

BERT MOFFAT: BUTCHER, KEILOR COUNCILOR, SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILOR 1957-1961

Background



Clarence Herbert "Bert" Moffat was born on 20 February 1918 in "Yack", the old National Trust goldfield town of Yackandandah in north-eastern Victoria. In 1824 when Hume and Hovell started on their trek for Western Port Bay they passed through this area before eventually passing through the district that would become St Albans on the Keilor Plains. It's a tenuous link but the old Keilor Plains had attracted a variety of adventurers during its century of settlement from the 1850s to the 1950s. First came the squatters, then the Closer Settlement Pioneers of the 1870s, the land developers of the 1880s, the new Closer Settlement selectors of the 1900s, and the post-war settlers of the 1920s and the 1950s. Moffatt came in between the latter eras and had already

established himself as a community leader when European refugees and displaced persons started arriving to make St Albans their home. It was a time of great change.

Bert Moffatt was the son of John Moffatt and Alice Ada Barnes. John Moffatt was born in Inglewood, Victoria, in 1879, and his parents were from Scotland and England. Alice Barnes was born about 1881 and she was from Kergunyah in Victoria, just south of Wodonga. Bert was the second youngest of nine children and they were all born in Yackandandah, also south of Wodonga (the two towns are not that far apart).



Little is know of Bert's early life other than he was fair haired and blue eyed and trained as a butcher. He enlisted for service in May 1940 at age 22 at the Caulfield recruitment centre and at that stage his home address was Hampshire Road, Sunshine. He was discharged in September 1940 in consequence of "being unfit for duties not occasioned by his own default."

Bert Moffatt married Beryl Louisa Bedford in October 1941 in the Sunshine Presbyterian Church with the reception held in the Masonic Hall; it was a grand occasion according to the newspaper report of the time. Beryl was the daughter of Ernest and Margaret Ellen Bedford of

Main Road, St Albans. Sadly, Mrs Bedford was too ill to attend her daughter's wedding service and passed away just a few weeks later; she'd been a member of the St Albans Mothers' Club including stints as Secretary and Vice President to long-term President Agnes Stevens. Beryl had two sisters, Valma and Shirley, and a brother Reuben. Reuben volunteered for service during WW2 and later married Kathleen Doris Bloxham of St Albans. Valma married Ian Bloxham of St Albans, so the family links intertwine. In fact the marriages of the Bedford sisters created kinship links with several other local families; for example, they were related to Effie and Clara Hughes and thus became related to the Perrett family when Effie married Eric Perrett. Shirley married an 'outsider' and that was Malcolm Cox of Elsternwick.

Bert and Beryl settled in Victoria Crescent; their neighbours included various members of the Self and Goddard families, the McIntyres, Ian Bloxham and Wally Baulch who became the town valuer at Keilor. Bert and Beryl's son, Leonard Herbert Moffat, was born in 1943 and attended the local primary school. He was one of the inaugural intake to St Albans High School in 1956, joining his new Form 1D classmates like Jeff Barlow, Gerhardt Haumann, Harry Knowles and Andy Kratsis. Bert Moffat also joined the high school through its Advisory Council in the following year when it moved to the new "temporary" building in St Albans. He continued his involvement with the school council through to 1961.

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FRESH FRUIT and VEGETABLES

Mrs. B. L. MOFFAT

16A EAST ESPLANADE

All your PETS NEEDS Supplied at the

P E T S H O P

Both Beryl and Bert became shopkeepers in the St Albans village - Beryl sold fruit and vegetables from East Esplanade. By 1943 Moffat was working locally as a butcher. Business must have been hectic during the forties because Moffat and other shopkeepers published a notice that they would be closing their shops for lunch between 12.30 and 1.30 pm daily. Where was the butcher shop? The first location was on the corner of Main Road West and West Esplanade where the barber shop was later operating. Then Eric Perrett built a butcher shop next to his store in Main Road West about 1934, and that's where Moffat moved to.

BERT MOFFAT WINS ELECTION

Mr. Bert Moffat, the well-known St. Albans butcher, easily won the extraordinary election for the Maribyrnong Riding of the Shire of Keilor, which was held yesterday. The final figures were:

C. H. MOFFAT	233
L. G. SELF,	168
C. G. COX	39

Absolute majority for Moffat 26

In 1948 Moffat nominated as a candidate in the extraordinary election for the Maribyrnong Riding of the Shire of Keilor against local businessmen Lewis Self and Claude Cox. Moffat was elected with an absolute majority of 26 votes, which was a surprise for some punters as Lewis Self had been the favourite runner. Perhaps it was the perennial allure of the sporting hero, because Moffat was known as a local cricketer and footballer having started his sporting career in Sunshine. He was welcomed with the observation that younger men - Moffat was aged 30 - were wanted on council,

though Cr Fox was more phlegmatic by observing that younger men generally had a lot to learn.

In 1949 Lewis Self re-nominated for the council election when Moffat's term had expired, but Moffat was again a decisive victor. So, despite Lewis Self's well-earned respect as a local identity, it was Moffat the local butcher who was the more popular as a politician. In 1952 when the election was again due, Moffat's was the only nomination so he was elected unopposed.

Shire of Keilor Elections

TO THE RATEPAYERS OF MARIBYRNONG RIDING

I wish to notify ratepayers of the Maribyrnong Riding that I will be again offering my services as a Councillor at the forthcoming Council Elections. Over the past 4½ years, I have endeavored to serve all ratepayers to the best of my ability and if re-elected will continue to watch the interests of the Shire and the Maribyrnong Riding in particular.

Yours sincerely
C. H. MOFFATT.

Moffat took on a number of community roles. In 1947 he was appointed to the Errington Reserve Committee in replacement of Del Kennedy who had resigned. The history of the Errington Reserve Committee goes back to 1910 when Alice Errington donated the land as a recreational reserve and it was a long standing tradition for councillors to be included on the committee. One of the main users of the reserve was the St Albans Football Club and in 1949 Moffat was one of the club's vice presidents so a number of interests coincided. He was already involved with the football club during the mid forties when he was responsible for inquiring into guernsey colours and design.

Moffat's status was further enhanced early in 1954 when he was appointed as a Justice of the Peace; this would have put him closer to par with relative-in-law Eric Perrett who was one of the longest-serving JPs in the district.

In 1954 Moffat helped re-establish the local youth club. A boys' club had previously been meeting at the Mechanics Institute hall under the supervision and of Constable Shaw of Sunshine, but the group had disbanded when he was transferred. It was subsequently revived as a police boys' club through the efforts of Sergeant Hume. The public meeting was convened by Cr. Moffat in May 1954 and the new boys' club began officially on Monday 14th June 1954, which was the Queen's Birthday holiday. Moffat was appointed Vice President but he wasn't the only local councillor who was there supporting the cause, because Harold Easton and James Eddie were the other representatives for the Maribyrnong Riding and they too were interested in proceedings. However, Moffat went one better by offering to pay for the club's use of the pavillion for the year. He also helped with fund raising innovations such as teaming up with Alf Pont's Coursing Track in Thornbury, which raised £70 in one night.

The boys' club soon became a youth club as the recreational needs of girls became included in club activities. The clubrooms still exist though in much revamped form and are now known as the Tin Shed, the home of the St Albans Community Youth Club that has been operating there for the last sixty years since that public meeting back in May 1954.

Later in 1954 Cr Moffat supported the application of a group of New Australians in St. Albans to erect clubrooms for social activities at the corner of Arthur and Alexina Streets. Moffat said that from the plans it appeared to be a desirable building and he had no hesitation in approving the move. That group was the Ukrainian Association of St Albans and their hall has also been in constant use for the last sixty years. As part of the resettlement of Displaced Persons in Europe after WW2, about 6,000 Ukrainians arrived in Australia between 1950 and 1952. This peak migration intake was quite brief, and afterwards there were fewer than 100 arrivals per year. At the 1954 Census there were 14,000 Ukrainian-born people living in Australia, or 0.16% of the population.



Festivities at the St Albans Ukrainian hall.

Bert and Beryl had two sons, Keith and Lenny. Lenny started at the St Albans High School in 1956 in form 1D and was part of the cricket team in 1958.

Moffat Street in the Stevensville estate was named after Cr Bert Moffat in recognition of his contribution to the community. This subdivision was developed by the Stevens family and was the central portion of their old "Edenhope" farm from the early 1900s.

Clarence Herbert Moffat died in December 1962 at the young age of 44 years and was buried in the Rose Garden at Altona. Beryl Louisa Moffat nee Bedford died in September 1999 at age 80 years and is also buried at Altona in the Garden of Music.



St Albans High School, Form 1D, 1956.

Article written by Joseph Ribarow

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