

## 1946 – Richard and Myrtle Yeomans

Richard William “Dick” Yeomans was born in Fitzroy in September 1888. He traces his forebears to 1571 in Duffield, Derbyshire, England. His family came to Port Phillip Bay in 1852 through William Richard Yeomans (1826-1904), whose son, also Richard William Yeomans (1854-1933), was the father of the St Albans’ resident Richard William Yeomans.

The youngest Richard Yeomans married Myrtle May Hills in 1938. She was born in Carlton and traces her forebears to 1703 in Ramsey, Huntingdonshire, England. Her family came to Victoria through Mr Alfred Charles Hills who arrived pre 1860 and married Sarah Elizabeth Mallett in Chewton, Victoria. One of their granddaughters was Lilian Violet Hills, whose daughter Myrtle May Hills was born in 1912 in Carlton. Myrtle trained and worked as a knitter.



Family of Alfred Hills and Sarah Mallett

Richard William Yeomans and Myrtle May Hills raised three surviving children:

- Robert William was born in May 1940, started at St Albans primary school in 1946 and left in 1951 for the Sunshine technical school. His father was listed as a sign writer. Robert became a fitter, married Edda Endress<sup>1</sup> and became a service station proprietor. They were in Percy Street, St Albans.
- Pamela was born in March 1944, started at St Albans primary school in 1949 and left in 1951 for the Sunshine technical school. Her father was listed as a storeman.
- Valerie Fay was born in November 1945, started at St Albans primary school in 1951 and left in 1955 for the St Albans East primary school. Her mother was listed as her guardian-parent. Valerie followed in her father’s footsteps and became a

sign writer. She married Fred Lorensini who was a computer programmer. They had a daughter and son and were living in Gisborne before migrating to Cairns in Queensland.

The Yeomans family came to St Albans in the early to mid 1940s and moved into one of the Coleman houses in Oberon Avenue, part of the Pinnacle Estate that was developed by Walmer Ewart Coleman (q.v.). As a resident, Yeomans sometimes raised problems on the estate at the Progress Association meetings, e.g. requesting additional lighting as well as improved drainage and street construction.

### Posters for

DANCES, SOCIALS, SHOPS,  
AUCTION SIGNS, TICKETS

**R. W. YEOMANS**

Oberon Avenue . . . St. Albans

Yeomans was a sign writer who designed posters for dances and socials, auctions and shop signs. He put that skill to good use

for his local activities. By 1945 he was part of the St Albans Progress Association debating a proposal to set up a housing group in the district. Yeomans prepared an attractive advertising board inviting further members to join the group.<sup>2</sup>

At a meeting of the Progress Association in 1947 he complained about the lack of entertainment offered in the district and raised the question of forming a co-operative picture organisation in St Albans. This was the first known meeting that raised the possibility of a kindergarten, which was left in the hands of Norman Self and Thomas McIntyre to follow up with representatives of the School Committee and Mothers’ Club, and it became one of Yeomans’ interests for the next few years.<sup>3</sup>

Yeomans was the assistant secretary of the Progress Association in 1947 and had to use diplomacy in negotiations with Keilor Council representatives who were upset with Tom Toby, the secretary of the Association.

Yeomans and Toby were a team because of their secretarial roles on the Association and sometimes they would attend together as delegates representing the group, e.g. regarding the expansion of the Footscray and District Hospital.<sup>4</sup> The new building would cost over £500,000 making the hospital the most modern in the Metropolitan area. Unfortunately their meeting with the public in Braybrook proved an embarrassing failure.<sup>5</sup> Despite this setback, Yeomans was re-elected as Secretary at the Association’s AGM.

Other issues that Yeomans raised with Keilor Council include the implementation of a garbage collection service and recurring problems of stock wandering about the district.

<sup>1</sup> Ernst and Annie Endress were German nationals who migrated in 1954 with children Ursula, Edeltraud (Edda), and Hans. Ernst was a motor mechanic and Hans also became a mechanic.

<sup>2</sup> Sunshine Advocate 23 November 1945

<sup>3</sup> Sunshine Advocate 24 January 1947

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine Advocate 18 July 1947 p2

<sup>5</sup> Sunshine Advocate 22 August 1947

In August 1947 Yeomans had taken over as Secretary of the Progress Association and was convening a meeting to organize a Christmas carnival. The improving rapport with Keilor Council had not lasted long, as in November 1947 the councilors criticized Yeomans at some length:

*... after the Council had dealt with a letter affecting St Albans interests and signed by Mr. Yeomans, as assistant secretary of St. Albans Progress Association, Cr. Dickson stated that the Association was simply using Mr. Yeomans as a dummy, but he (Cr. Dickson) refused to be fooled in regard to the position. Cr. Dickson went on to say that Mr. Yeomans and Mr. Toby travelled together in a train to certain meetings, and Councilors could rest assured that those were not of sporting interests or of the Liberal or Country parties.<sup>6</sup>*

Apparently some councilors saw the Progress Association as being persistently anti-Keilor and recent debate about severance had aggravated perceptions of animosity.

1948 was an important year for the development of a local kindergarten, because two members of the Association, Messrs. Alfred Clarke and Richard Yeomans, convened a public meeting to discuss the question of starting a branch of the Free Kindergarten in St. Albans:

*A speaker from the Free Kindergarten Union will attend, as will also Mr. D. McLean, of Spotswood, where a most successful branch has been operating for the last three years. Mr McLean is a former resident of St. Albans and will be remembered by many old residents. Considerable interest has already been created in the move.<sup>7</sup>*

At this "small but enthusiastic" meeting, Alfred Clarke was elected President pro tem, and Richard Yeomans was elected Secretary pro tem, though the availability of suitable premises was a "matter that was left in abeyance for the time being".<sup>8</sup> In the following week Yeomans issued a number of questionnaires to parents with eligible children as it was intended to enroll pupils at the next public meeting. This was probably quite ambitious as they had not yet secured an appropriate venue. Nevertheless, this formative work by Clarke and Yeomans meant that over the next decade they were credited with starting the St Albans Kindergarten.<sup>9</sup>

In August 1948, Tom Toby resigned as secretary of the Progress Association and Dick Yeomans took on the position. The kindergarten project progressed by identifying the public hall as a potential venue. The 'energetic secretary' Yeomans had arranged a deputation with:

*... the Free Kindergarten of Victoria and the Dept. of Public Health; from both these bodies much*

*valuable information was obtained and on Friday of last week, Miss Goldberg of the Dept. of Public Health, visited St. Albans, and in company with Mrs. S. Thomas, Cr. H. Easton and Mr. A. Clarke made an inspection of the local hall.<sup>10</sup>*

In the meantime Yeomans was also active on other Progress Association business. He wrote to Keilor Council requesting a tree planting scheme for St Albans, stating that his Association would assist in the planting and maintenance if Council would supply trees and guards. He also wrote to the Railways Commissioner asking for an additional train in the afternoons.

The kindergarten project continued with a fundraising carnival on A.N.A. Day. They were becoming quite ambitious in their advertising:

*The committee of the local Free Kindergarten would like to make it known that they are in need of a Play Leader, and are happy to announce that they are in a position to assist any suitable young lady who may be interested, in this type of work. The minimum age is 18 years and offers a direct stepping stone to a Kindergarten Directress.<sup>11</sup>*

In 1951 the Kindergarten Committee was holding its third annual meeting. Despite its earlier positive plans and ambitions, a local kindergarten service had not been established, but local commitment was still there, and the leadership had diversified: Agnes Easton was president, Alfred Clarke and Lloyd Coleman were vice-presidents, Dorothy Self was the treasurer, and Richard Yeomans was secretary.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, the references to Richard William Yeomans in the digitised records for the local paper at the time, the Sunshine Advocate, stop in August 1951. There is one last reference to a "Mr Yeomans" in 1953, and the digitised records for the Sunshine Advocate stop in 1954, thus there is little reported information about the family in St Albans during the 1950s.

Myrtle Yeomans' role in St Albans was seldom mentioned in local history. She was occasionally mentioned as raising funds through running stalls and baking cakes, but she must be recognised as being a foundation member and President of the St Albans East State School Mother's Club in 1956.

The Yeomans family appear to have moved to Ridley Street, Albion, by 1963 and were there at least a decade. By 1977 Richard William Yeomans and Myrtle May nee Hills were at Bulltown Road in Ballan, and Richard was once again working as a sign writer. Little else is known about their new lives.

Myrtle Yeomans nee Hills may have passed away in 1991.

<sup>6</sup> Sunshine Advocate 7 November 1947

<sup>7</sup> Sunshine Advocate 9 July 1948 p2

<sup>8</sup> Sunshine Advocate 16 July 1948 p1

<sup>9</sup> The kindergarten was not built till 1960.

<sup>10</sup> Sunshine Advocate 24 September 1948 p2

<sup>11</sup> Sunshine Advocate 21 April 1950 p3

<sup>12</sup> Sunshine Advocate 17 August 1951