

Living Memories 2

Stories from the early days of the Town of Victoria Park





Tram travelling down Albany Road towards Perth c1920. Prior to the Second World War the tram stopped on every corner. Twenty-two plaques have been installed near the original tram stops along Albany Highway showing where they were.

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The Old Ranch

Marjorie Jessie Barker, 2002

Our grandparents, William Henry and Mary Elizabeth Thomas settled in Western Australia in 1895. They were Welsh descendants. At that time, they had two sons, our father William Guy (three years) and his brother Arthur (two years). They settled into a house we now call The Old Ranch, on the corner of Somerset and Shepperton Road, East Victoria Park, where they were to have eight more children. Our grandmother had to deliver several of the children herself because no doctor or midwife could be called in time. Apparently the child would be placed on her knee and smacked on the bottom, and then hot water, towel and basin were called for to bathe the child. Grandmother was a very strong woman mentally and physically and was very religious. She was also a very good pianist and had attended a ladies finishing school in England. The children's names were Gertrude, Dorothy, Gladys, Harry, Charles, Jesse, and Phyllis. Dorothy died of a brain abscess, Jesse died in childbirth and Harry was drowned on the HMAS Perth during WW2. William Guy, our father, served in Gallipoli and France in WW1 and suffered ill health continuously throughout his life. He died aged 51 years. Charles served in the Middle East in WW1. Arthur lost his arm in a railway accident as a child and therefore was disqualified from military service. Gladys was Matron of Kalgoorlie and Armadale hospitals.

Before settling in the Old Ranch, our grandparents lived in a house in Albany Highway near the corner of Westminster Street, and grandmother had a dairy there. She was the first to deliver milk in the area by horse and cart. The cows roamed far and wide in the bush, and often rubbed themselves up against some of the wooden houses built along there.

The Old Ranch figured very strongly in our collective memories. It was surrounded by bush, some new houses had started to be built down near Albany Highway. We would catch the number 11 tram to the bottom of

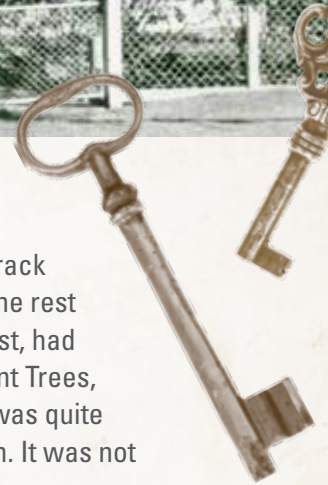


Somerset Street, which was then the Terminus in Albany Highway, it went no further. We then walked along a bush track to the Old Ranch which had an old picket fence and gate. The rest of the home which would have been about two acres at least, had wire fences. The house was surrounded by large Peppermint Trees, very popular because of their shade. The front yard which was quite large had wild pelargoniums growing, and other native bush. It was not a cultivated garden.

We loved to play cubby houses under the Peppermint Trees where the fronds reached the sand and swayed with the breeze, sweeping it almost perfectly smooth. It was cool and shady there. We would watch the steam trains passing in the distance, which is now the suburb of Carlisle, and grandmother knew the time and destination of most of the trains.

The Old Ranch was full of happy memories for all our family, Grandmother lived to 86, outliving our grandfather by 20 odd years.

Our mother, who had come to Western Australia as a World War One war bride walked along the bush track to Albany Highway in her wedding gown. But that's another story to tell.



Number Thirty Nine Sussex Street

Mary Catherine Angus, 2006

Upon the corner it had stood
Since well before the years of war
A funny little building, true
With lounge and bed and kitchen too
But in the front for all to see-
A little shop-front painted white

It used to sell to all around
With credit offered, oh so free,
To wife whose husband was at war
Or those who found ends hard to meet
But debt there very rarely was
For people then were caring too
And understood that each must help-
For times like those were hard for all

And in the little rooms behind
The laughter used to echo round
For fun there was in every day
With birthday parties, friends to tea
Games in the yard and climbing tree

School was important to us all
And then on Sunday, Sunday school
And often there'd be picnics too
At dams and waterfalls and parks
A simple life but full of fun
While mother worked in shop and home,
and father was at war.



Gypsies in the
park c 1927



Water mess!

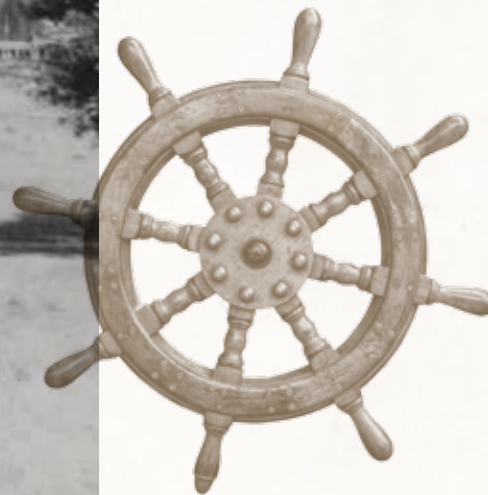
**Rose Browne, 2002
(as told to Meg Griffin)**

Whoosh! – A sheet of brown water rushed into the open window of the train in which I was travelling to Perth one morning after a night of heavy rain. On the opposite seat was a very young English sailor, dressed in a new, white-as-snow naval uniform.

And yes! The wave of brown water broke right over him! No one could resist laughing, including the sailor himself.

The now brown uniform was hastily mopped with clean hankies taken from various pockets and handbags, the young sailor obviously feeling so much better from our ministrations.

Who was this English sailor on leave on his way to the City?
Who indeed! None other than our beloved MAYOR, Mick Lee!!



John Shalders and his family

25 years in Victoria Park 1913–1938

Malcolm J Shalders, 2004

In 1913 at the age of 51 years, John Shalders moved with his family to Victoria Park where he was to live and work for the remaining 25 years of his life. This was to be a period of momentous social change, the 1914-18 World War, the great depression of the 1930's and political upheaval in Russia with the advent of Communism in 1917, and in Germany the rise of Nazism to power in 1933. It was in these years that John Shalders was most actively involved with the society in which he worked and lived, local community groups, his church, and the Freemasons' Lodge.

On arrival in Victoria Park, John and his family lived in rented shop premises on the corner of Mint and Bank Street where he opened a business as a Grocer storekeeper. Within the Victoria Park Municipality John became a member of the local "Progress Association" with regular meetings held in his home.

John later purchased two adjoining quarter acre blocks, Lots 274 and 275 in Bank Street, almost opposite the East Victoria Park Railway Station. Here he had a shop and adjoining residence of timber construction built for himself and his family. The grocery business was transferred to these premises in 1915. The street entry to the new shop opened into the ground floor where groceries, fruit and vegetables were sold, whilst drapery was sold from an upstairs mezzanine floor, accessed by a narrow staircase. The shop had a gallon licence for beer, wine and spirit sales. It was open six days a week: grocery sales from 8am to 6pm and for fruit and vegetables until 9pm. Four of his daughters worked in the shop from the time they finished school until they married and left home.

The routine John Shalders would have followed was typical of the work of all small traders. It was an era of home delivery service by the grocer, greengrocer, butcher, baker and milkman. John would go to market on



Monday, Wednesday and Friday for supplies and call on his customers to collect their orders. On return to his shop, the items listed were collected together by his daughters who worked in the shop, for return delivery next day. A handwritten docket with items supplied and prices listed was made out for each customer order and the bill totalled. On delivery cash payment was received. John carried out this work right up until he was 74 years old in 1936 when he was forced to stop work because of failing health.

In his early years John Shalders had only a horse and cart for transport for market days and deliveries. Later he had a T model Ford Tourer adapted to his needs. Benches were added along the sides in the back serving a dual purpose – for transport of deliveries and for picnics and social outings with intrepid travellers, family and friends all crowded in to fill the car to capacity.

In the early 1920's there was an increase in population in the state that also brought increased prosperity to the area of Albany Road in Victoria Park, which developed into the biggest regional shopping centre outside the Perth city. Larger stores were able to sell cheaper groceries and the larger city department stores were also able to sell and deliver goods at prices below those that could be offered by the small corner grocery store. John Shalders joined a group of small owner operated grocery store owners to form a co-operative to negotiate better wholesale bulk purchases. As a result the "Wholesalers Limited" was formed in 1924 with John Shalders as one of the directors.

Unfortunately prosperity faltered with the Depression of the 1930's and it had, as elsewhere in Australia, a severe impact on residents in Victoria Park. This was a typical suburb of "working class" wage earning families with many men employed in State Government utilities such as the railway, railway workshops, tramway and State Saw Mills. As the economy stagnated so the employment situation was felt by all, with many put on shortened working hours, reduced wages and increasingly, unemployment, with families becoming dependent on the small government sustenance payment or charity. For John many such families were no longer able to pay for all their groceries. He was often asked to put things on 'tic' to be paid at some indeterminate time in the future. He still had to pay his suppliers in full. On one occasion where a customer was unable to pay any of the debt he owed for groceries, John accepted 'payment' by the carpenter for a 'glory box' for one of his daughters who was engaged. This well constructed French Polished piece of furniture survives in the family to the present day.

Our Australian Dream

Home

Madeleine Tingey, 2015

I remember the excitement the day the letter, in an official looking brown envelope, arrived in the post.

“Yes!” shouted my mother, dancing round the small room behind my uncle’s small corner shop where we lived, crammed like peas in a pod in the living quarters at the back. “At last we’ve got it. A home of our own, in East Victoria Park!”

It was the 1950’s, several years after World War Two had ended, but buying a home was still a major problem for families. Joan, my school friend, lived with her family in a garage on the block of land they had bought. “It will be years before they’ll be able to afford to build”, I had heard my dad say. No one realised the results of the war would continue so long.

During the war everything had been geared towards the war effort so no houses had been built. Consequently, when the defence personnel were discharged from the services a large number of people needed a home to rent or buy. The population was growing and my parents marriage at St Peters Anglican church in Leonard Street during one of Dad’s brief leaves from the army, was one of many. Pressurised by these factors, war service homes were an area of Commonwealth funding the nation had taken on in response to the need for housing for ex-servicemen.

That afternoon my family walked to the new house from the shop at the Causeway end of Victoria Park. We were used to walking and not many people owned a car so the roads were quiet. Our parents not only believed that exercise was good for you, but didn’t want to waste money on bus rides. So we walked the whole length of Albany Highway as far as Hill View Terrace because Mum wanted to look in some different shops. Albany Highway had become the largest suburban high street in Perth and people came from miles around on shopping expeditions.

Our new house was just up from the beautiful Fraser Park and as soon as we saw it our mood changed to one of excitement. Houses like ours had a conservative design but we thought it was wonderful with its red terracotta tile roof and small front porch, distinctive features of post war homes. The house was made of fibro, with a wooden frame, and was built on stumps. My brother Geoff and I ran up and down the hallway, flinging open doors and exploring the novelty of having our own bedrooms. There were two bedrooms, one for my parents in the front and a second one next to it for me, while Geoff had the sleepout to himself, with a row of louvered windows providing cross ventilation.

The lounge room overlooking the front garden had lovely etched glass doors and a brick fireplace. There were decorative cornices as well as a ceiling rose. There was a new gas stove and the kitchen floor was modern checkerboard patterned linoleum.

It was wonderful to have a back garden after the small paved area behind the shop. Gardens were seen by this time as an outdoor living space rather than simply a utilitarian area. At first these new sub divisions had a raw look but most people, like our mum, were planting trees and shrubs giving the streetscape a softer, more appealing look.



I Remember When...

Les Stevens, 2015

The old Swan River, was nice and clean
And trams, on the Causeway bridges seen
Vehicle traffic was sedate, and slow
And catching Blue Manna's, we could go

Without any buses, to compete
Trams noisily trundled, up the street
Along the highways, to South and East
They really were, a noisy beast

Town hall sat 'tween Rushton and Cargill
With the Broadway Theatre, up the hill
The Fire Station, on the main highway
With St. Peter's Church, tucked away

A Hotel that does remain there still
Known widely, as the "Broken Hill"
The Post Office, up by Duncan Street
Probably by now, made obsolete

Up through the middle, the highway ran
Shops both sides, to no regular plan
Dependant on where, the trams did stop
Convenient place, to put a shop

Flour and sugar measured, by the pound
For Supermarkets, were not around
Bread and milk delivered, from a cart
Whose horses knew where, to stop and start

On Raphael Park, most sport was played
Where Moreton Bay Figs, provided shade
And just to show you, that they were boss
Magpies swooped if you walked across

The railway line ran, just to the North



Carrying the people, back and forth
Red Castle Brewery, making Stout
Proud of the product, that they turned out

As there were no Blowfish, to annoy
Spent some spare time fishing, as a boy
On Blood worms, you could never fail
To catch Bream, Pilchard or Yellow Tail
Memories of pocket money, made
From Marine dealers, that plied their trade
Collecting all bottles, you could see
Beer bottles were worth, a half penny

The values were, so different then
You could get a lot, for half a "pen"
Not like today, if your money's spent
For there's no such coin, as half a cent

The tennis courts, at McCallum Park
Always good for my collecting lark
It was not far, from the water's edge
Surrounded by, a large Ti-Tree hedge

Three bridges did cross, the sluggish tide
Over placid waters, oh so wide
Because the river, they did divide
There were two islands, they sat astride

And when I roamed that rivers shore
Shooting all jellyfish that I saw
Lilac berries from my shanghai stuck
Embedded in that glutinous muck

Yet Primary Schools, there were but two
But the "Bottom School" was my venue
And some rivalry there was, at least
Between lower Park and those up east

There is a lot more, that I could tell
Of that wonder land, I knew so well
Fond memories of, a time long past
Of the boyhood years, that did not last

Albany Road



My Memories from 1932 **M Shelley Johnson, 2002**

I remember as a young child, my father, Percy Etheridge pointing out a shop and dwelling where his parents, Elizabeth (Lizzie) and James (Jim) Etheridge, Percy and his sister Ella lived and ran the grocery shop when they first arrived from England in 1912. It was on the right hand side of Albany Road and on the corner of Colombo Street (west side).

Dad left school at 14 and was apprenticed to the motor repair workshop on the east side of Armagh Street. The tin roof had a long red cross painted on the roof, which could be seen from the Causeway. That building was the first one on Albany Road. Between it and the Causeway was vacant land.

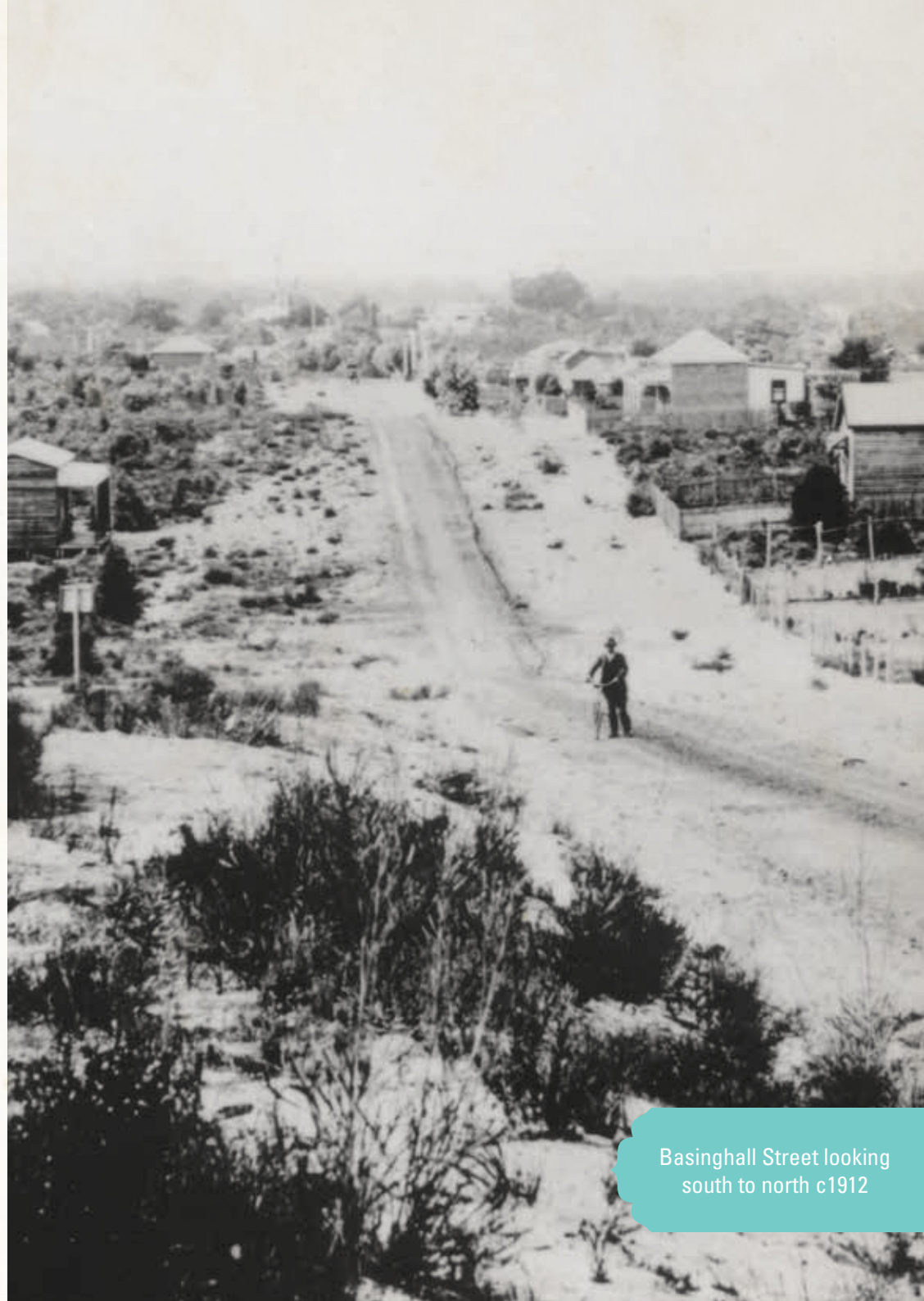
My grandparents sold that business after World War I and built a house with two small shops at 266 Albany Road. Mrs Etheridge ran the grocery shop alone from 1934 when she was widowed until a few years after World War II when she went to live with her daughter Ella Kelly and help her in her shop on the corner of MacMillan and Hordern Streets.

In the second shop at 266 a gentleman by the name of Maloney ran a drapery store for many years.

My grandmother ran the grocery shop and employed my mother Edna Baker who lived with her parents Amy and Sidney and siblings Irene, Doris and Sidney Jnr. Edna married Percy in early 1927.

I remember in the 1930s that an old gentleman would walk down Albany Road at night and use a long stick with a little hook at one end to turn the shop frontage lights off. There was a small charge for this service to the shopkeepers.

Not many people had radios in the early 1930s and James (Jim) Etheridge set a loud speaker above the doorway of 266 for folk to listen to the cricket – England versus Australia.



Basinghall Street looking
south to north c1912

I can just remember him tuning in with a machine that had a part called a “cats whisker” for the fine-tuning. Later he had a proper radio.

A large clock in the shape of a “fob watch” hung in the window and a water bowl was always kept filled at the front of the shop for dogs to drink. A few doors up from the Etheridge store Jack Freedman started a second hand shop and he was still there in the 1980s.

Tudor Blinds and Awnings started c1940s on the corner of Harvey Street. Over the road, Memorial Park where bands used to play. Then a couple of little shops and we come to the Broken Hill Hotel.

I have heard tell that the bookmakers in the 1920s and 1930s had to rely on telephones to get the results of racing (night trots) on the other side of the Causeway where the results were shown on a large, lighted screen. By using a strong telescope they knew the results early enough to “fiddle the books” as the saying goes.

A bootmaker’s shop was on the corner of McMaster Street. I attended a kindergarten in a hall just behind this shop.

On the river side of Read Park there was an open-air theatre.

My maternal grandparents Sidney and Amy Baker had a grocery store on the east side of Kent Street c1926. Sidney Baker’s father built a cottage just four house blocks before the Balmoral Hotel around 1904.

Next door to the Baker cottage was a shop and dwelling where we lived in 1937. My mother ran the shop and Percy worked at Brookings Motor Co, Perth.

When my mother fell pregnant she sold the shop and we moved into a rental home next door.



Our neighbour on the corner of Westminster Street was a small “factory” where a Mr Hunt made wooden vases, etc. out of Banksia nuts and various local timbers. I remember that one or two women would leave their baby in its pram outside the factory and go over to the hotel for the evening. It certainly wasn’t the “thing to do” those days.

There was a cake shop on the corner of Canterbury Terrace. Next door was a greengrocer and I was sent up on Friday (pay day) for one shilling worth of mixed fresh fruit (10c today) and it would include grapes, bananas, apples and oranges, etc.

I believe that my grandfather Jim Etheridge made the first ½ d (halfpenny) box for their shop in the 1920s or earlier. It was made of pine and painted with silver paint with handles at each side for lifting from under the counter when children came in to buy sweets. Each section had divisions in it and I remember that first shelf at the bottom always had aniseed balls 20 a penny, mint leaves 10 a penny, conversation lollies 10 a penny, etc. So if you only had a ½ penny to spend you could do quite well. Other shelves had musk sticks, coltsfoot rock checkers “gum boils”, etc. etc. The top shelf had the luxury items such as Nestles penny chocolates. “Cones” were made out of twisted squares of newspaper – lollies were placed in them instead of paper bags. Ice blocks were 1 penny for milk ones and ½ penny for water ones.

Old clean newspaper was bought for a penny a pound and every article was wrapped for the customer. Biscuits came in bulk and any broken biscuits were put into bags and sold for 1 penny.

Living it up in Victoria Park

Robert Hatton, 2014

It was 1941 in the month of May
When I first saw the light of day
Maternity hospital, Victoria Park
World War II was raging – the mood was dark
In Berwick Street, number 91
My extraordinary life begun
Dad was away, so Mum took her lad
Home from the hospital in a Browns taxi cab
Operating from Carlisle in Archer Street,
No seatbelts, no capsule, no baby seat
Soon that baby climbed ladders to rooftops at home
Chasing red rooster, grabbing its comb
As a three year old, lost, causing exasperation,
I was found by police at Carlisle Railway Station
At five, discovered fire, and how quickly it spread
Raging bushfire, siren, bright red!
A fireman with tired face, blackened with smoke
Stood muttering, cursing some naughty young bloke
At Carlisle Primary, close to home
Turned white chalk to blue in an inkwell of stone
Took another kids pencils so Mum marched me back
To the nearest police station for a cautionary chat
The milkman delivered fresh milk every night
To a canister out front for sixpence a pint
On Canning Highway for two shillings and six
A sugar bag of fresh veges I'd pick
Meat was kept in an ice chest bought on payday
From the department store on Albany Highway
When meat stores were low, I'd be in the Swan River
Catching fish, crabs or prawns for the family dinner
At Broadway Theatre near the Broken Hill's door
I'd watch movies while jaffas rolled down the sloped floor

Then collecting drink bottles and selling them quick
I'd be off to buy myself steaming hot chips
In 1954 off to Kent Street High School
Often causing much havoc, perhaps I broke the odd rule
I'd run out with the boys to get a cheap thrill
Watching the nightcart thundering down the hill
To deliver its load at the end of the beat
To the shire council's sandpit in Etwell Street
In the high school five mile paper chase
Running barefoot through collier, I earned myself second place
Worked part time after school, 15 hours a week
At Charlie Carters, corner Canning and Berwick Street
Bagging onions and spuds where McDonald's now stay
For one pound and tuppence – my weekly pay
I blew my own trumpet on musical days
Did a year of architecture, but gave it away
With teenage years came radical push bikes
Lucky that I (and others) survived
A car versus push bike accident one night
Gave a motor car driver one horrible fright
Pushbike and rider crashed through his windscreen
A week later in hospital he cursed that bike riding fiend
After working in hospitals where bureaucracy reigned,
I became demolition man, my whole life then changed
With a wife and four kids never short of a job
Cleared many sites in Vic Park as Bobcat Bob
Bought an East Vic Park home in 1992
Demolished old dwelling, built another brand new
To make way for the Park Centre, a school was demolished
Many timbers were salvaged, collected and polished
To be used again, in my Vic Park home,
Where I'll spend my retirement, no more to roam
Restored an old Norton in 1963
to its glorious best, what a victory
Content in my hometown, buzzing around like a bee
I still ride my Harley at 73
Been a bit of a lad, a bit of a yokel,
But I reckon you could, just call me a 'local'

Our Australian Dream

The Night Stalker

Madeleine Tingey, 2015

East Victoria Park was a peaceful neighbourhood where adults knew the children by sight and looked out for their safety, and where mothers gossiped in the corner shops and over garden gates. But something happened to change all this. The events that unfolded during the 1950s and early 60s were dramatic and forbidding, causing people to lock doors that had always been open and hurry to the safety of their homes after dark. People were terrified in their previously innocent and safe communities and felt they were living in an unbearably frightening situation. Peaceful neighbourhoods were in a state of shock as a series of murders changed the spirit of the place and the serial murderer Eric Edgar Cooke randomly killed eight strangers, shooting, stabbing, strangling and running them down with cars.

Cooke's victims were concentrated in the western suburbs but in 1958 his reign of terror struck in our neighbourhood. A twenty six year old woman named Nel Schneider (in fact Cooke's first victim) was seriously injured in a hit and run accident not far from where we lived. At the time we had no idea that the crime that horrified us was connected with this particular killer and the spate of horrific murders committed by him. It would be some years before the horrifying events would be pieced together and his reign of terror would end with his hanging in Fremantle Jail on 24 October 1964.

Nel and her husband Jan, aged 33, were immigrants from Holland and had only lived in Western Australia for three years. Perth was a place of peace and safety for them after the horrors of World War Two and its aftermath. The Reformed Church was looking after them and it was a focal point of their lives. They lived in a simple asbestos state housing commission home in McKay Street, Bentley. Jan would cycle to Albany Highway each week day, leave his bike behind Charlie Carters shop and take the bus to the panel beaters where he worked in Murray Street, while Nel looked after their little boy and new baby daughter. They were both contented and thankful.

Their lives changed completely on 12 September 1958. That evening Nel had been to choir practice at the New Reformed Church in Colombo Street near the

Causeway and was cycling home as she usually did. On the way she stopped at St Joachim's rectory in Shepperton Road to pay the rent her church owed for use of their hall. She then started riding home along Albany Highway, turning into Hill View Terrace just as my family had when we walked to our new house a few years earlier. The route was uphill to Berwick Street but then downhill to Devenish Street after which it was an easy ride as far as the Collier Pine Plantation at Jarrah Road, an area where the bush had been cleared to make room for much need housing. This area was originally called the Millen Estate but had become a part of East Victoria Park and was a community centred around new schools and sporting facilities. Once Nel found herself cycling down Marquis Street she was almost home.

Unknown to anyone, Cooke had stopped his car to watch the young woman cyclist. Prowling and watching his victims were trademark preoccupations, but that night they weren't enough. Within minutes he started the engine of the Ford Consul sedan he had stolen locally in Mackie Street and followed her. At Jarrah Road he accelerated and pursued her at full speed into Marquis Street before running her down. The slightly built young woman was thrown into the air and landed on the road headfirst. Her bicycle was caught in the cars' grille. Nel Schneider had fractured her skull and suffered permanent brain damage. Cooke had worn gloves so there were no fingerprints. Nel spent several weeks in Royal Perth Hospital but never fully recovered from her serious head injury, forever suffering blackouts and seizures.

Although peace and tranquillity eventually returned to our quiet and friendly neighbourhood families were suspicious and on edge realising that things would never be quite the same again.





New life for a Valentine tank post Second World War, Hubert Street East Victoria Park 1949.

East Victoria Park Verge parking c.1949

Natalie Easter (nee Owen), 2015

After World War Two came to an end in 1945, people began to settle into new occupations.

So it was with my uncle who had been working at the Welshpool Ammunitions factory as a welder, making components for Bren Gun carriers. Pre-war he was a gold miner but now decided he would like to try his hand at farming near a small town named Kukerin about 270 miles (308 kms) south east of Perth.

At the Karrakatta Army base, various pieces of military equipment were being auctioned, including several Valentine tanks, minus their turret and guns. My uncle thought, with modifications, a tank would be ideal for scrub rolling (clearing) the land. To my family's surprise the tank was delivered by truck and placed on the verge of 73 Hubert Street in East Victoria Park.

The modifications to the tank took some time and local people became quite intrigued as they walked past. Finally the work was completed – time to leave!

So one night about 11pm my uncle started up the two stroke diesel engine and headed south down the big hill in Hubert Street to Albany Road (later highway), taking about five days to reach his destination – Kukerin. Imagine what folk thought when he pulled into the Williams' garage and asked if they could fill the 'tank'.

After a few years my uncle decided farming wasn't for him. He gave the tank to a neighbouring farm and returned to the comforts of the city.

I wonder if the tank's remains are resting in peace!

Yes, it is me sitting high c 1949.

My Memories of life in Victoria Park from 1934 to 1977

The War Years

Elsie Newcombe, 2003

Shopping

Shopping was pretty much a daily chore because of the difficulty keeping food cool, especially meat. We had a Coolgardie Safe which was placed on the shady side of the house where the afternoon sea breeze blew through the damp hessian sides. It was a constant job to maintain water in the top and bottom tray to keep the strips of cloth wet and to avoid any bridge across which the ants could travel. Ice chests generally replaced the safe, but we managed with ours until we graduated to a refrigerator in the 1950s.

So a visit to the butcher seemed to be a daily occurrence because meat was a big part of our diet, and Hendley's Butcher Shop on Albany Highway was popular because of the quality of their meat. Mum often remarked she wished someone would invent another animal, to add variety to the menu. Chickens were a special Christmas treat, but we did have rabbit, and particularly liked them baked. Barrett's Rabbits were located behind Hendley's Butcher Shop and Colley's Ice Works.

L&F Ashbolt's grocery store was on the corner of Mint Street, and most items such as flour and sugar had to be weighed into brown paper bags. Cheese and butter were cut from big blocks. Mrs Dewar's greengrocery was next to Ashbolt's, and she sold very nice home cooked ham on the bone. I was sent there about once a week to get a few slices for Dad's lunch.

Two other greengrocers in the same strip were owned by the Lucchessi family from Italy and the Litis Brothers from Greece. Leo Lucchessi was a popular kid in my class. I believe his father was interned during the war.



The home garden

During the war years everyone was encouraged to grow their own vegetables. Dad got his seedlings from the Chinese market gardens near the Causeway. Our back garden was turned over to cabbages, lettuce, beans, onions, tomatoes and peas, as well as the fruit trees already there. We always had two lemon trees, and a very productive plum which provided us with countless jars of jam. The mulberry tree was a favourite of two generations of children. It was great fun to climb among the branches to pick the black juicy fruit and see who could fill their billy can first.

Even backyard orchards at that time had to be registered, at a cost of two shillings, under the Plant Diseases Act. The certificate of registration also gave detailed instructions for compulsory Fruit Fly foliage bait.

Gardens required manure and the chooks and ducks which most people kept for their eggs, provided some of this; however the horses from the dairy and bakery were also a good source for manure. Dad built a handcart – a 'BIG' handcart. The frame was made of angle iron and it had motor bike wheels and long shafts. My brother John and I were required to take this down to Mounsey's Dairy in Albany Road (now Albany Highway) where we were allowed to scoop up the horse manure. I guess the resulting good vegetables contributed to our good health. The main pest in the garden at that time seemed to be the white cabbage moth and it became quite a game trying to catch them with homemade nets, or swiping them with a tennis racket.

I remember an elderly lady who lived in Mint Street – Mrs Buzza. The kids used to pinch the mulberries off her tree which overhung the footpath. She always dressed in black and her short stature was further emphasised by the fact that the footpath was higher than her path. She would come out with her broom and shout at the kids till they ran away.



My Wonderful Memories

Vera Dawn Selwood (Parkins), 2015

I was born 30 December 1934 in a little old house in Victoria Park. This is now the blind school. At the time we lived in Rivervale. There was Mum, Dad, Ted, Doris, Phyllis and me, Dawn. When I was six we moved to Victoria Park, number 6 Oswald Street. A big old house but I loved it. Ted was working making cane furniture, Doris went to Perth Girls School, Phyllis and I went to Cargill Street Primary, two streets away.

Dad was a linesman and was near retiring. Dad was 15 years older than Mum, he was born in 1886 and Mum in 1901. He was in the First World War, joined up when he was 14. Dad was injured in the war and sent back home to Australia. He never talked about the war, he actually never spoke much at all. We were brought up in the war years (World War Two). We had to paint our windows



black so there wasn't any light shining through, in case the enemy flew over at night. Quite often the air raid sirens would sound and we had to turn the lights out and stay inside. We even had practice at school and there were air raid shelters we had to run to. Even though it was war time, we kids always found things to do. Victoria Park was a great place to live and we were only two streets away from the Swan River and the Causeway. In summer we would all go to the river after school and have a swim. I was the only girl in our close neighbours, but the boys didn't care, I was treated as one of the boys. We played skittles in our street as well as cricket brandy. It was great, we were never inside, we also climbed trees.

It was hard on a lot of families, money wise, and they only had coupons for certain things. If the coupons ran out they had to wait for the next issue. Ted had joined the army, and when he came home on leave, he would bring chocolate and chewing gum, which was a real treat.

I remember the night the war ended. I was at the Broadway Theatre with friends. It was a real scary movie and at its worst, when it was announced 'the war is over', everyone got up and cheered and yelled, the movie stopped and we all went home. When I got home Mum had heard the news and said she was catching the train to Perth. So I went with her. There were hundreds of people dancing and yelling in the streets, it was really great. It went on to all hours of the night and morning. We left about 2am. I was eleven then. I don't think Dad even knew we were had been out.



East Victoria Primary School

2 July 1946

William (Bill) Bickerton, 2015

'Standard' 3

I am the fourth boy from the right in the back row. I remember all of the faces very clearly and have listed the names of those that I can recall – goodness me 69 years ago, so please excuse me if a couple of them are incorrect. In those days the school was on Albany Highway, opposite Mint Street where the shopping centre is now.

There were actually two schools – the 'big' school fronting on to Albany Highway for grades 4, 5 and 6, and the infants' school for grades 1, 2 and 3 behind and fronting onto a small street (Dundas Street), that no longer exists. There was a little tuck shop (Mrs Bird's tuckshop) on that street. We called the grades 'standards' if I remember correctly.

Miss Hannant was our Head Mistress at the infant school. She was a very regal and wonderful lady and I continue to visit her in her beautiful cottage in Darlington after she retired.

We had air raid trenches in the school grounds and from time to time the bell would ring and we would all have to troop out and sit in those sandy trenches until the bell rang again.

There was a canteen in the 'big' school where we picked up our daily small free bottle of milk and the mothers made healthy Oslo (salad) sandwiches.

Many will remember Miss Phillips – a very wonderful tiny Welsh teacher, who was choir mistress. We practiced singing after school and on occasions caught the electric tram at the front gate on Albany Highway, and went into Perth to the ABC studios in St Georges Terrace to sing on the radio. We sang mostly Welsh songs which my parents loved as our forbearers came from Wales.

I lived in a big old timber house at 39A Sussex Street on the corner of Gloucester Street, now long gone. There was a little corner shop in front of our house fronting onto Sussex Street.

I wonder how many of these old timers are still around.



The Town of Victoria Park Local History Collection was established at the Town of Victoria Park Library to preserve the history of the municipality of Victoria Park and provide information about the area. The collection contains books, newsletters, photographs, newspaper cuttings, maps, oral history interviews, microfiche records of local newspapers and early rate books. To expand our collection we rely on the generosity of the community who allow us to collect copies of family photographs, stories and records. The Town is grateful for all appropriate contributions.

The stories presented here are taken from the Local History competitions run between 1999 – 2015 and are based on the writers' own memories and personal research.

For further information please contact the Local History Coordinator on 9373 5500.

Town of Victoria Park Library | Living Memories

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