experienced by Aunt Emma. Such information would have been known and shared within a communal oral history tradition but unfortunately this has now been lost.

¹ Sunshine Advocate 19 May 1933

² Recollections of Frank Farrugia.

³ Sunshine Advocate 26 July 1940

⁴ Edward James Luxford was the President of the St Albans Progress Association for nearly 30 years. It is said that he started the Association in 1907.

⁵ Sunshine Advocate 16 October 1942

⁶ Sunshine Advocate 28 October 1932

After his wife died Frederick Charles finally decided it was time to retire. He announced that he would not seek re-election when his term of office expired in 1947. The decision capped 40 years of continuous representation on behalf of the St. Albans residents in the Maribyrnong Riding.

Stenson's retirement from council created an opening for other local aspirants and it ended as a three-way contest between James Eddie, Daniel Gavaghan, and Harold Easton. Eddie, a grazier, had arrived six years earlier and had a farm on Taylors Road. Gavaghan was the endorsed Labor candidate; he worked for the State Electricity Commission and had been a local resident for fourteen years. Easton had established a hardware store in East Esplanade in 1946, but earlier he had been involved in local youth activities through the Presbyterian Church. Agnes Stevens, widow of James H. Stevens, who had been a Keilor councillor for many years, was promised strong support if she nominated, but she declined due to the pressure of her community activities. She endorsed the candidature of James Eddie, whom she believed "*has all the qualifications of a live wire civic representative.*"¹

It's hard to know if Agnes Stevens's personal endorsement influenced many ratepayers, but people respected her enormously because of the decades of voluntary work that she had contributed to the township. In any case, James Eddie was elected quite comfortably after the allocation of preferences. Agnes Stevens was another woman whose leadership role in the community has gone largely unreported. She was a stalwart supporter of the church, had been on the parents committee at the primary school for many years, organised many fund-raising events in the district, and was the public face of the benevolent society. People still remember Agnes Stevens for helping distribute aid to families during the depression. On top of that she was an accomplished pianist and would readily support any local event and celebration in this capacity. She also donated land for a reserve, and that is Jamieson Reserve in Main Road West.

In October 1947, the local Mechanics' Institute was packed to capacity when residents throughout the Shire of Keilor paid tribute to Fred Stenson on his retirement from active municipal life after 40 years' continuous service. On behalf of the local residents, the Chairman of the Citizens' Committee thanked Mr. Stenson for his efforts on their behalf, both in municipal and private life. He was ably supported by the President of the Shire of Keilor, Cr. William Nathan Gooch, and Crs. James Eddie and Alexander Dickson. On behalf of the residents Cr. Gooch presented Stenson with a bank cheque for a substantial sum as a mark of respect and appreciation for his past services. Stenson was given an enthusiastic reception when he replied.²

¹ Sunshine Advocate 20 June 1947

² Sunshine Advocate 10 October 1947

Little has been recorded about Stenson's activities in the decade after he retired. No doubt he would have kept active within the church, but otherwise he seems to have withdrawn completely from public life. One can imagine a gradual decline in physical health and his financial position seems to have also deteriorated. As has been noted by local historians, the condition of Keighlo, his once grand home in Winifred Street, "*slowly went to rack and ruin.*" In fact when the house was occupied by the Catholic diocese there was talk of having it demolished. However, local builder Fred Barnard was able to restore it.

One can speculate that Stenson's finances had dissipated because small-scale farming had become unviable. David Millburn and his sons were buying neighbouring land to extend their holdings, but that was not the case with the Stensons. The Stenson farm became hemmed in by the river at one end and urban growth at the other – there was nowhere else nearby to expand to. There was also greater competition from orchards in the Bacchus Marsh district, which had the advantage of a planned irrigation scheme, in contrast to Keilor, where farmers were installing pumping machines individually. Bacchus Marsh became one of the most successful districts for growing fruit and was especially noted for its prolific apple orchards. The development of irrigation farming around Shepparton after the war with its intake of experienced European farmers encouraged enormous investment in orchards, and the fruit preserving and canning industries very quickly followed – think of the Shepparton Preserving Company, SPC, as an example.

Frederick Charles Stenson passed away on 11 June 1958, aged 88 years. He was buried with his late wife at the Keilor cemetery. He had seen enormous change in his community over his lifetime. When he arrived in 1888, St. Albans probably had a population of between 100 and 200 people at most. This remained pretty much unchanged for the next forty years. By the time Stenson retired from public life the population had grown to about 800 people, so it was still a village, albeit a much larger one than when he'd arrived. But he could not have foreseen the population explosion that occurred during the decade of his retirement, as by the end of that period the population had reached 6,000 – Stenson's small farming village at the turn of the century had become a town of multicultural proportions.

Frederick and Eva Stenson did not have a son to whom they could pass on the family farm (as was the custom of the time). Fred and Eva raised four daughters: Alice, Mary, Emily, and Winifred. None of them appears to have inherited the family farm, so either it was already sold off by the time of their father's death or it was sold off to settle the inheritance. The eldest daughter, Alice, became a farmer with her husband on their property known as "Burn Brae" in Taylors Road.



Fred and Eva Stenson with daughters © Gwen Kratsis

Alice Eva was born on 17 April 1900. She married Fred Anderson on 18 April 1923. The Andersons were farmers on Taylors Road – Peter and Hannah Anderson (q.v.) came from Campbellfield in about 1910 and became known as one of the greatest hay-growing families in the district. Fred was the eldest son and he continued in the farming tradition by establishing his own farm in Taylors Road on the western side of the railway line. Alice was a member of St Alban the Martyr Church and acted as secretary for parish fairs raising funds to reduce the debt on the vicarage. Their daughter Jean Stenson married David Alexander Chandler of Deer Park. Their son Arthur Frederick was born in 1927 and took up farming with his father.

Mary Ruby was born on 9 February 1902. She married Thomas Daniel Crawford in 1934. They had at least one daughter, Kath, and a son Thomas Frederick. Thomas Daniel Crawford was an ANZAC and served as a private with the 3rd Battalion in World War One. He died in South Australia on 24 July 1971. Mary Ruby died in South Australia on 27 March 1974 at the age of 76 years. They are both buried at the Burwood Cemetery in Victoria.



Emily Hall with Jill & Wayne © Gwen Kratsis

Emily Leah was born on 6 June 1904. She married Frank Hall of Sydenham in 1942 at the height of the World War 2. They did not have any children. Em, as she was known to her friends, was one of the longest-lived residents in St Albans with her home in William Street near the old water tower at the Arthur Street corner. Emily had strong links with St Alban the Martyr Anglican Church, having been the organist for 50 years. She died in 2000 at the age of 96 years. At her funeral eulogy she was referred to as “an icon of the St Albans community.”

Winifred Jean was born on 17 March 1914. In 1943 she married John William Edward Honey but everyone knew him as Jack, a member of the Honey family near Station Road. He worked as a blacksmith with the railways and was elected to Keilor Council in the 1960s. Winifred was the secretary and treasurer of the St Albans Red Cross Society in 1940. She had three children: John (1946) who worked with the Lort Smith Animal Shelter and retired to Port Fairy, Frederick Albert (1944) who became a bank manager and retired to Gippsland, and Gwen (1950) who worked as a telephonist and clerk and retired to Hoppers Crossing.



Winifred Honey with Fred, John & Gwen © Gwen Kratsis

The Stenson family contributed enormously to the district. Between them, Charles Stenson and Frederick Charles Stenson spanned a century of work on the farm and in the town. Frederick Charles, with the support of his wife and daughters, became a senior statesman and leader within the church and in municipal life. It is fitting that he was given a Gold Albert for his work in the community and it is even more fitting that he should be remembered with respect as “Mr. St Albans.” #

STEVENS, James and Agnes



James Henry Stevens came to St Albans in 1907 and acquired the two blocks in western St Albans that had been selected in 1905 by George Thomas and Sabina Murrowood, plus two more blocks to the north, so he had land totaling 332 acres from the Overnewton Estate.

This selection had a potential supply of water for stock with a couple of gullies at the southern end running down to and across Boundary Road. There was a dam and a water hole formed along one of the gullies and the other one was known as Jones Creek which was an intermittent stream except for the rainy season. The land was clear of stones at the North Pole Road (Taylors Road) boundary with patches of stone to the south – it was part of an old cultivation and there were mostly stone walls on the boundaries.

The old cultivation was related to the Closer Settlement Board's activities in 1868 when the land was described as "open plains" and "fine pasture land" and was owned by Mr Matthew Harrison and Dr Louis Lawrence Smith, but the latter was a speculator rather than a local farming aspirant. In the 1890s it was owned by Alfred Padley's Cosmopolitan Land and Banking Company and they too were speculators who failed, hence the land's eventual return to the Closer Settlement Board. The Murrowoods who came in 1905 did not stay long because they went bankrupt and the land thus reverted to the Board – so that farmland had had a checkered history.

The price of the land was £2000 and it would take decades for the Stevens family to pay it off¹ but they stayed and developed a productive farm.

James Henry Stevens was born on 29 March 1873 at Eddington near Betley, the youngest of four brothers and one sister. His father was George Havelock Stevens (1826-1911) and his mother was Diana Wyatt Lodge (1832-1900); they had married in 1853 at Bedminster, St John, Somersetshire. In 1954 they emigrated from Barrow Gurney, England, as Assisted British Immigrants. They were a young couple: he was 28 and she was 22. Their first child, Mary Jane, was born in 1854 and died on 7

November 1854 on the journey to Australia; she was buried at sea.

George and Diana Stevens arrived in Portland on 31 January 1855 and they may have gone to the gold diggings before settling in Maryborough. In the 1860s they were living at Betley where they had bought several hundred acres in the land sales of 1865. Much of this land is still owned and farmed by family descendents. George was a man of social conscience and this characteristic was passed down to his children. For example, in 1867 George wrote to the Maryborough council objecting to a proposal to dam the Four Mile Creek upon which seven families depended for water and which ran through their properties. The family became grain farmers and merchants. George, with a brother, ran a hay and grain store from 1856 in High Street Maryborough. They also had several similar stores across the district. This store might have also been operated by George's father who came out a little earlier.²

They later received some royalties from the Duke and Mains Leads Consols Company.³



George and Diana Stevens raised five children:⁴

- George Louis (1865)
- Matilda "Tilly" Louisa (1867)
- John Thomas (1869)
- Edward Samuel (1871)
- James Henry (1873)

George was born on 1 March 1865. He married Adelaide Louisa Wragg in 1895 and they lived at Betley. They raised five daughters and three sons. George died on 26 February 1949 at Maryborough. Adelaide died on 24 June 1952 at Albert Park.

Matilda was born on 27 April 1867 at Maryborough. She married local lad George Patterson in 1890, had seven children and settled in West Footscray, not far from brother James at St Albans. She died in 1951 in Harrierville, Victoria.

John (Jack) married Selina Walker who died of TB, then he married Mary Scantlebury. They had

¹ John Stevens recalls that repayments were £123 per year with £120 being interest and £3 on the principle.

² Information from Brenda Stevens-Chambers.

³ It was a gold mining company and its greatest yielding deep alluvial mine was at Maryborough.

⁴ Brenda Stevens-Chambers *The Stevens Family of Betley – Victoria : From the Goldfields to the New Millenium*.

six children and lived at Havelock. He later settled in Fremantle where he was on council for many years. He died on 17 March 1940 at Maryborough.

Edward Samuel, known as Samuel, married Elizabeth Ellen Walker in 1899 and took over the Betley farm. He distrusted all government officials and was reported in the Dunolly Advertiser of July 1917 to have ridiculed a government official at a public meeting, who was promising locals the world if they all became orchardists. However, Samuel spoke as far as Bendigo at rallies encouraging young men to enlist in WW1. He was behind the development of a rifle range in Maryborough. He died on 13 April 1933 at Maryborough.¹

James Henry Stevens' interest in theology was probably initiated here as in 1887 there was a small Church of Christ Chapel in nearby Bet Bet with a seating capacity of 100 and a membership of 40. The family was known to attend there for wedding celebrations.²



Church of Christ Chapel at Bet Bet



James Stevens migrated to USA in July 1893 and stayed until 1900. He lived in Indianapolis as a clergyman and became a "naturalised and loyal citizen of the United States". He went there to study and in June 1894 he received a prize and a mention in the yearbook for "Preparatory Department Declamation" at Butler

University, Irvington, Indiana. He was proud of his qualification and was often noted as being "J. H. Stevens B.A." He appears to have returned to Australia about 1900. The reason for his return is not documented but it may have been because of the failing health of his mother, who died in Maryborough in 1900.

James Stevens became the Evangelist at the Malvern Church of Christ. It was formed in 1889 and had a congregation of over 200 members over the next decade. In 1902 it had a membership of

¹ Information from Brenda Stevens-Chambers.

² Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser 26 June 1918 p4

about 50 and a Sunday School program catering for 20. In 1903 he was the Evangelist with the church and had a team of nine officers and teachers as church leaders.³ He would preach on themes such as "Peter's Great Confession", "World Wide Evangelisation", "Cries from the Cross", and "Scrapping Scripture". The sessions were often promoted in the Age and non-churchgoers were invited to attend.



James Stevens (L) with church elders at Malvern

It is not known why he decided to return to his earlier roots and a farming life. His transition from evangelism was probably about 1905. He wrote a book on mnemonics in 1906⁴ and established a business in Collins Street Melbourne where he taught his system of memory recall – he called himself a memory teacher. His office 'suite' in 1906-1907 was at 145 Collins Street in Burke and Williams' Chambers, second floor room 3⁵ but in 1907 he had moved to 157 Exhibition Street and taught "scientific memory culture". In the meantime he'd been looking for opportunities to buy some farming land and that occurred through the Overnewton Estate at St Albans.

Agnes Jamieson Lee Crichton Cockerell was from Newmarket. Her parents were Mary and James Cockerell and she met James Henry Stevens through the Church of Christ, Wellington Street, Newmarket. Agnes was a church organist and James was a preacher. They married in 1909 and the new bride came out to St Albans on a steam train. At that stage there was a suburban steam train that would come in the morning, and in the evening the Bendigo Express would stop at the station, if requested, on its way to the city. John Stevens recalls that:

"Mum always remembered when she first arrived in St Albans after getting married that the town looked

³ A.B. Maston; Jubilee Pictorial History of Churches of Christ in Australasia; 1903

⁴ "Full memory power : and how to obtain it" also titled "Climb to the top"; James Henry Stevens, 1906.

⁵ The building was opposite the Scots Church on the corner of Russell Street. Stevens' business neighbours included Miss Mona McBurney who was a professor of music, a Miss Bini Barr who was an artist and pianoforte teacher, and the Misses Keane who were ladies' tailors.

no more that a small store and post office set amongst farm paddocks all round. She was well dressed for the occasion in a dress with train, pointed shoes and a picture hat, then had to walk the mile or so along Main Road West to her new home, the farmhouse.

*"She'd never done any cooking of consequence. The first thing that happened after she came to the farm was to be introduced to cooking for the farm workers. Dad had all this stacked hay and they had the thrashing blokes with their machines with 15 or 16 blokes all working this thing. The rain came down and of course the blokes couldn't work but they had to be fed. Their introduction to chopping up a side of lamb was mum's first experience in cooking for sixteen blokes."*¹

They named their farm "Edenhope" after the town of Edenhope, near Mildura, where Agnes's sister was convalescing. For the next fifty years the family ran sheep and cattle and harvested wheat, oats and barley and occasionally they experimented with other crops. They were raising sheep from 1910 until the 1930s, selling merinos and crossbreeds including the comeback variety, through the Melbourne stock markets.²

Despite all the work of the previous farmers from the 1870s, there was still a lot of stone lying around and therefore the new crop of farmers were still collecting them. In 1912 Stevens wrote:

*"We got our heap of stones finished Saturday. It is 14 yards wide and 15 yards long and one yard high. It was a pretty big job and I think we are all glad it is done. The skin on our hands was about worn through."*³

In 1921 Stevens bought 154 acres from the estates of the late John and Michael O'Connor. Sometime later he bought another 140 acres in Deer Park for £1400. In fact he ended up buying more than 250 blocks around St Albans between 1908 and 1927, but that's another story.



Stevens family at Edenhope farm © Karen Bugeja

¹ John Stevens in *Stories About St Albans* 2012

² The Comeback is a type of domestic sheep originating in Australia. This type of sheep results from crossbreeds produced by British Longwool sheep and Merinos being mated back to Merinos.

³ Letter to Agnes Stevens 6 October 1912

It was the era of horse power and in the 1930s Stevens would have a team of at least 8 horses when they were hauling his big wagon-load of sacks of wheat or a load of hay. One year the load of straw weighed about 25 tons. They had a chaff cutter and sold chaff. He grew wheat and barley and also tried peas. They used 6 draught horses to pull the plough. He had a 3-horse reaper-binder working in the fields between North Road (Taylors Road) and Boundary Road (Main Road West) which enclosed wide open fields with a line of trees along the boundary. They were mostly stone fences and clearing the fields of stone was one of the basic farm chores in the early days.



Garfield Stevens loads hay for delivery

Later came the age of mechanization and they bought an old Fordson Major tractor.⁴ The flirtation with automotives came early. Agnes obtained a Model T Ford after the birth of her fourth son, John Stevens, in 1923. By the fifties when the Stevens brothers had started their building supply business in East Esplanade they had a delivery truck that they also used for carting bales of hay. In 1940 they were selling some of their horses and maybe this was heralding the triumph of mechanical power in their own little patch.

James and Agnes Stevens became involved in many local committees and causes. James was later described as one of Keilor's most progressive citizens. Agnes was referred to as St Albans' great social worker. They worked together but each had distinct and distinguished careers as community leaders and activists.

James Henry had come to St Albans at the age of 34 years with an interest in theology, mnemonics and farming. After his work as an Evangelist he continued in that role as a lay preacher. He had written a book on mnemonics and taught his system of memory recall through an office in Collins Street, Melbourne. He continued this business while establishing the farm in Main Road West and sometimes would rely on workers to complete the farm chores. There was a scheme where prospective British immigrants were trained

⁴ Fordson was a brand name of tractors and trucks. It was used on a range of mass-produced general-purpose tractors manufactured by Henry Ford & Son.

to become farmers and there was an opportunity to bring them to Australia. Stevens would bring them to Australia and they would work on his farm while he was in the city working at his memory recall business.¹

He also became interested in community representation and that started not long after his arrival. By 1908 he was the Secretary of the Overnewton and District Settlers Association and was writing letters on their behalf and attending meetings with the Settlement Board and "waiting on the Minister" to press their cause. In 1914 he addressed members of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Closer Settlement problems when they interviewed selectors on the Maribyrnong and Overnewton estates:

*"On the Question of the under-valuation of improvements Henry Stevens expressed himself strongly. He said that he thought the system of valuing was very imperfect. The valuers seemed to him to be overcautious and never erred on the side of liberality towards the settler. One settler had had trees which had been planted for six or seven years valued at 7d. In his opinion they should be valued at as many shillings, while their actual value was 20/. ... Ridiculous was the only word for the valuation ... The valuation of his improvements was £850, but he had spent out of his private money, not a penny of which he had made off Overnewton, more than £1,500, and, in addition, he had spent all the money he had ever made in the years he had been on the estate."*²

In 1908 Stevens, at the request of local residents, sent a petition to the Railways Department asking that the Post Office be transferred from the railway station to the general store that Robert Aylmer had established in Boundary Road west. In 1916 Stevens was in a deputation to Keilor Shire council regarding the proposed severance of St Albans and spoke with both Keilor and Braybrook councils. Keilor was concerned about losing ratepayers and Braybrook was interested in gaining them if the majority of St Albans residents signed a petition requesting it. There was considerable debate and opposition to this proposal and the severance did not occur.



Stevens' home on Edenhope farm © Karen Bugeja

Stevens was still active as a preacher. The family attended the Presbyterian Church in Elaine Street and James at one stage was holding Sunday school classes at the primary school in West Esplanade. In 1927 his sermon at the Masonic Hall in Sunshine was "That they may all be one". 1934 was a special anniversary because Stevens was one of the preachers at the Church of Christ jubilee in Newmarket where Agnes had family ties.

He became involved with the St Albans Primary School Committee, the Mechanics Institute, and the Progress Association. In 1927 he nominated for a position on Keilor Shire council when he decided to stand against Cr Frank Milburn³ for the Maribyrnong Riding:

*"... affirming their right to the full exercise of the civic franchise, St. Albans residents, at a public meeting held on Monday night at the local hall pledged their support to Mr. James H Stevens, who was chosen to contest the vacant seat, against Cr. Milburn."*⁴



J H Stevens (front left) with councillors & senior staff 1934

By this stage there were 160 votes in St Albans, 40 in Sydenham, and 60 in Keilor, so it was evident that St Albans had the bulk of the voters and the locals wanted to have three members in the Shire Council representing their Riding as at that stage Frederick Stenson was the only St Albans resident on Keilor Council. Stevens was candid with voters when he said his interests were in St Albans because he owned 250 blocks in the town, so in helping the town he would be helping himself, but there was no one who had more at stake than he, and, if people wanted him to stand, he would do his best.⁵ Stevens was elected in October 1927 by a margin of ten votes. He was elected the Shire President in 1930 so he had undoubtedly been accepted by "the establishment".

J. H. Stevens spent 16 years on Keilor Shire

³ Frank Milburn (1876-1951) was the son of David and Susan Milburn who had established market gardens along the river at Keilor.

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 23 July 1927

⁵ Sunshine Advocate 23 July 1927

¹ Recollections of Evelyn Mullenger.

² Argus 1 August 1914 p17

council representing St Albans and he became well respected for his work. He was appointed a Justice of the Peace in 1932 – at the time a J.P. was a person of some importance and authority in the community, and some of them sat on the Magistrates' Bench dealing with lower level crime and such transgressions.

The Depression years were not good times for anyone in the district, not even for the Stevens family. Coincidentally, it was a time of greater problems with stock losses and James Stevens reported that during one weekend he lost a dozen sheep through marauding dogs. A decade later he was frustrated enough that he issued a public warning that trespassers on his property would be prosecuted and that dogs would be destroyed without warning. It was a problem that other farmers were experiencing with greater frequency as more people settled in the district and the number of free-roaming dogs increased.



Presbyterian Church in Circus East © Karen Bugeja



John Stevens (second from left) with church elders © K Bugeja

In 1935 the Keilor shire was experiencing its own problems with rates arrears and the finance committee noted that Cr Stevens was one of the main defaulters and had a large amount of rates outstanding:

“After negotiations with Cr Stevens, which failed to achieve the desired result, he was given a reasonable period in which to place before the council some definite undertaking regarding the reduction of his liability. This was not forth-coming,

but in the report of the finance committee to the meeting on Saturday last it was stated that Cr Stevens had given notice of appeal to the Farmers' Relief Board, the hearing of which will take place on Tuesday, June 25. The finance committee made a recommendation that this appeal be opposed, evidence obtained and the council's solicitor be asked to appear on behalf of the shire.”¹

The financial distress did not lessen and in August 1935 the Sheriff's Office advertised the sale of about 80 blocks of Stevens' land *“unless the said process shall have been previously satisfied or the said Sheriff be otherwise stayed.”²*

It is not known how this was resolved but one strategy that they used was to pay the minimum installment possible while waiting for property values to improve. John Stevens recalled that at one stage his parents were having difficulty in paying rates on all their extra land and this was partly because they were not able to sell the blocks that James had been buying as a family nest egg:

“Land in the old sub-divisions ... was virtually unsaleable before the war (offered for as little as £8 a lot) ... My dad had in excess of a hundred lots. Before the fifties my father was trying to sell some of his blocks and had erected a big bill-board in Footscray advertising housing land for sale in St Albans. But the demand just wasn't there at the time and after six months he hadn't sold even one block so he had a think about it and decided on a new strategy. He put up a new poster across that billboard that said 'STILL A FEW LEFT' and he still didn't sell any.”³

James Stevens was a member of the St Albans Progress Association and would report to them about his council activities and they would often work in tandem. For example, the ambition of building a direct road to Sunshine had been extant since 1914 and was periodically revisited. In 1928 James Stevens with his fellow Councilor Frederick Stenson and the Association president Edward Luxford went on their latest deputation to Braybrook Council, who this time agreed to buy some land that was needed to complete the road connection. (The road was finally completed in 1933.) The Konagaderra water scheme was another such item, and it also was a process that took many years, as a water supply to parts of the village was finally installed in 1940. Cr Dickson noted that Stevens *“had shown great tenacity in forwarding the movement for bringing water supplies to St. Albans”⁴*. In 1933 he was also a delegate at a conference of municipalities to prepare a scheme for reducing Government expenditure.

¹ Sunshine Advocate 7 June 1935

² Argus 6 August 1935 p2

³ John Stevens in Stories About St Albans: Celebrating 125 Years; 2012.

⁴ For many years the town water supply was four water tanks on a tower in Arthur Street. In the 1960s three enormous ground-level tanks were installed on the old Stevens' farm south of Taylors Road.

James was on the school committee for some years and Agnes Stevens also became involved as president at one stage. All four of their sons attended the school, which was not surprising as it was the only school in the district at the time.

In 1938 Stevens decided not to stand for re-election to the Keilor Council at the end of his term. His health had started to deteriorate in a drawn-out process because of Parkinson's disease and the family nursed him at home between 1940 and 1946. He died on Monday 23 December 1946 at the age of 73 years, a St Albans pioneer of 40 years. The funeral took place at Fawcner Cemetery on Christmas Eve with the combined ministrations of the Church of Christ and the Presbyterian Church. He had arrived when the population was less than 200 people and when he died St Albans was still a village, but it was a larger one with a population of about 800 people.

Agnes Stevens was no stranger to the workings of local councils. Her uncle had been Alderman Crichton of the Melbourne City Council and her mother Mary Cockerell of Newmarket was a foundation member of Church of Christ, a life governor of the Alfred Hospital, and a generous giver to the poor and needy. Agnes inherited her mother's caring qualities and, because of her decades of service through many groups, the Sunshine Advocate ended up calling her the "St Albans' Great Social Worker". It was a fitting title for a very dedicated and hardworking volunteer who busied herself with the welfare of the community in general. There was no worthy cause that Agnes Stevens did not support. She was a good pianist, an excellent organizer, and a compassionate volunteer.

She was a good pianist and would support activities at the Mechanics Hall when concert performers and singers needed accompaniment at public entertainments. Her son John said:

*"She had a wonderful ear for music. If she could hear a tune for a while she could sit down and play it. She played a lot of the accompaniments for my second brother, Doug, who had a glorious voice. She could transpose: she might be playing in the key of G and she could slide down and play that same tune in a lower key. She was enormously gifted. ... She read music, but more often than not she would play it without the music sheets. She had a beautiful ear."*¹

Agnes was an inveterate committee-joiner. If ever an organisation needed someone to form a local branch for their cause, then Agnes was there to get things going and was proposed as president, secretary, correspondent, organiser, group leader or other such title of authority, sometimes permanent sometimes pro tem. When an Auxiliary Branch for the Women's Hospital and the Red Cross Society was wanted, Agnes Stevens was proposed as president. Similar things happened with groups such as the St Albans School Funds variety

concert, Sunshine Amateur Dramatic Company, Infantile Paralysis Fund, Sunshine Band Ladies Committee, Red Cross Emergency Service Home Nursing Class, Footscray and District Outpatients and Welfare Centre, the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind Concert, and the Presbyterian Happy Circle running a market fair for the Sunday School fund. She even contributed to reviving the local boy scout movement in 1933 and her son Doug became the assistant to Mr. Schmidt of Sunshine who was the leader. The list goes on.

She was the public face of the Benevolent Society in St Albans and if anyone had a genuine hard luck story she would do something about it. Even some of the needy migrants of the 1950s remember receiving a blanket from her in the depth of winter. The local paper was always impressed:

*"There has been no more earnest worker for charity and local activities at St. Albans than Mrs. A. L. Stevens, wife of Cr Stevens, of the Keilor Shire Council. Nearly every entertainment that she organises is a success, and every detail is considered to make it so. Mrs. Stevens' guiding hand was seen in the Variety Concert held last week in aid of the St. Albans school funds. 'Pop and Little Lady' who are associated with 3 AW Broadcasting station were the leaders of the entertainment, and together with the Melbourne Boys' Club staged an enjoyable evening for all those who attended. As a result of the concert the school funds will benefit to the extent of £8."*²



During the war she organised collections for the British Bombing Refugee Clothing Depot, the Prisoners of War Fund, and there was even a Tobacco Fund. Her involvement with the primary school meant that she sometimes trained students to present concerts at the Mechanics' Institute. These concerts were sometimes held as fund raisers and other times as a presentation of the students' achievements over the year. James Stevens had been involved with the school committee for a number of years.

The unemployed relief scheme was a project that both Agnes and James had been involved with in the

1930s. James was the honorary president of the St

¹ *Stories About St Albans*; 2012.

² *Sunshine Advocate* 1 May 1936

Albans Unemployed Committee in 1931, but apparently it was Agnes's idea to form it a year earlier and James had proposed the idea at a Council meeting. It was a worthwhile endeavour that also created a few problems due to conflicting egos and expectations. James Stevens was the chairman at the first meeting and Mrs Lily Turner became the secretary. The group worked in conjunction with the Keilor Public Assistance Committee and provided support such as food and clothing for the unemployed in the municipality.

In 1947 Agnes was encouraged to stand for council after Frederick Stenson retired. She was promised strong support if she nominated, and it would have been a landmark event if she'd been elected as she would have been the first lady councillor in the shire. She decided not to stand because of her other volunteer commitments and she endorsed the candidature of local farmer Mr. James Eddie "*whom she believes has all the qualifications of a live wire civic representative.*"¹ The Stevens and the Eddies had a political affinity through being supporters of the Liberal-Country party. The inaugural meeting of the St Albans branch was held at the Mechanics Hall in September 1949 and James Eddie was elected as President, John Stevens as Treasurer, and Agnes Stevens as Secretary and one of the delegates to the Federal Electorate Committee.²



James and Marjorie Eddie (R) © Karen Bugeja

Agnes continued her work at the local level. Life for the family became more secure financially with the money they received when they sold their land in Deer Park. Agnes paid off Edenhope and received the title to the property in 1951. After that the official maps show the owner as being "A. J. Stevens" – Agnes Jamieson Stevens. She gave her sons a share of the money and thus assisted them in setting up their own businesses; a new generation of family enterprise had begun. For herself, Agnes later purchased a Mercedes car that she drove as long as she could.

She donated some of the farmland near the creek to a support group for people with disability,

which was known as the Spastic Society at the time but is now known as Scope. The creek bed is now part of Jamieson Street Reserve, which was named after Agnes Jamieson Stevens.



Agnes Stevens née Cockerell died in 1968 at age 86 years, a St Albans pioneer of 60 years. She had outlived her contemporaries by many years, people like Alice Errington, another grand dame of St Albans who was a pioneer from the 1880s. When Agnes arrived in St Albans in 1908 it was a small rural village with a

population of less than 200 people, and when she died in 1968 it was a thriving urban neighbourhood and the population had surpassed 13,000 people, so she had lived through some major demographic changes.

The children of James and Agnes Stevens were James Garfield (1911), Horace Henry (1913), Douglas Lloyd George (1916), and John Stevens (1923). All of the boys went to the St Albans Primary School. The older boys went on to Sunshine Technical School and John, the youngest, went to Williamstown High School.



Stevens boys with family car © Karen Bugeja

James Garfield was born on 10 March 1911 and attended St Albans Primary School between 1916 and 1924 before going to Sunshine Tech. He married Flora McRae, who was the daughter of Euphemia and John McRae, of Sydenham. He left the family farm and became the manager at Torin Electrics, which was a branch of Braemar.

Horace Henry was born on 20 October 1913 and attended St Albans Primary School between 1917 and 1925 before going to Sunshine Tech. He was a keen sportsman and he loved football. He played full back for the North Melbourne seconds and after he left League football he played with I.C.I. He was a prominent member of the Sunshine and District Cricket Association and the St. Albans Cricket Club. He drowned in the Yarra River on 14

¹ Sunshine Advocate Friday 20 June 1947

² Sunshine Advocate 14 October 1949 p3

January 1940. His body was interred at the Melbourne Crematorium, Fawkner Cemetery:

*"A prominent member of the Sunshine and District Cricket Association in Horrie Stevens, of the St Albans Cricket Club, was drowned in the River Yarra, near Queen's Bridge, on Saturday evening last. A railway signalman working in a box near the river heard cries for help and noticed a man struggling in the water. He threw a rope in the direction of the man, who was unable to grasp it and disappeared. Later the river police recovered the body and it was identified as Horace Henry Stevens, aged 27 years, of St. Albans."*¹

Douglas Lloyd George was born on 19 May 1916 and attended St Albans Primary School between 1922 and 1928. He went to Sunshine Tech and then studied radio at the Melbourne Technical School and became a wireless operator. He married Isobella Brown on 17 September 1938 and they were living at Station Road Deer Park. He enlisted in December 1939 at the age of 22 years and served as a wireless operator. He embarked from Sydney for the Middle East in July 1940 and disembarked at Melbourne in March 1942. He then embarked from Townsville in July 1944 for New Guinea and disembarked at Townsville in February 1945. His 'special skills' noted in his service records refer to his abilities as a wrestling instructor, but his great talent was singing. He had a beautiful tenor voice. He used to sing at the P. & A. (Professionals and Amateurs) Parade on 3KZ and at various live theatres about town. He was very popular in the Sunshine and St Albans districts, where his personality and good fellowship and sportsmanship brightened many social and sporting functions.² He was also a fine sportsman, one of the best local cricketers and a footballer of class. Doug and Isobella had three children: Greg, Isobella, and Douglas.

He was also active in promoting local drama, an initiative that has largely been forgotten. In 1954 he convened a public meeting for the purpose of inaugurating a Musical and Dramatic Society in St Albans.³ As a consequence, the "St Albans Little Theatre" was formed with Doug Stevens as the President, Dorothy Baulch as Secretary, Mary Hewitt as Treasurer, and Neville Thurgood as Producer.⁴ The selection of cast members for the pantomime was held at Doug's home in Main Road West.

Douglas Lloyd George Stevens, the man behind the "D.L.G. Stevens" business name, died in 1988 and was buried at Altona Memorial Park.

John Edward Stevens was born on the 25th October 1923 and attended St Albans Primary School from 1928 to 1934 before going to Williamstown High School. Music and singing were his hobbies and he also had a good reputation as

a singer, being a fine baritone. When his father became ill, John returned and managed the farm for his parents. He later bought land in Taylors Road to the west of the Kings' property and next to Fred Anderson and farmed that.



John married June Butler, daughter of Elizabeth and Clifford Alwyn Butler of Ballarat Road, Sydenham.⁵ John and June's children are Karen (now living in Poowong), Donna, and Mark (who works as a sports presenter and commentator).

The war years were harsh for everyone but brought an unexpected reprieve for the financially struggling Stevens family. Some of the land that James had bought was towards Deer Park; it had cost £1400 but the debts were heavy. Fortunately the Commonwealth Government wanted that land for an ammunition dump and bought the property, which was the break the family needed. Mrs. Stevens was able to pay off the Edenhope farm and thereby obtained the title in September 1951. She gave each of her sons £1000 and from there on the family was fairly well off.⁶



Stevens brothers with timber supply early 1950s © Karen Bugeja

¹ Sunshine Advocate 19 January 1940

² Sunshine Advocate 4 March 1938

³ Sunshine Advocate 15 January 1954 p1

⁴ Sunshine Advocate 12 February 1954 p3

⁵ June's brother, Cliff Butler, managed the Croft Bank Dairies outlet opposite Errington Reserve.

⁶ Garfield Stevens quoted in *A History of St Albans Technical School*, Frank Sofo, Deer Park, 1967

Times started changing rapidly after the war when the European migrants started arriving at the rate of 2000 per year. The village of less than 900 in 1950 suddenly had 4000 inhabitants in 1955 and this created incredible business opportunities as St Albans became the cosmopolitan capital of the region. It encouraged the start of St Albans Building Supplies. In 1951 the Stevens brothers had started selling building timber from the farm in Main Road West and they decided to establish a more formal business enterprise.

In 1952 the Stevens brothers applied to Keilor Council for changes in the zoning permit for their land in East Esplanade and soon the well-known St Albans Building Supplies on the corner of East Esplanade and Circus East became a thriving business. Stories abound of migrant men coming with their push bikes and carting away their selected foundation stumps or a bundle of wall studs for the weekend building project. Half houses lined the streets and on weekends the village resounded to the ringing of countless hammers. German was the lingua franca.

Even the mainstream press came to witness the phenomenon. The Argus, Melbourne's main daily newspaper at the time, discovered this wondrous new suburb where the classrooms were like a little League of Nations. The students at the primary school were snapped for posterity and labelled with their country of origin as proof of their cosmopolitan background. They also snapped the

High School's collection of pupils representing more than 30 nations. St Albans was definitely on the map and in the news.



Citizens of the world, St Albans Primary, The Sun, 1956

The DLG Stevens team of three brothers and a cousin started building houses and at one stage would have built more than 100 houses a year. You could buy a house block for £50, a bungalow for £140 or a five-roomed house for £2,000. As John Stevens recalls:

"The old subdivisions gave new birth to St. Albans as migrants from 1950 onwards advanced out into the west of Melbourne. Unimproved blocks of land despite a lack of all facilities – we could say no facilities – were rapidly taken up because of the low prices compared to the south-eastern suburbs. In those days everybody was going to the south-eastern region. People came to St Albans and saw so many rocks and the wind sweeping over the plains and thought no-one could live under those conditions.

"Buying a part-house on these lots on convenient terms gave migrant families a base from which they would assume an Australian way of life. Blocks, which had been virtually unsaleable from the collapse of the land boom in the late 1890s right up to the Second World War, were regularly sought by migrants looking for a new start after their suffering in Europe."¹



St Albans Building Supplies 20-22 East Esplanade

The sixties were busy times for the Stevens family. When the family started their timber yard the St Albans' population was about 1,000 people. By

¹ John Stevens, *Stories About St Albans*, 2012

1960 the population was about 7,000 and still expanding, and because of this the authorities decided to open up west St Albans for more housing, namely the Stevens' farm on the old Overnewton Estate which became known as Stevensville Estate:

*"Mrs. Stevens sold half of Edenhope Farm (160 acres) containing two parcels of land (20 acres) which were reserved for school purposes ... the developers who bought the land called it "Stevensville Estate" after the family name. In fact, the family got together and named all the proposed roads. Stevens road was the first, named so because of its long history as a track up through the centre of the farm. Jamieson St., on the eastern side of lot 3, the present school site, was named after Mrs. Agnes Lee Jamieson Stevens. James Street, named after her husband Henry James Stevens is on the northern boarder. Murray Street, the southern boarder street was one of Mrs. Stevens' grandsons. Moffat Street, the western boarder of the school was named after a very prominent Keilor Councillor and friend of the Stevens. Garfield, Douglas and John Streets were named after Mrs. Stevens' three sons. McRae, McLeod and Butler streets were named after Mrs. Stevens' sons' wives' maiden names!"*¹

There were two schools built on the old Edenhope property. St Albans Technical school opened in 1962 and was later renamed as the Jamieson Park Secondary College. The Stevensville primary school was established in 1971 and located on Kings Road.

"Stevens Bros" were also active at this time. John E. Stevens had his real estate business operating from the back of his home at 115 Main Road West "almost opposite the St Albans police station". He was buying and selling; he was advertising alterations, extensions, home improvements sleep-outs, concrete paths, driveways, porches etc, on no deposit and convenient terms. The sales message was to the point: "There are others, but none like the brothers". You could buy an 'almost new' brick veneer home near the technical school for only \$11,000.

D.L.G. Stevens was next to Unger's in Main Road East and was offering "home improvements, additions, alterations, concreting, plastering, plumbing etc" as well as being agents for life and fire insurance. St Albans Building Supplies was now also operating from 14 East Esplanade and selling "electrical white goods" as an adjunct to the well-established hardware store at 20-22 East Esplanade. Alan Patten, well known local footballer, was company accountant, and original staff included Roman Punicki, Jan Sadowski and Bob Malewski, who were a real boon to the business because they could converse with their many cosmopolitan customers without difficulty.

Another branch office was opened in 302 Main Road East about 1964 with Sid Jarvis as the store

manager while Cliff McCulloch was in charge of the electrical department. Douglas Stevens junior and Les and Murray, sons of Garfield Stevens, were also involved in these operations. At this stage the principals of St Albans Building Supplies were Garfield Stevens and Douglas Stevens because John had retired due to health problems.



Stevens brothers at social function © Karen Bugeja



Stevens brothers & spouses at function © Karen Bugeja

By now the European contingent was becoming more prominent within St Albans in many business ventures. Self Bros & Goddard were rightly proud of their continental delicatessen, but Sparta's Foodland store in Main Road East advertised not only their English wafers but also their Polish jams, Yugoslavian smoked carp, Bulgarian gherkins, and Hungarian champagne. There was a Slovenian butcher, a Dutch pastry cook, an Italian green grocer, a Polish doctor, a Czech haber-dasher, and a Greek fish and chip shop proprietor.

In real estate the continental competition by now included Don's Real Estate (Maltese), John Setek (Hungarian), George Eisner (Czech), and the building trade included J.A.C. Construction (Dutchmen Kropman and Correlje), and the Psaila Bros (Maltese) to name a few. Fred Scheurer was also in real estate at Unger's corner in Main Road East and his name sounds Germanic because his family was originally from Switzerland but in truth Fred was a homegrown Australian and commuted daily from his home in Sydenham.

John Stevens was once again involved in the real estate business during 1978 at 17 Alfrieda

¹ Garfield Stevens quoted in *A History of St Albans Technical School*; Frank Sofo, Deer Park, 1967.

Street and was promoting his work as a building auctioneer and real estate agent in a combined operation with partners John Falcone, Alan Fox and Colin Rich. You could purchase an “executive residence” for \$55,000.

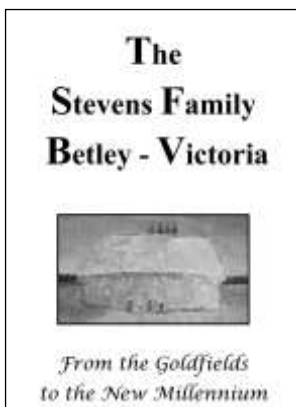
After John’s first wife June Elizabeth Butler died of cancer he married Heather Mottershead. They retired to Keilor and became members of the bowls club. John Edward Stevens died at the age of 82 in Brunswick on 25 October 2005. #



John & June Stevens (right of centre) © John Perrett

The Stevens’ family history is included in several publications:

- Garfield Stevens in *A History of St Albans Technical School*; Frank Sofa, Deer Park, November 1976.
- John Stevens in *Stories about St Albans: Celebrating 125 Years*; Joseph Ribarow, Ascot Vale, 2012.
- Geoff Stevens in *Frontier Suburb: A Short History of St Albans*; Jeff Maynard, St Albans History Society, 2014.
- George and Diana Stevens in *The Stevens Family of Betley – Victoria*; Brenda Stevens-Chambers.



Many thanks to Brenda Stevens-Chambers, a great-granddaughter of George Stevens, for her background information about the family’s life in Betley. Brenda is a professional author and has written the family memoirs as well as other regional histories that document the role of country women – she refers to herself as the

“Grassroots Women’s Historian”. For more detail about her publications go to her website at www.brendabooks.com.au. #

SYKES, Alexander and Robert

Two adjoining blocks of the Overnewton Estate were allocated to a father and son combination. Block 48 (120 acres) was allocated to A. Sykes (Alexander) of Swan Hill and Block 49 (119 acres) was allocated to R. A. Sykes (Robert Andrew) of Swan Hill. These selections were on the north-west corner of Main Road West (Boundary Road) and Station Road, one and a half miles west of the St Albans railway station. The next block west was on the Kororoit Creek and that’s where Dale’s piggery was established.

Alexander Sykes was the father and he was born in 1854 in Brighton, Victoria, the son of William and Mary Sykes. Robert Andrew Sykes was Alexander’s son and he was born about 1882 in Cranbourne. Alexander and his family moved to St Albans in 1906, judging by the primary school enrolment records.

The family has an interesting history and trace their English heritage to 1799 and their Australian origins back to 1841. Grandfather William Sykes (1821-1887) was from Lanca-shire England, so he became the family patriarch after they came to the colony of Port Phillip. His settlement history was around Clyde North, Berwick, and Cranbourne. Alexander, who was his son, moved north and his settlement was around Swan Hill, Nyah, and Tyntynder.

William Sykes and Mary Ann Jones were a young couple from Lancashire, England; William was a shepherd and Mary a housemaid. They migrated to the Colony of Port Phillip in 1841 and landed at Melbourne in November. They settled in Brighton where William started farming and bought property. They became members of the Brighton Wesleyan Methodist Church and William became one of the lay preachers. He was a member of the original Port Philip Society and a trustee of the Cranbourne Cemetery.

They bought 716 acres of land in Clyde in 1854 and moved there in 1856 with their children, all of whom were born locally. They called their farm Mount John Estate where they pursued grazing and agriculture. Three more sons were born locally, so they ended up with six sons and four daughters.¹ Alexander Sykes, born in 1854, was their seventh child and he’s the one who came to St Albans.

Mary Sykes died on 28 March 1879 at Mount John, aged 60 years so William auctioned off the farm in 1880 and moved to Dandenong, planning to return to Britain. He married Anne Kinder in 1884.

He withdrew all his money (about £1000) from a Melbourne bank in May 1887 as he was intending to sail to England but was robbed after leaving the bank and lost it all. William Sykes

¹ One of their youngest sons, Robert, drowned in the dam on their property when ten years old.

sailed for England but died at sea on board the *Orient* on 6 October 1887.

Twenty years later at St Albans, Alexander Sykes established a dairy and poultry farm on the north-west corner of Main Road West and Station Road and named the property Pine Park. He had married Mary Elizabeth Banton in 1881. She was the daughter of William Banton and Jane Edwards whose family background is unknown.

Alexander and Mary Sykes had several children: Robert Andrew (1882-1965), Arthur James (1885-1904), Albert Henry (1887), Charles Walter (1889-1918), Eleanor Mary (1892-1893) and Daisy Eleanor (1894-1956).

Eleanor Mary was the first of the children to die, in 1893, at the age of only 7 months. Her brother Arthur James died a decade later, in 1904, when he was buried alive while trying to clear a water tunnel excavation:

*"A sad accident occurred at Nyah on the 4th November ... whereby a fine, promising young fellow, 19 years of age, named Arthur James Sykes, lost his life. It appears that during the last few weeks Mr. J. Thwaites and party have been engaged in cleaning out a portion of the tunnel constructed by them some time ago, in order to obtain water for irrigation purposes, and on the day in question the deceased and his brother, Robert, volunteered to assist in the work ... The lads had only been down the shaft a few minutes when a fall of earth, estimated at two tons, took place, completely burying Arthur, probably as he was stooping, as he was subsequently found in a recumbent position. His brother ran home for assistance, and, his father returning with him, no time was lost in extricating the unfortunate youth, and conveying him to the surface ... Fully three hours were spent endeavoring to restore respiration by artificial means, which, however, proved unavailing, and, from the marks on the head and chest of the body, it is safe to assume that death must have been instantaneous."*¹

By all known accounts of the time, the family's new home in St Albans on their Pine Park property was part of the old cultivation that was either "stony" or with "patches of stone" and would have been virtually treeless, so the family planted a lot of little plants, mostly gums, about the house and down the paddocks, which soon grew into a "beautiful place surrounded by trees" and thus fulfilled their Pine Park ambitions.² They were fortunate because the property was already fenced in stone walls built by earlier settlers.³

Alexander Sykes ran into trouble fairly soon when a can of milk being sent on consignment was tested at Richmond station and found to be diluted and below standard in milk solids. The consignee

said he had dealt with Sykes for two years and had had no reason to complain of the quality of the milk. Sykes swore on oath that had been in the business for thirty years and had never been charged with having sold adulterated milk, and that he had not adulterated his milk. The prosecution agreed to withdraw charges.⁴ Apart from his farming work, Alexander was a supporter of the Maidstone Methodist Church and would sometimes be the lay preacher of a Sunday.

Robert Andrew Sykes was born about 1882 in Berwick. He established a poultry farm in Boundary Road between his parents' farm on Station Road and Dale's piggery along Kororoit Creek. He was a member of the Footscray Rifle Club for several years and did rather well:

*"That brilliant shot of the miniature range, Mr. R. Sykes, a farmer, by the way, at St. Albans, put up a wonderful performance at Footscray recently, when he shot an 80 possible, and, continuing, got 20 consecutive bulls eyes before getting a 9. He is one of the leaders in the championship."*⁵



Robert Sykes enlisted in the A.I.F. in July 1915 at the age of 33 years. He embarked with the 9th Reinforcements in 1916 aboard HMAT Warilda. He was in France for five weeks with 1st ANZAC Entrenching Battalion and was admitted to hospital suffering with deafness. He was evacuated to England and then returned to Australia and was discharged on 11 March 1917. He received the 1914/15 Star, British War Medal, and Victory Medal. He returned to his St Albans home and must have been a competent farmer because in September 1922 he won a prize at the Royal Show for "Algerian Oats grown by a returned soldier".⁶ He was nearly killed in the same month:

*"Mr. Robert Sykes, of St. Albans, had a wonderful escape from death at an early hour on Tuesday morning. He was driving a wagon load of hay across the railway line at St. Albans at about half-past 5, when he was run down by a goods train. The wagon was smashed to matchwood and the hay strewn along the line for a considerable distance; but Mr. Sykes and his horses escaped without any injury whatever. When the wagon was struck the front portion of it was jammed against a semaphore. This prevented the vehicle from being carried along the line. Instead it was cut in two, and the driver was fortunate enough to be seated on that portion that the engine left behind."*⁷

A decade later he received a less personally threatening but nevertheless annoying surprise:

¹ Mildura Cultivator 19 November 1904 p3

² Daisy Eleanor Sykes wrote to the reader's column "Cinderella's Menagerie" about the farm and her pet cat. Melbourne Leader 24 June 1911 p55.

³ Previous owners from the 1870s included John and Mary Burns, and Matthew and Mary Harrison.

⁴ Age 11 October 1908 p10

⁵ Sunshine Advocate 14 August 1926

⁶ Weekly Times 30 September 1922 p11

⁷ Footscray Independent 23 September 1922 p3

*"When Mr. R. Sykes happened to have a look at his cultivator during the week he found that some thief had stripped it of all moveable parts. Apart from the cost of the repairs, much inconvenience was caused."*¹

Charles Walter Sykes was born about 1889. He lived with his parents at Pine Park, St Albans and worked as a farmer. He later moved to Gwelo Street Tottenham and worked as a quarryman before moving to Seymour. He enlisted at age 25 years and served with the A.I.F. 24th Battalion, 2nd Reinforcement, and was killed in action on 9 October 1917 at the Battle of Poelcappelle in Belgium. He was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal. His name was listed in the Weekly Times' Roll of Honour for persons killed in action.² It appears that he never married, as he left all his possessions to his sister Daisy.

Daisy Eleanor Sykes was born on 21 November 1894 in Tyntynder, just north of Swan Hill. She was admitted to the St Albans Primary School in March 1906 from Nyah³ (which confirms the family's arrival date in St Albans) and left in December 1908. She later acquired a couple of properties in central St Albans, one on the corner of Albert Crescent and West Esplanade⁴ and a portion of Lot 22 which was a large block in Boundary Road adjoining the property of John Stevens.⁵ Little is known of Daisy's life in St Albans or what happened afterwards. One oral history recollection suggests she may have taken up nursing and possibly served overseas, though there is no record of this at the National Archives of Australia website and the electoral records generally include her occupation as being home duties. She was still resident in St Albans in the early 1930s but by 1934 was living in Camberwell, still occupied in the ubiquitous home duties. She married William Brockley in 1942 and they lived in Dromana. He was born in 1883 in Staffordshire, England, to Lewis Brockley and Martha Ball; it is not known when he migrated to Australia. Daisy Eleanor Brockley née Sykes died in 1956 at Dromana, aged 61 years. William worked as a gardener and died at Dromana on 31 October 1959 at age 76 years.

Alexander's wife, Mary Elizabeth Sykes née Banton, died on 21 March 1927, at her Pine Park home, aged 68 years, late of Berwick and Nyah. She had been ill for a long time and was buried at the Footscray cemetery. This may have been the impetus for Alexander to withdraw from his farming life and subdivide his Pine Park estate:

¹ Sunshine Advocate 22 April 1932 p2

² Weekly Times 8 December 1917 p32

³ North of Swan Hill, formed as a utopian socialist community after the New Australia settlement in Paraguay. Lack of water and a falling-out of favour of socialism led to the end of these communities.

⁴ St Albans The First 100 Years p18

⁵ St Albans The First 100 Years p16

*"First Subdivision 94 Noble Allotments about 50 by 150 bounded by two made Government roads. Perfect Drainage. Forest Trees all over the Estate. Magnificent Views of Mountains Sea and City. From £25 per Lot £5 Deposit Balance £1 per month. Only 5 per cent Interest."*⁶

He kept the poultry farm going but started selling off his equipment over the next couple of years, but then unexpected disaster struck:

*"A disastrous fire broke out in the incubating and brooder house belonging to Mr. Sykes of Boundary road, on Monday afternoon, about four o'clock. Dense clouds of smoke were seen and almost immediately, the whole building was in flames, although at that time, no one knew whether it was the residence or the outhouses. It appears that just previous to the fire Mr. Syke's attention had been directed to a smoking brooder lamp and very soon after this the alarm of fire was given. Mr. Sykes rushed in and endeavoured to extinguish the flames and in doing so was rather badly burned about the head. A few chickens were released, but the flames spread so rapidly that attention had to be directed towards confining the flames to one building. A partition joining the incubating house to the fowl pens was knocked down and the residence which was quite close was watched. Mr. Syke's loss is estimated at somewhere round £200, although it is safe to say that £200 would not be sufficient to replace the machines, building, etc, to say nothing of the 400 chickens and about 2000 eggs which were lost. The loss, we understand, is not covered by insurance."*⁷

Undefeated, Sykes kept trying to sell what he could of his stock and equipment over the following year and in the meantime advertising his farm for the agistment of stock: *"Grazing - good feed, water and shelter, horses and cattle, 1/- per week."* He died on 30 September 1933, aged 80 years; a St Albans resident for nearly thirty years.

*"The death of Mr. Sykes occurred on Saturday last, in St. Andrew's Private Hospital, Sunshine, after an illness extending over the last month. Mr. Sykes who was about 80 years of age, was an old resident of this district, and leaves a son and daughter to carry on his farming pursuits, in which he was a prominent poultry breeder. Mr. Sykes was also an enthusiastic member of the Methodist church. The funeral took place on Monday, when the Rev. Fletcher and the Rev. G. R. Godbehear, conducted the burial service at the Footscray cemetery. A large number of relatives and friends followed the remains from W. A. Warne, who had charge of the funeral arrangements."*⁸

In 1934 the Sykes' property was bought by Mr. Mochrie who appointed Mr. Gray as the manager to the run the farm.⁹ It is not clear if the new owner was Mr. George Mochrie who founded Sunshine Cabinet Works in 1919.

In 1935 Robert Sykes was also closing down his farm. He'd sold the property and consequently

⁶ Argus 15 December 1928 p28

⁷ Sunshine Advocate Friday 9 September 1932

⁸ Sunshine Advocate Friday 6 October 1933

⁹ Sunshine Advocate 6 April 1934.

was holding a clearing sale of 150 sheep, 50 cattle, 15 horses, hay and everything else and it is impressive to realise how much equipment a "small" farmer had accumulated over time:

*"Stack of about 60 tons Oaten Hay; 15 Pure Jersey 23-year-old Springing Heifers; 20 Ayrshire Cross Cows and Heifers; 4 Draught Horses, excellent workers; 4 Hacks; 2 McCormick Binders; 1 Federal Harvester, Size B; Ford Truck, "T" Model (also framework for Sheep and Cattle), in running order; 1 Farmers' Favorite 15 Hoe Drill; 1 Roller Bearing Wide Iron Wheeled Wagon, carrying capacity 41 tons; Free Wheeled Jack; Canvas Cover, 33 x 18; 21 sheets Plain Galv. Iron, 6 x 3, also 15 Sheets 10-ft. length of Curved Iron, 30 sheets 6 ft. lengths Corrugated Iron; Hay Press for Trussing; Grader, Single Furrow; Garden Plow; Rain Gauge; Massey Harris Spring Tooth Cultivator; 4 Leaf Set Stump Harrows; 1 English 3 Furrow Plow; 1 Disc Stump Jump Plow, 3 furrow; 18-Disc Set Cultivator; Harness; Chains; Swing; 1 1000-Gallon New Tank and Stand; Ladder; Maize Sheller; Vice; Anvil; Blacksmith Tools and Bellows; Buffalo Drilling Machine; Foot Power Emery Knife Grinder Wheel; lot of Augers and Carpenter's Tools; Coil Barb Wire; 60 feet Hose and Connection; Hay Forks, some new; Crow Bar; Shovels; Spades; Trenching Tools; Wire Strainer; large quantity Scrap Iron; 400 feet New Murray Pine Lining Boards, 6 x 1; 150 feet Weatherboard; 5 Dozen New Wheat Sacks; 4 Dozen Oat Sacks; 1 Mammoth 1200 Egg Incubator and Coke Fire Boiler; Surplus Furniture and Crockery; Garden Tools; Ropes, 120 Ewes (6 and 8 tooth), Rams joined; 50 Ration Sheep."*¹

The family had been living in St Albans for thirty years and would have seen a lot of change over that time. When they came the local population was about 120 people, and in 1937 it had reached 600 people and they were mostly located on the Keilor side of Main Road. Most of the area south of Main Road to Furlong Road was under crops or used for grazing, slowly disappearing on the Sunshine side where some of the manufacturing industries were being established. Electricity was connected to central St Albans near the railway crossing in the thirties but was not extended to the farming outskirts till much later.

In 1940 Mr. F. L. Gilbert applied to Keilor Council for a licence to operate a piggery on the late Syke's property. A letter was sent from the St Albans Progress Association protesting against the establishment of the piggery and council tried to persuade Mr. Gilbert to place the piggery in a different location on his property.² The licence for operating offensive trade premises was granted, as were subsequent renewals of registration.

The old Sykes' farms were later acquired by the Urban Land Authority and developed into the Movelle Estate. #

¹ Sunshine Advocate Friday 12 April 1935

² Sunshine Advocate 12 April 1940 p6. Probably Frank Leicester Gilbert from Picola who also established a piggery in Cranwell Street Braybrook and a sausage casing factory in Raleigh Street in the 1940s.

TREVENA, William and Edith

William John Trevena was a railway employee and he was in St Albans in 1904. His daughter Dulcie Ruby started at the St Albans State school in March 1904 and left in May 1904, so the family's stay in the district might have been quite brief to say the least. Short term stays in the district by railway employees were not unusual. Another railway man in similar circumstances at the time was Jabez Lorenzo Grimmer (q.v.).

William Trevena was a homegrown Australian born in 1870 in Ballarat, Victoria. His parents were John Trevena and Emily Hocking; nothing is known about their backgrounds or when they came in Australian. William appears to have been an only child.

William John married Edith Henrietta Fraser in 1897. She was born about 1874 in Inverleigh, Victoria. Nothing is known about her family background. William and Edith had three children: Dulcie Ruby (1898), Robert Eddy (1899), and Albert Edward (1901).

Dulcie Ruby Trevena was born on 23 May 1898 in Bridgewater and a brief part of her education was through the St Albans State school in 1904. She turned 21 during 1919 and was living in Murtoa in the Wimmera. She married Cecil Vernon Warne in 1924; he was a store keeper and they ended up living in Ascot Vale. They may not have had children. In 1940 at the age of 43 Cecil enlisted in the Citizen Military Forces and was assigned to the 3rd District Canteen Service with the rank of sergeant. He was later discharged and given a war medal "in consequence of being medically unfit, not occasioned by his own default." Cecil died on 4 April 1966 at Heidelberg. Dulcie died on 16 November 1997 at Nambour in Queensland.

Robert Eddy Trevena was born in 1899 in Carisbrook. He married Annie Eileen Madden of East Trentham in 1929. They had a son Geoffrey Robert who was born about 1928 and died at Ivanhoe in 1935.

Albert Edward Trevena was born on 2 November 1901 at Maryborough, Victoria. He enlisted in the RAN in 1919 and worked as a stoker. In 1921 he jumped ship in Sydney and was reported in the police gazette as a deserter from His Majesty's Service.³ He was "invalidated" in 1922. He married Thelma Rodgie in Sydney in 1926 and they do not appear to have had children. Albert died in May 1965 at Echuca, Victoria.

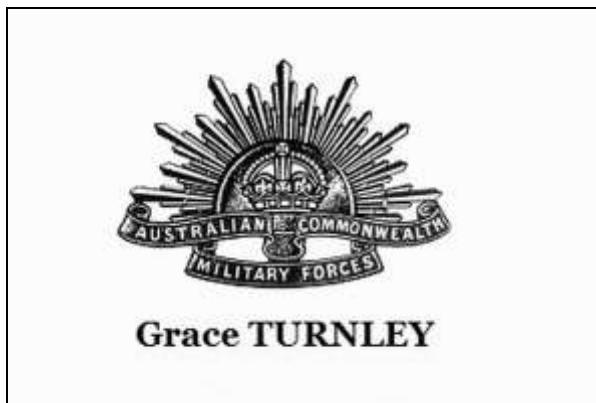
William John Trevena died at Prahran in 1941, at the age of 71 years. Edith Henrietta Trevena née Fraser died at the Footscray Hospital on 12 November 1954 at age 80 years.⁴

The Trevena family stayed briefly in St Albans and probably left within the year of their arrival. That was the nature of their life as a railway family. #

³ News South Wales Police Gazette 2 February 1921 p66

⁴ Age 13 November 1954 p21

TURNLEY, Emma, Claude, and Grace



Mrs. Emma Turnley, a widow, came to St Albans about 1900 with her two younger children, Claude and Grace, and settled in "Yatala" which was their home in Biggs Street. They were descendants of an American immigrant from the 1820s, and thus their family lineage goes back to some of the earliest Australian squatting pioneers.

Their forebear, Henry Wellington Turnley, was an American who became the patriarch of a quintessentially Australian family who settled in St Albans in the early 1900s, but he started his Australian sojourn in the Apple Isle where some of his relatives settled permanently. Turnley was born in 1821 in Charleston, South Carolina, the son of George Turnley and Ann Thompson. In 1826 as a young lad he sailed with his parents to Van Diemen's Land. By 1844 he was pursuing pastoral interests around Hobart and on 28 November 1846 he married Anne Caroline Thrupp in the district of Broadmarsh (Brighton), van Diemen's Land, north of the Derwent River. She was born in 1817 and was the daughter of Alfred Thrupp and Sarah Ann Piper of Sydney. (Alfred was assistant Naval Officer to Sarah's father, John Piper, who was the first Customs Officer in Australia.)

Caroline and Henry contemplated moving to Port Phillip as their permanent home. In 1844 Henry had traveled from Launceston to reconnoiter the opportunities being promoted by other pioneers such as John Batman and John Fawkner. He found the prospects to be very poor – sheep were selling at only 2/6 per head and the price of wool was also very low, so he returned. He came over again in 1853 with his wife and young family and this time they decided to make the new Colony of Victoria, as it had been promulgated, their new home.

Turnley bought the Ghin Ghin Station on the Goulburn River near Yea and raised cattle, which at this stage was more profitable than sheep farming. He also bought the Mount Campbell Station near Heathcote. In 1861 he sold these properties and moved to the western district where he bought the Glenorchy and Rifle Ranges stations near Merino. He must have wanted to set down roots here because in 1864 he was calling for tenders

for the making of 60,000 bricks which must have meant a commitment for permanent construction.¹ In 1870 he bought the Ardno East and Glenelg stations in the Strathdownie and Dartmoor area, in south-western Victoria. He was with the Anglican Church (and founder of the St Peter's Church at Merino) and a trustee of the Merino cemetery.

Henry Wellington Turnley and Anne Caroline Thrupp raised a large family including Harry (1847), George Washington (1849), Alfred (1850), Caroline Louisa (1852), Robert Goulburn (1855), Harold Henry (1856), Lavinia Flora Blanche (1860) and Herbert Hastings (1861).

Life on the land as a pioneer farmer was not easy and the Turnleys had to face harsh times and hard treatment from those around them, as did many early settlers. That's the way life was. In 1872 Henry was charged at the criminal court with trying to defraud the London and Australian Agency Corporation with regard to the wool clip from 21,000 sheep depastured on the Ardno station. It was a big case with serious charges, lengthy arguments and multiple witnesses. The defence argument was that the wool in dispute was "dead wool" and not part of the current clip:

*"The farther hearing of the charges against Henry W. Turnley was resumed, and for the evidence given for the defence it appeared that on the two stations during the season of 1871, from 12,000 to 13,000 sheep had died, and the wool from them had been carefully taken and hand-washed. The wool was sent down to Port MacDonnell by Robert Turnley, a carrier, and the brother of the defendant. A few days after he started on his trip he was met near Mount Gambier by the defendant who asked whose wool it was and was told it belonged to the station. He then produced a judgment he had signed in Melbourne against Harry Turnley for £238 for money advanced, and said he would seize it in payment of the judgement. Robert Turnley offered no objection and then the defendant asked him to take the wool to Port MacDonnell for him, which was done. In Clough and Co.'s books the wool was described as hand-washed pieces and locks, and Mr. Clough said it was not unusual to describe "dead wool" in that way. The jury, after deliberating a short time, returned a verdict of "Not guilty," and the defendant was discharged."*²

The scale of Henry Turnley's grazing ventures and their consequences was enormously greater than the "backyard" farms on the Keilor Plains. Compared to Turnley's flock of 21,000 sheep, the smaller St Albans farmer could stock about one sheep per acre and therefore some had flocks of 100 sheep or so.³

Henry's son, Harold Henry Turnley, was born on the Ghin Ghin Station in Yea on 17 March 1857

¹ Portland Guardian and Normanby General Advertiser 7 July 1864 p3

² Border Watch 27 November 1872 p4

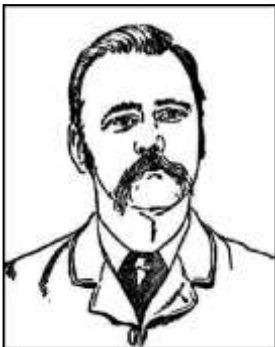
³ Larger farms had larger flocks, e.g. M'Lean's farm in Braybrook was a run of 30,000 acres on which he kept 28,000 sheep.

and growing up he was “continually in the saddle, hunting and shooting, he learned to appreciate a good horse and dog, which taste have increased with years.” He finished his education at Wesley College, Melbourne, in 1872. In 1879 he married Emma Bunkin who was born in Norwood, Adelaide; her father was Frederick Bunkin and her mother was Georgiana Flaxman.¹

Harold and Emma settled very successfully into Shepparton during the 1880s where he was working as a stock and station agent. Their children were Harold Eric (1880), Gerald Oscar (1883), Claude Ivan (1885), Grace Evelyn (1887), and Reginald Aubrey (1889). Some of their relatives also settled in the district.

Harold Henry was working as an accountant and commission agent in 1884 when he became the secretary of the Mooroopna Turf Club and the Shepparton Turf Club. He was also the secretary to the Shepparton Agricultural Society, president of the Early Closing Association and did a lot of good work for the Mooroopna Hotel, so he was a busy man. It was said of him that:

“Mr. Turnley is very sanguine as to the future of the clubs under his control; and it is his ambition to make Shepparton and Mooroopna the two leading up-country race clubs in Victoria; and there is little doubt that he will succeed. In April last Mr. Turnley took it upon himself to call a conference of delegates from all race clubs in the north-eastern district of Victoria for the purpose of improving the conduct of race meetings throughout the district. The conference was a success; and the benefits which it has conferred upon racing in the neighbourhood have already been felt and appreciated.”²



During the 1880s he owned and raced several horses and greyhounds but with only moderate success. In 1890 he and his brother Alfred decided to invest £1,000 and apply for a gold mining lease which was seen as a good sign for the revival of the district's mining industry.³ It is not known

if they were successful in this venture because Harold Henry died suddenly on 27 May 1892 at the age of 35 years. He may have received the equivalent of a military funeral because he had been a member of the old Victorian Mounted Rifles. The press referred to him as:

“... a gentleman who has for the past 13 years been highly respected by a large number of

persons in the Shepparton and surrounding districts, and who was one of the most prominent figures in Shepparton public life. ...

“The funeral ... was the largest ever seen in Shepparton. Hundreds of residents gathered at Mr. Turnley's residence, while his remains were being conveyed thence to the hearse, the Shepparton band, meanwhile, playing ‘The Dead March in Saul’. The cortege consisted of the band, the hearse, mourning coaches, 24 members of the mounted rifles, 103 vehicles, 30 horsemen and 20 state school cadets. The pall bearers were Mr. James Campbell, president of the agricultural society, Mr. W. Grattan, M.L.A., and the Messrs. Turnley brothers of the deceased. The funeral service was conducted with much impressiveness by the Rev. J. Youlden. Three volleys were fired by the mounted rifles over the open grave of their late lamented comrade.”⁴

It is not clear when Emma Turnley moved to St Albans, but it must have been about 1900 as Emma is included in the Melbourne directory listing of residents for 1902, but her daughter Grace Evelyn had started at the primary school in the previous year. Grace was born on 1 May 1887 at Shepherds Flat (Moir). She was admitted to the St Albans Primary school in February 1901 and left a few months later, so she was already about 14 years old when she arrived in the district. Her brothers were Harold Eric (1880-1923), Gerald Oscar (1883-1965) and Claude Ivan (1885-1943). The youngest brother, Reginald Aubrey, died in his first year (1889).⁵

Harold Eric Turnley was born in 1880 at Shepparton and became a station overseer. He was with the 2nd Victorian Mounted Rifles and volunteered in January 1902 for service in South Africa (Boer War) at 21 years of age, serving with the Overseas Colonial Contingent. He was a resident in 1911, had married Kathleen Muriel Simion, and they had a son, Joseph. Harold Eric died of an accident in 1923 in South Africa.⁶

Gerald Oscar Turnley was born in 1883 at Shepherds Flat. In 1908 he married Winifred Shirley Clare Padley, who was born in 1883 and was the fifth daughter of Mary and Alfred Padley; they had come to St Albans in the 1880s and led the transformation of the farming neighbourhood into smaller suburban allotments and giving the village its name.⁷ The Padleys left St Albans in the early 1890s and at the time of their daughter's marriage they were living in South Yarra. Gerald and Winifred were living in Sandringham. Gerald died in 1965 and is buried at Box Hill. Winifred died in 1967 at Ballarat. They had several children.

Claude Ivan Turnley was born in 1885 in Shepherds Flat, Victoria. At St Albans he became one of the trustees for the Errington Reserve which was the home of the local sports clubs. He joined

¹ Emma's older sister Jane married Robert Linton and the couple moved to St Albans about 1907. The Linton Tennis Club of St Albans was named after them.

² Australian Town and Country Journal, Sydney, 10 September 1887 p36

³ Euroa Advertiser 23 May 1890

⁴ Kyabram Union 3 June 1892

⁵ Argus 26 April 1889

⁶ Argus 29 August 1923

⁷ Refer to chapter in *St Albans Pioneers* 2013

the cricket club and for some time was the secretary of the committee and looked after the accounts. He worked as a clerk. In 1913 he married Maud Beatrice Bellman, who was from Cornwall England, the daughter of William Bellman and Marion Pollock. Claude and Maud ended up living in South Yarra and he worked as a hardware merchant. Claude died in January 1943 at Surrey Hills and was buried at Box Hill. Maud died in 1960 at Mont Albert, Victoria.

In 1900 Emma Turnley with her son Claude and daughter Grace was living in Biggs Street on a property named "Yatala". Local residents were mostly living north of Boundary Road and thus within the Keilor municipality. The Victorian Municipal Directory of the time records there being 120 people, a primary school, a post office with two mails daily, and that Robert Surridge was the postmaster at the railway station.

Local press references about the Turnley family start about 1904 and show that Emma and her children were already involved in various local activities, e.g. in 1904 Mrs. Turnley was holding a "fruit and fancy fair" at her home in aid of the building fund for the proposed Mechanics Hall:

*"Mrs. Turnley, who was the originator of the movement, kindly placed her home at the disposal of the committee."*¹

There were other activities of a fund-raising nature. In 1909 with much "ability and energy" Grace trained pupils from the primary school in recitations, songs and choruses for a concert at the Mechanics Hall. There was a fancy dress night in aid of the Boys' Improvement Society and a Christy Minstrel display for the Ladies' Club return social.

In 1911 she was a joint secretary in a fundraiser with a difference when the dancing went on all night as no one could go home because of the rain: *"The water came down as if a big bucket were being spilt; roads were flooded, and nobody ventured out till daybreak."*²

Grace's grandmother, Caroline Ann Thrupp, the wife of Henry W. Turnley, died on 7 July 1896 at Nelson Road, Camberwell, in her 80th year, and was buried at Kew.³

Grace's grandfather, Henry Wellington Turnley who came to Tasmania in 1826, passed away on 24 April 1914 at the home of his son-in-law, Mr. Mumford, in East Camberwell, in his 93rd year, a colonist since 1826.⁴ He was buried at Boroondara cemetery.

Grace's mother, Emma Turnley née Bunkin passed away in the Melbourne Hospital on 13 October 1918 at the age of 66, the cause of her death being diabetes. Her remains were buried at the Shepparton cemetery:

*"She leaves three sons Captain Eric Turnley, on active service, and Messrs. Gerald and Claude Turnley of Melbourne, also a daughter, Miss Grace Turnley, who is a nurse on active service abroad. Her husband predeceased her about 25 years ago, and her remains were laid to rest beside his. Mrs. Turnley's general character caused her to be held in high esteem by a large circle of Shepparton acquaintances, and she will be deeply regretted by all who knew her. Her place in the estimation of her Melbourne friends was sufficiently evidenced by the large number of beautiful wreaths which they forwarded."*⁵



Grandpa Bunkin (centre) with family



Unfortunately Grace had missed her mother's funeral as it occurred while Grace was overseas on active service. Grace Evelyn Turnley trained as a nurse and passed her examinations at the Alfred Hospital in December 1915.⁶ She was working at the

Caulfield hospital in 1916 when she enlisted with the AANS (Australian Army Nursing Service) on 27 November 1916. She was aged 29 years and 5 months having already served 3 months with the A.I.F. (She had previously enlisted on 29 August 1916). She was described as being of fair complexion with dark hair, blue-grey eyes, five foot tall, and being of Church of England denomination. Her unit embarked from Sydney, New South Wales, in September 1916 and disembarked at Plymouth in February 1917. Once in London she was posted to the 14th Station Hospital at Rouen France arriving 23 February 1917 and five months later she was posted to the 2nd Australian General Hospital. In May 1918 she was a Staff Nurse in a team of 40 nurses and sisters stationed in France: *Nord Pas de Calais, Pas de Calais, Boulogne*. Later in the year she herself was hospitalized for a

¹ Footscray Independent 24 December 1904

² Footscray Independent 18 March 1911

³ Argus 8 July 1896 p1

⁴ Argus 25 April 1914 p11

⁵ Shepparton News 31 October 1918 p2

⁶ Bendigo Independent 17 December 1915 p6

month with influenza and tonsillitis, then again early in 1918 with dermatitis. She was promoted to Sister in December 1918 and discharged in August 1919. Her awarded medals included the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Grace returned to Australia in May 1919 and by mid-year was living in Everton Street, Surrey Hills. She might have been patient of or worked at the Military Hospital in Caulfield.

Grace Evelyn Turnley married Arthur Gordon Nicol in 1921. He was born in 1894 in Collingwood and his parents were Fred Hamilton Nicol and Mary Elizabeth Bonsak. Arthur was a wool classer by occupation and in the 1930s he and Grace were living in Woornack Road, Oakleigh. Their children were Margaret Helen (1922-1978) and Ian Gordon.

Grace Evelyn Nicol née Turnley died in 1952 at Moorabbin at age 65 years and the funeral service was held at the Springvale Crematorium.¹ Her husband, Arthur Gordon Nicol, died at Box Hill in 1970 at the age of 76.

Acknowledgement of Grace Evelyn Turnley's contribution to Australia's war effort was not extensive in her lifetime. When the Keilor Honour Roll was unveiled in 1918 it contained 53 names and later enlistments were added, but not hers. Then in 1930 three more names were added including hers. In 2011 the Keilor Historical Society initiated memorial plaques at the Keilor Cenotaph to honour war veterans and nurses, which now includes Nurse G. E. Turnley. In 2012 Brimbank Council proposed that a road near the Keilor Golf Course be named Turnley Parkway in her memory. Her name is included in the book "More Than Bombs and Bandages: Australian Army Nurses at Work in World War I" (written by Kirsty Harris, Big Sky Publishing, 2011) but there is no story about her personal experiences.

Grace Evelyn Nicol née Turnley served her country well and should be remembered well. #



Image from Australian War Memorial EO2116. Grace Turnley with group portrait of nurses of the 2nd Australian General Hospital, outside their quarters, France: Nord Pas de Calais, Pas de Calais, Boulogne, 11 May 1918.

¹ Argus 23 September 1952 p11

WORTHINGTON, Isabella Frances

"Isobel" Worthington is listed in *St Albans The First Hundred Years* as being a resident in 1902, so she was also a local pioneer of the Federation era.

Isabella Frances Worthington came to St Albans in 1898 with her young daughter, Essie Margaret Worthington, and they stayed a few years.

Isobel was born Isabella Frances Marshall in Wahgunyah in about 1867. Unfortunately we know nothing of her family or her early life. In 1887 at Cobar NSW she married Samuel Cheeke Worthington of Wahgunyah. He was born about 1863 to Carol Cooper and Samuel Cheeke Worthington who was from Nottinghamshire, England.

Isabella and Samuel jnr moved to Victoria where their daughter Esther "Essie" Margaret was born on 13 April 1891 in South Melbourne. There was a family connection as Samuel's brother Frank was living in Hawthorn. Sadly, Samuel Worthington died at Box Hill on 15 September 1892 and was buried in Kew.

Isabella and Essie came to St Albans in May 1898 and Essie started at the St Albans Primary School. Isobel was working as a dressmaker so she was probably in competition with Esther Menesdorffer. The Worthingtons left St Albans in September 1900 and moved to Creswick Street in Footscray. In 1902 the young "Miss Essie Worthington" was organizing a children's bazaar in aid of the Malee Relief Fund:

*"The young people by their united efforts realized the sum of £1 10 and this sum has been sent on. During the afternoon a short musical programme was contributed by the little ones."*²

Essie appears to have continued her education through the Covent of Mercy in Lilydale. She was a medal winner for Christian Doctrine in 1905³ and was awarded an Honor (Junior Division) for the Trinity College (London) theoretical examination in 1906⁴ and passed the senior piano examination in 1908.⁵

By 1909 Isabella and Essie were living in Darling Street, Moonee Ponds, where Isabella continued in her work as a dressmaker.

On 17 February 1914 Essie Margaret Worthington married Henry Bramble Makin of Middle Park, at St Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Ascot Vale.⁶ He might have been her childhood sweetheart because they both had attended the St Albans state school. It was a popular wedding and was reported in several papers including *Punch*.

By the 1950s Isabella Worthington had moved to Hampton. She died on 18 January 1951 and a requiem mass was held for her at St Mary's Church in Hampton. Her remains were buried at the Boroondara Cemetery in Kew.⁷ Isabella must have had a hard time raising a child on her own, but she succeeded and survived to reach the good age of 84 years. #

² Footscray Independent 20 December 1902 p2

³ Healesville Guardian 23 December 1905 p2

⁴ Advocate 10 March 1906 p19

⁵ Healesville Guardian 26 January 1908 p2

⁶ Essendon Gazette 12 March 1914 p5

⁷ Argus 19 January 1951 p15