



TOWN OF
VICTORIA PARK

LOCAL HISTORY AWARDS

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Memories of a Vic Park Kid



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Category
Personal Memoirs

Introduction

By way of explanation, of the following story, firstly let me state, that it is not solely, about the memories of my first decade, of life, when I actually lived in Victoria Park. But rather, it is the ongoing memories, throughout my life, of times and places when I was closely associated, with the place where I was privileged to be born!

All throughout my life, there have been circumstances, that brought me back into contact with Victoria Park, it's people, its establishments, and or it's close environs. Even when, in my retirement, I moved to far distant Northcliffe, to live for a short time, I had the happy occasion, to find people there, who like me, had spent some of their childhood in "Victoria Park".

I have entered the Local History Competition, on two other occasions. I was a very successful in the Personal Memories section held in 2015. But though this story encompasses items, that also appeared in that story, I hasten to add, that, that story was largely about my Childhood. Where as this story adds to that, a whole raft of memories that I have, of the years that followed, prior to 2020. Memories over the years, pertaining to the place where I was born. Having perused the Victoria Park Time line on the internet, I am aware that some of the things, that I have spoken about in this story, are not mentioned in that, but it was a great memory jogger all the same. And although, my story is basically about Victoria Park, it contains an integral part, of eighty plus years, of memories, in my own personal history! None of which I have embellished in any way. All that I have written, is the truth as I know it to be.

So the title of this story is really what it says! "Memories of a Kid from the Park" Because basically that is what I am. "A Kid From The Park"

Memories of a Kid From the Park

Despite achieving, what some people refer to, as my O.B.E.'s, (Over Bloody Eighties) I still have clarity of mind, and all my marbles are in the right places. At least I hope they are! Unlike some poor souls of my age and era, Alzheimer's, and or senility takes a heavy toll on my generations. Only one of my maternal, or paternal families, remains alive, at the time of my writing this story. My one remaining paternal Aunt, is Violet Bowie. She was also a former resident of Vic Park, in her own childhood. Violet is, at this time, the only surviving member of my paternal Stevens family. Born here in W.A., on St. Patrick's Day, 1930, she is now in her 90's, but unfortunately has succumbed to the vagaries of those afflictions. December 2025, will mark 100 years, since the Stevens family first arrived in this state. My maternal family, the Nield's, passed that milestone over a decade ago!

Both my parents and my paternal grandparents, lived in Canning Highway, Victoria Park, not far from the Causeway. Before I was born, in 1941, My maternal Grandparents and Great Grand parents, also had once lived in Garland and Stafford streets. Both of which, I know to have been located close by, on the river flats, between Canning Highway and the Swan River. But the constant flooding, of what was called Burswood Island, and the adjacent river flats, at Victoria Park, during the early 1930's, had caused the Government of the day, to reclaim, all the residential land, that existed, along those river flats. From the Causeway, south to Ellam St in South Perth. So due to this reclamation, all of my maternal Grand Parents, were forced to find another place to live. This they did, in the nearby suburb of Rivervale, further east, and on higher ground, away from the river.

This resulted in all the land, between Taylor St, and the Causeway, after the demolition of all the residential buildings there, to be redeveloped into an "A" class reserve, complete with a number of Tennis courts. These courts were later surrounded by Ti-Tree hedges, and the rest of the land, was turned into park lands, with trees and palms. It then became known as McCallum Park. Along this stretch of river bank, my family spent most of their spare time, in summer. Crabbing and or fishing. Garland St, which was located in this section, is still shown, on some road maps today, but only as an access, to the Tennis Courts, which still remain there. Stafford St. was actually on the southern side of Taylor St. and no longer exists at all. That land, between Taylor St and Ellam St, in South Perth, remained largely undeveloped, when I lived in the "Park", in the late 1940's, and early 50's. It is now referred to, as Taylor Reserve. So much so, that regrowth of its Gum trees, had begun to occur, in the south eastern part of that land. This was also one of our favourite small boy haunts, in those halcyon days of my early childhood.

My maternal Grandparents Harry and Maria Nield, along with their two eldest daughters, Lily and Marie, and Maria's parents, Fred and Lily Rawson, first came to Western Australia, aboard the "SS Gothic", in December 1912. Having arrived in W.A., they all initially went to live, in Randall St. North Perth. But the birth of a third daughter, to Harry and Maria, brought about a need for larger accommodation. So the move to Victoria Park was made about 1915. My Grandparents to Stafford St, and the Great Grands, to Garland St. Harry and Maria, between 1915 and 1930, then had nine more children. Unfortunately, four of them died as infants, but five survived. So Harry and Maria were survived by eight children. My mother and her sister who emigrated with them from England, another Aunt who was born in North Perth, and the five who were born in Vic Park. Most of whom at some stage, lived in Victoria Park or suburbs close by. So I had five maternal aunts, and two maternal uncles.

But that whole area, where they had all lived, as I said, was later subjected to those Government Reclamations, because of the constant flooding, in the 1930's, by the Swan River. My Great Grandfather Fred Rawson, actually died, during the thirteen or so years, they lived there. He died in 1929, of causes, and or in circumstances, that were some what unclear. The Newspaper report, the family's versions of his death, and that which is written, on his death certificate, do not all totally agree. There is also an amusing error, in the dates on that death certificate. It had him, as having been seen alive, the day after he was actually buried, at Karrakatta Cemetery.

My story on Fred's life is another one altogether. Anyway because of those reclamations, the Nield's and Lily Rawson, now a widow, moved to Great Eastern Highway and Orrong Rd in Rivervale, respectively. Lily Rawson died there aged 73, in 1945. Maria Nield died in 1960, and Harry died in 1965, also still living in Rivervale.

My paternal Grandparents, Ernest and Harriet Stevens, with their family, of two sons and three daughters had arrived in Fremantle in December 1925, aboard a ship called the "Jervis Bay". A ship that had frequently been used, to convey migrants to Australia, in those years. They subsequently rented houses in the Berwick St area of South Perth and Vic Park. In 1929, as I mention below, they built their own family home, on the corner of Taylor St.. Footnote! The arrival in Australia, of all three, of the above families, has been duly recorded, on the Welcome Walls, of the Fremantle Maritime Museum.

The house that my paternal Grandfather, along with my father and his elder brother built, on the southern corner of Taylor St, at No. 53 Canning highway, has since fallen victim to the need for more high rise accommodation, close to the city. They built that house, around 1929. It stood there, for over 90 years, only marginally altered, by its subsequent tenants, until 2023, when the site was finally totally redeveloped, for high rise accommodation. My Grandfather had died in July 1956, so my Grandmother sold that house in about 1965, and moved to a Duplex unit in Mackie St, also in Victoria Park. She passed away in 1975. Likewise the land, where my parents rented a house, at No. 58, is now occupied by commercial premises. My own family consisted of my father Horace, mother Marie, and two older sisters, Margaret and Joan, plus little ol' me. All three of us are still alive. Another brother was born, many years later, in 1951.

In my early years, when we lived at 58 Canning highway, my mother's sister Winnifred, and her family, were also living in Canning highway. One street closer to the Causeway, on the corner of Washington Street. That family later moved up to Moorgate St, behind the East Victoria Park Primary School. At that stage, the land on the opposite corner of Washington St. was largely vacant, except for an Army Drill Hall, which later came to be built there. Then years later, that family sold the Moorgate St house, to my eldest sister, Margaret and her husband, and then moved to a new home, in Esperance St. Subsequently, they again sold that house too, and moved to Mandurah, where they had purchased a School Bus service.

As far as I am aware my father, in his younger years, being English born, played the brand of football, that we call Soccer. Probably for a club whose home ground was at Raphael Park, which was not far from us, up Gloucester St. After his war service in the R.A.A.F., he graduated from playing, to coaching, and then refereeing. I believe that at one stage, before the Korean War, he coached a Victoria Park team, called the Balmoral Rangers. Which leads me to think, that in those days, they may have been sponsored by Victoria Park's, Balmoral Hotel. However they were disbanded during the hostilities of that war. English foot ball, or Soccer as we know it, is not my cup of tea. My wife considers it, like Tennis, a little akin to watching grass grow! In Tennis though, there is always a result. Soccer often can produce no result at all!

I have two distinct memories of Raphael Park, other than the Magpies, who nested in the Southeast corner of it, and in nesting season, regularly swooped me on my way to school. Those memories, are a bit on the botanical side. I remember two of the types of trees, that grew there, besides the usual pines. One was rather an oddity, the other common throughout parks and official gardens in Australia. On the western boundary of Armagh St., and probably elsewhere in the park, there were very big Moreton Bay Fig Trees. Then on the northern side, roughly level with Colombo St, was the strange prehistoric Bunya Pine, which is classed as a living fossil. Its origins are truly Jurassic.

That Bunya Pine was quite a tall tree, and its "fruit" could be dangerous, if you were beneath the tree, when one fell down. They were like a very large, many faceted, tightly packed pine cones, about eight or nine inches in diameter, and somewhat longer. They could weigh in the region, of several kilograms. Even a small Bunya Pine Cone could weigh in excess of 3 kg. If one fell on your head, chances are it could kill you. As it would have fallen from very high up, in the tree. The seeds it contained though, were apparently very edible, like most of all other Pine trees.

My father was employed as a "French Polisher", by the then Perth Department store, Boan's Ltd, who also had a furniture factory, in Bennett St East Perth. Up until the 1960's my father never owned a car, and rode his pushbike everywhere, including to work, fishing, and Soccer matches.

I do not have a great deal of memories, of my early formative years (from 1941 to 1945). But as history records, they were the years of World War two, and families some what struggled to exist, with rationing and most of the breadwinners, absent on war duties. Times were hard, but mothers managed to hold families together. My father and his brother, had both enlisted in the R.A.A.F., but thankfully for my mother's sake, they never served overseas. I believe that at some time, other than training courses interstate, most of my father's war service was spent at Pearce Airbase, or other West Australian locations as required. So home leave was often possible.

Shopping for the family groceries, was a vastly different kettle of fish, in those days. All groceries were dispensed usually by the small "Corner Shop" who sold a lot of their wares in loose (bulk) format. Salt, Sugar, Flour, Butter, Biscuits, etc, were all sold by the pound weight, or part thereof. So, were individually weighed out and bagged up, by the shopkeeper, in what ever quantity, the customer required. Potatoes were sold in much the same fashion, but generally by the "Stone" (which equalled 14 pounds, in imperial weight). Products like Jam, came in tins. Vinegar, Sauce, Cool Drinks, and the like, came in glass bottles. Some products, both edible and household, came in glass Jars. Virtually nothing else came pre pack, except of course, the last mentioned items, until supermarkets came on the scene. Even Hardware stores and Butchers also sold their products by weight. Nails and Screws etc, were sold by the pound. In that aspect though, the sale of meat, and meat products has not changed. Though generally it may now be readily pre packaged, it is still sold by its individual weight.

Most of these establishments, offered customers, a line of credit. Most of one's purchases, were "booked up", in an account, which was then later settled, on the next pay day. Times were such, that not many people, had ready cash during the week. So the "account" system served their purpose admirably. The colloquial term for this, was "Putting it on the Tab". There were two such shops, within easy walking distance of our home. One was run by a chap called Jones. It graced the corner of Berwick St and Canning Highway, and the other was just down the road, in the other direction, opposite Washington St, in Canning Highway. Initially that one, was owned by a family named Bird, but later sold to a family called Wright. Invariably these shops also catered for some Greengroceries too. They also carried a wide range of other essential items, like spices, tea and Coffee, and some medicines. The local Grocery stores, really were the only place, that you could buy, what you needed, in the grocery line.

The husband of the Wright's daughter, Connie, I believed at the time, was a swimming instructor, for the Royal Australian Navy. Tom basically taught me the basics of swimming. He would throw me out, well beyond my depth, and I would have to "swim" back to shore, as best as I could. If it looked like I was not going to make it, then Tom would come to my rescue. A bit drastic for someone at my tender age, but hey, I did learn to swim that way! Tom also had a unique method of catching crabs. He would walk along the river walls, until he saw a crab, then jump in, and grab it in his bare hands. In my later years, I myself, used a variant of that method, in Cockburn Sound. But we wore leather gloves then!

As Refrigerators were not yet in vogue, all perishable items like Butter, Dripping, Milk and Meat etc, and sundry other items, were kept cool, with the aid of an Ice Chest. (Ancient Version of the Esky) To this end the Victoria Park Ice works, in East Victoria Park, undertook to make regular deliveries of Ice, in large blocks to its customer. The Ice Chest was generally a large wooden cabinet, with a metal lined compartment, with a suitable lid, at its top. The ice being placed in that compartment. A small pipe was usually provided, to drain away the water, as the ice melted.

Milk and Bread were also delivered to householders, by horse and cart. Bottled Milk did not make an appearance, till the 1950's. People depended on those vendors, to maintain their supply of those basic essentials. A householder could not, just nip down to the supermarket, to get a dozen eggs, a bottle of milk a loaf of bread, or a bag of Ice. In summer time, us kids would try to scrounge chips of ice, from the ice man, to suck on.

One of my earliest memories, is of the time that I spent in the Princess Margaret Children's hospital. I recall that I was about four years old at the time, so it must have been sometime in 1945. Apparently, I had somehow contracted Meningitis, which was considered a serious, and contagious disease. It must have been, because I caught it from somewhere didn't I? Because of this, my mother was not allowed any physical contact, visiting with me. So I was kept in an isolation ward. I have recollections of my mother and my aunty Winnie, looking at me, through a window. That was the only type of contact with me, that they were allowed. Visual, but not physical! That period of my life is one, where I grew to dread the sound of a medicinal trolley, being wheeled along the hallway, outside of that isolation ward. Part of my treatment were needles in my spine, which I grew to detest. I recall frequently having a bet, with the kid in the next bed, that it was coming for him. But somehow I always seemed to lose that bet. To that end, I tend to think that those needles, are why my spine, has a slight curvature.

I have a lasting souvenir of that spell in hospital, although at the time I was unaware of it happening. I am not sure of the severity of my illness, but I have scars, that have slowly faded over the years, on the inside of both ankles. Which I believe, were due to having been fed intravenously. No doubt, when I was first admitted to hospital, my condition may have been critical. I was obviously unable to feed myself! I have some recollections that my father may have been home on leave, some of the time, but I could be wrong. So that was the first real Medical drama of my life. I have no idea of just how long I remained in hospital, but as you can see, I must have somehow survived the experience. But back in the fold of my family, life progressed, and over my eighty years, other such dramas from time to time, came to pass

One of my earliest recollections, regarding my environment, in those years, was that, at the location known as the "Causeway", there were two channels, in the Swan River, passing either side of a large Island. However it appears from historical writings, that Heirisson Island, was in fact, originally just a series of small islets and mudflats.

Spoil from the dredging of the river, to create a deeper boat channel, and for Oyster Shell, was used to create, one single large Island. There is a picture on the internet, that shows that more small channels, may have also existed on the Perth side of the river. So it required two bridges, for the population to cross the river, from east to west. The channel, on the western side of the river, was the designated Boat channel, for all craft, passing up and down the river.

The bridge over this channel, rose in a hump, high over the water, to allow unhindered passage, to all river traffic. This bridge was known locally, as the "Hump Back"! My father often used to do some of his fishing under that bridge. He would climb down the Bridge Pylons, to gain access to the boat channel, at water level. I can tell you, doing that, when one was just a child, was a scary experience. As some of the bridge work, moved about decidedly, when the weight of a Tramcar passed over it. Slightly to the south of that bridge, there used to be a Boat yard, known as Coleman's.

The other bridge was low and level, with respect to the water. Both bridges, also carried the large water mains from Canning Dam, across the river, into the city. But both, were of wooden construction, and were apparently reaching their use by date. To that end, at the beginning of the 1950's, two new, four lane, concrete and steel bridges were under construction, to replace them. For the purposes of the construction of these new bridges, any small channels, on the Perth side of the river, were filled in, and that all became part of the East Perth foreshore, so ceased to exist. This work also caused the demise of Coleman's Boat Yard. And likewise the dredging, and demolition of the old "Hump Back" bridge, and its low level mate, destroyed some of the best damn places, to dig Bloodworms, in the river, that I knew

The Swan River, played a great part in my families activities, in those days. Its abundance of fish and crustaceans provided a supplement to our diet. Sadly, that is not quite the situation, in this day and age. Greedy people do not care much for conservation. In the summer season, hardly a day in the weekend went by, when you would not find Mum, and or at least, one of us three kids, down at the river either fishing or crabbing. Both my sisters were older than me. We virtually lived on those big Blue Manna Crabs, that were plentiful in the river, in those days. We rarely ate the female crabs, when there was such an abundance of the male ones. The female crabs really were the means of propagating the species. So it was to our advantage to set them free.

Though we did often, tie them into our drop nets, to attract the males, and released them later. Those Big Blue Crabs, could be caught, as far up river as Maylands. And sometimes beyond.

Our crabbing forays, were done from the river walls, which were made of limestone blocks, that lined the river shore, from the Causeway bridges, almost to Ellam St in South Perth. From memory just short of Ellam St, the river walls were then, comprised of prefabricated, sloping concrete slabs, for probably the next hundred yards down river, and then the lime stone blocks took over once again. Although just south of Manning point, it was the concrete slabs again, for most of the way down to the Coode St. Jetty. These concrete walls, had suffered badly from erosion, by the river, and were in a bad state of repair. With a few exceptions, as I later describe, the limestone walls were much more resilient.

One thing that I found strange, was where these walls had been provided. The eastern shorelines, and a section of the north western shore, of Heirisson Island, remained as sloping, shelly beaches. But its south western shoreline, from the causeway, to almost the southern tip of the island, again had a Limestone wall. Likewise on the river's northern shore, down river to the city, about half a mile from the western end of the Causeway, was again protected by a wall. Why some shores, were protected by walls, and others not, I never understood. But with respect to that eastern shoreline wall, it was an ideal place, to use our drop nets, when Crabbing. I later became aware of other limestone walls that mainly lined the river's western banks, down river from Perth. Like along Mounts Bay Rd, to Matilda Bay in Crawley, and the Nedlands, Dalkeith foreshore. Footnote! I had noted, that on a visit to my old crabbing location, in 2023, that the limestone wall, that I once knew, no longer existed, and had been replaced, by a sloping raft of limestone boulders. Not quite as picturesque, or historic, as those great old limestone walls. They added character to the scene. The boulders, with the weeds growing up through them, do not.

Though there were very few places, upriver from the causeway, where you could pull a Prawning net, you could catch them in another way. Not in any great quantity, but sufficient, if you just wanted some for fishing bait. There was a trick to doing that. During the daylight hours, River Prawns, being some what nocturnal little creatures, would bury themselves, for the daylight hours, in any soft mud or sand, on the river bottom. The trick was to lock both your hands together, at the thumbs, spread your hands wide, and place them flat, on top of a patch of sand, on the river bottom. Then with all your fingers partially hooked downwards, slowly draw them towards you, through the sand. When your fingers touched a prawn, that lay hidden, beneath the surface of the sand, it would flip up into your flat hand, and you closed your hand around it.

You did not catch a lot this way, but if the prawns were plentiful, and all you wanted, was a few for bait, it was a simple way of catching them. I preferred the sandy areas over muddy ones, but it could also be done in soft mud too. Strangely, I don't think a terrible lot of people knew, that, that could be done. I have also known them to be caught using drop nets with a fine mesh. I saw this done in the Murray River at Ravenswood. Once again it did not get you much of a feed, but it probably served a purpose

The Swan river was a great playground like that, for a young boy in those days. When we weren't fishing or crabbing we were walking along its banks with our Shanghai's, shooting Lilac Berries into the Jelly fish, that at times, would infest the river, during the summer season. These Jellyfish were of two types. A large, saucer like, almost transparent, light blue one, which had, what looked like four eyes, but were not.

The other was a larger brown one, with white spots, and long tentacles trailing behind. These were sometimes referred to as the "Man-0-War Jellyfish. These two species, invariably infested the river in summer, from Fremantle to well up river. But seemingly at slightly different times. They looked quite funny, with the lilac berries embedded in them. I don't know whether shooting the berries into them, actually killed them, but they were a pest, so it didn't matter much to us, if it did. It was just good amusement to a kid, to do that. They were a pain in the proverbial, to swimmers or people dragging a Prawn Trawl net. They made that job, so much more difficult. I reckon the professional fishermen didn't like them much either. The White Jelly fish in particular. For as they drifted on the tide, they would lay up against the fishermen's nets, making it a visible barrier to the fish, and therefore render the net virtually useless.

I have distinct memories of a vast area of swamp and reeds, that grew adjacent to the river, between Ellam St and Manning Point. This was also bordered in the east, by an area we knew as the "Polo Grounds", and Mill Point Rd (Formerly known as Suburban Rd) in South Perth, and the river in the west. As small boys, this was a habitat that we frequented, and we had our secret pathways, and places in it. At that time, the adjacent area, behind the houses of Mill Point Rd, there was an open, grassy area that was largely uninhabited, with the exception of a Dairy Farm at Manning Point. These days that area, which we knew as the "Polo Ground", has evolved into part of suburbia. I never saw it happen, but I guess that at sometime or other, Polo must have been played there.

Likewise I guess that Swamp area, has also undergone some reclamation for housing too. A 2018 UBD Street directory I have shows that area, as partially residential, with the remaining river front area, as being part of Sir James Mitchell Park, with no indication of any swamp land.

In those years, one never bought bait for fishing and crabbing. The gathering of bait for one, often ensured the bait for the other. To us the most universal bait, for the greater number of fish species in the river, were Bloodworms. Which we dug out of the mud, of the river bottom. Some of the endemic small species of fish like the Trumpeter, inhabited the river in shoals. We caught them using the Bloodworms for bait, and then used the Trumpeter's, as bait to catch our Crabs, because of their small scales and tough skin.. So it was literally a case, of "Robbing Peter to pay Paul". To us it was a simple inexpensive logic.

I tend to think that the river was a lot less polluted, those days, than now. The residue of the fuels and oils, used by the increasing number of marine craft, on the river these days, must to some extent leave its mark. I no longer see or hear of people digging those bloodworms for bait. Yet in my day, it was one of the most acceptable thing to do, to get bait for your fishing. But in those times, one of the best places to dig for those worms, was alongside the boat channel, under that old decrepit bridge, on the Perth side of the river. With bloodworms, the species of fish that could be caught using them, seemed to be endless. They could be used, to catch Garfish, Trumpeters, Yellow tail Grunters, Pilchards, Silver and Black Bream, Roach, small Mulloway, Flathead, and Cobblers.

In the more sandy parts of the lower reaches, you could catch Whiting and Flounder as well. There were also many ocean species that were quite partial to them too. Sand and King George Whiting, Tarwhine, Skipjacks and Herring (or Tommy Ruff as they were also known). Some reef fish, like the Rock Cod and Wrasse, were not known to turn their nose up, at Bloodworms either. So all in all, for a kid, Bloodworms were an easily obtainable bait, for a wide variety of fish. All that it required, was a little effort on your part. So as the Swan River provided the means, all a young bloke had to do, was provide the how and when.

We boys evolved a unique way of catching the river's Garfish. We used a length of Bamboo, a piece of fishing line, a cork for a float, and a very tiny hook. Although, we sometimes used Bloodworms, Flour, sugar, and water mixed into a stiff dough, was preferred as bait. Mainly because the dough, was a lot more visible in the water, than worms were. In the river, up near Ellam street, there was an area of shallow water, in which seaweed grew quire well. And the Garfish liked to hang around in those shallow weedy places.

We would tie one end, of the piece of fishing line, to one end of the bamboo pole. Then, to the other end of the fishing line, we would tie the very small hook, and affix the cork, as a float, to keep the bait at a visible depth. Then we would dangle the cork, with the fishing line and bait attached, into the water, near the Garfish. When one of the fish, had obviously swallowed the bait, we would heave upwards on the bamboo pole. Thus hopefully hooking the fish. There was not much flesh, on a river Garfish, but they were fun to catch, in this way. Just another boyhood fishing skill, to amuse the mind.

Besides the fish and the crabs, there were also River Prawns available. Normally, these were mainly caught at night, along the sloping, eastern shores of Heirisson Island in summer, using a hand trawl net, which were dragged through the water, just off the shore, by two people. The shores of Heirisson Island were very shelly, but there were many sandy places along the river, from Fremantle to the Causeway, and in the Canning River, where the River Prawn could be, and were caught, in this way. So our summer diet consisted of a large amount of the river's marine abundance. Fish, Crabs and Prawns! A situation that continued to occur, as I grew older.

The only difference then was, that I became a lot more mobile, and more able to extend the places, that I could go to catch them. One of my best ever catches of River prawns, in later years, was made, along the Nedlands, Dalkieth foreshore!

One commodity, that nearly everybody in those days, purchased was Kerosene. Basically its use was in "oil" lamps, which were needed to provide some lighting, during power failures. The most predominate lantern of that era, was the "Hurricane" lantern. Fishing families also used these, for illumination, when fishing at night for Cobblers etc. However there were more elaborate lamps, for general household use. The Kerosene fuel for these lanterns, normally came in four gallon tins (about 19 litres.). Not in plastic bottles and containers like today. These tins were roughly about ten to twelve inches square, and eighteen inches high. When the tins became empty, they were generally converted, into useful metal buckets. The tops were cut out, and a strong wire handle attached. After thorough cleaning, to remove all traces of the Kerosene, these home made buckets, were also used to cook the Crabs and Prawns, we had caught in the river. In this case, they were filled with River water, and placed on an open fire to boil. Then when the water was boiling, the Crabs or Prawns, we had caught, were placed in it, to be cooked. There was nothing tastier, on a balmy summer's night, than freshly cooked River Prawns. Or for that matter, Crabs cooked straight out of the water, during the day!

Because the Prawning nets were dragged along the bottom, a lot more than just Prawns, were caught in them. A large number of small marine life, also fell victims to this, as well as some larger species like Cobblers and the odd Crab. Often the net, when pulled ashore, contained a large variety of small fish, and usually some small black Rock Crabs, which had two large nippers. The small fish were either, very juvenile Mullet or Pilchards and one other, that was generally, no more than a couple of inches long. We called these "Gobble Gutses". They got this name for their combined efforts, of attacking the bait on your fishing line. Rather like the bigger "Blowies" (Puffer Fish) that infested the river, in later years. All this detritus from the net, was normally just left on the shore, for the Seagulls and Water Rats (Rakali's) to feast on later, or the following day. Only the Prawns, Crabs and edible fish were kept!

The Heirisson Island of my pre teenage years, was largely undeveloped. The only manmade structure, other than the bridges, that passed over it, was the limestone wall, on its south western shore. It was basically a waste land of weeds, sedges, and scrubby vegetation, with patches of mainly native Casuarina Trees. No effort had ever been made to improve its outlook. But that was o.k., to the local population, who mainly only went there at night, to either catch fish or Prawns. Its sloping south eastern shore, being ideal for that purpose. So it was no drama, to light a fire, to cook your Prawns. There were no lakes, as such on the Island, like there is now. Only muddy depressions that held water during winter. Largely dotted with Sedge grasses.

The shells that litter its shores, were those of a species of Oyster. Shell Middens, that were found along the shores of it, and the river, did indicate, that the local indigenous people, over the years, had often feasted on them. But strangely, no live oysters of that type, have survived to this day. It is thought, that at some time, in the very distant past, the mouth of the river, at Fremantle, had silted up, and the prolonged abundance of fresh water, caused their demise. I have found no written record, of this silting occurring, since the founding of the Swan River Colony. So industrial pollution, could not have been the reason, and can therefore be ruled out. I can only thus assume, that any silting of the river mouth, occurred a very long time ago, prior to the port of Fremantle being established, and it was nature who caused the loss of those Shellfish. However, the waters around the mudflats, of the original islands, is where these Oyster shells seem to occur. Over the seven decades, that I have known it, the river around Heirisson Island, is the only place that I have found, that those shells exist. In early years, Swan Portland Cement, made great use of this abundance of shells, in their production of cement, because of their high lime content.

I also have some written memories of my father's, in which he says, in early 1926, when he first went down to the Swan River, near where they lived, after arriving in Western Australia, which I think was in the region, of Taylor or Ellam Sts, that the river was quite shallow. He wrote that you could walk out into it, for quite some distance, as the water was less than knee deep. I very much doubted that. Because in my day, you definitely could not do that. Though, in my later years, when doing a little recreational Net fishing off shore, between Coode St and Manning Point, I did find that the river was extremely shallow in some parts there.

From my research, I found, that it had been recorded, that Swan Portland Cement, established in 1919, dredged three million tons of Oyster shell, from the river between 1927 and 1956. That meant, that it may have been quite possible, that in 1926, the eastern arm of the river, was in fact, very shallow. So, what he wrote, could well have been true. Particularly if you consider, that Swan Portland Cement Company, had been dredging for Oyster shell, in the years, preceding my birth. So that very well could have been responsible for the increased depth, after I was born.

One thing I learned much later, was that those Kerosene tins, that I spoke of previously, were also used in other ways. Out in the farming districts, because of the shortage of building materials, these tins were often used as wall cladding, and or, on the roofs, of some rough bough sheds and huts. The tops and bottoms of them, were cut out and removed, then the tin was cut open, down one side. The remainder was then flattened, into a single sheet of metal, about eighteen inches wide, and three to four feet long. Thus suitable for use, as a wall or roof covering. It was even used sometimes, to line ceilings. Later when round tins, became the normal container, they too were used, in much the same way. Albeit not quite offering the same covering, but just as useful. Farmers also cut Hessian bags down two sides, to form a sheet of Hessian, which they dipped in a mixture, of wet sand and cement, until it became saturated, and then used it in the same manner. When the cement dried, it also became a barrier to wind and rain, when used as a wall cladding. In early 1970's I saw examples of this at Hyden, in the wheat belt. One could say that recycling, was in vogue those days too. Necessity was definitely the mother of Invention!

I have consistently spoken in this story, about Bloodworms. It occurs to me, that maybe some of the younger generation these days, probably do not have a clue, of what I speak. So now, I will attempt to elucidate. Bloodworms are, or at least, used to be, a worm that lived in the mud, on the bottom of the Swan River. Like most worms, I assume that they lived on rotting marine vegetation, and or the decomposing bodies of small marine life. I am in no way a biologist, so I can only express that, as my own conclusions.

To get a supply of these worms, for fish bait. One dug up shovel fulls of the mud, from the bottom of the river, just off shore, and then searched through it on shore, for these worms. The usual receptacle in which to collect them, was an empty Jam tin, or a large jar. There appeared to be two distinct types of these worms, which lived in that mud. But I am not certain about that. One appeared to be a very soft bodied worm, and the other was ever so much firmer. For all I know, they may have been the male, and female of the species. Although most worms, I thought were "A" sexual. The worm, with the firm body at its end, could display a wicked pair, of black pincer like "Fangs".

These I presume, were it's aid to the trapping and intake of food. These particular worms, were much more preferred as bait, because their firm bodies, stayed on the hook much better. We referred to them as "Hard Heads", because of the firmer bodies, and those pincers. Having gathered sufficient worms for our bait, the trick was then, in their preservation, till they were required. To this end. A pile of river Seaweed was gathered, and placed on a suitable piece, of wet Hessian sacking. Then the worms were tipped onto the seaweed, and the whole lot, was then tightly wrapped up, in the damp Hessian for later use. Either that day, or the one following. The worms rarely lasted for much more than a day or so. But doing this effectively prolonged their life. The fresher the worms, the better they were as bait. Because the longer they were out of the river's mud, they too, could begin to decompose.

My father was more into catching the larger Black Bream and Mulloway, colloquially known as Kingfish or "Kingies", from the Causeway bridges. My mother though, was not particularly fond of the odour, that the Kingfish normally gave off. Because they were literally bottom feeders, they somehow seemed to acquire a particular pungent aroma. Something, that was often heard at our house, when my father came home, after having caught one, were the words "Don't bring that "Bloody " Kingfish in here". Often, even before, he had hardly passed through the front gate. My mother, seemed to be able to smell them, a mile away. So the scaling, cleaning filleting etc of all "Kingies" was relegated to the back yard. All residue of that, which were not required, was consigned to our neighbour's chooks. Heads etc. were sometimes kept as Crab Bait

The rest of my family though, more often than not, did their fishing from the limestone walls, which once graced our part of the river, stretching south, from those wooden bridges. Fishing from, and under those bridges, carrying your gear and subsequent catch, could at times be a little hairy. So we kept our feet on dry land.

In my memory, I recall that between the Causeway bridges and Ellam St there were two sets of steps, that led down into the water, which we sometimes fished from. At the bottom of Taylor St, at some time, there may have been another set. But in the river's wall, at that point, was a broken section, and a little bay had been scoured by high tides. In the centre of that "bay", at the river's edge, was a flat limestone paved area, with three possible mooring posts, set along the outer edge of it. The demise of whatever stone work, was originally there, had allowed the river and tides, to erode a large section of the river bank, behind it.

It was via this eroded section, that we accessed the river, when swimming. I can also recall three drains, that emptied into this section of river. The drain that ran alongside, the south side of Taylor St, was virtually an open drain, with a pipe that passed through the river's limestone wall, to allow water to escape into the river. All I recall of the other two is that they emptied into the river, through the wall, between Taylor St. and the Causeway. The origin of both, I never really knew. However, the one closest to the Causeway bridges, I strongly suspected, of carrying waste water, from a nearby Sewerage treatment plant, in Hordern St, into the river.

At the river end of Elam St there was, what I as a kid, took to be some sort of slipway, where the Net Fishermen could launch their rowboats. That also no longer exists as such, for currently there are jetties and buildings, that are home to the Swan River Authority, and the Fisheries Department.

I also have recollections that the Canning Highway was originally called Fremantle Rd and the present Mill Point Rd. in South Perth, sported the title of Suburban Rd. In the early days of my childhood, Trams ran across those two wooden Causeway bridges, to the eastern side of the river. After crossing the bridges, to the Victoria Park side of the river, they then went in two directions. One east, the other south. One route ran straight up Albany Highway east to a terminus in Welshpool. And then, in 1942, extended, to near the railway line, in Welshpool Rd, for the benefit of workers, in the WW2 Munitions factory, that was in the industrial complex nearby.

The other Tram route, went south, along Canning Highway (Fremantle Rd), to Douglas Avenue in South Perth, where it turned right into Douglas Avenue. It then made a left turn into Angelo St. Then at Labouchere Rd. it turned right, again, and proceeded to a terminus, near the Perth Zoo, at Mends St.

Those trams ran along the river side of Canning Highway. On the opposite side of the road, to our house. I still remember those Trams as having a crew of two. A driver and a conductor. The job of the conductor was to collect the fares, from the prospective passengers. To do that, they usually rode on the tram's front step, ready to hop off to do this, when and if the tram stopped. I have mentioned in a previous story, about the antics we young boys used to get up to, with our Shanghais, on those poor fellows.

On the western side of the Causeway, in East Perth, there was a big depot, that catered for, and where all the Perth Trams were kept, when not in use. This was known as the "Car Barn". That establishment in later years, with the advent of motorised Buses, became the headquarters of the Metropolitan Perth Passenger Transport Trust, or MTT. for short. These days most of the Bus fleets, have been out posted, to depots in the suburbs. The building that graces that site, now houses the W.A. Police Force.

Several of the Tram Drivers, lived in our section of Canning Highway. I suppose the close proximity of the Tram Depot, on the other side of the river, and the fact that trams ran along Canning Highway, made it easy for them, to get to and from work. All they had to do, was hop on, or off, a passing tram

I seem to recall that most of the major road outlets, from the city, supported a Tram Service. One such service went out on the western side, along Hay St to serve Subiaco and nearby districts. In doing that, it passed by, Princess Margaret Children's hospital. And that was the only possible way, that my mother could visit me,

during my early sojourn in hospital. Other Tram routes used William St and Beaufort streets. The William Street trams, served North Perth, and Mt. Hawthorn. And Beaufort street, the Inglewood district, and suburbs to the north of Perth. Although I am not certain, I would have thought that a Tram line, also ran along Mounts Bay Road, and up Stirling Highway. To serve the Nedlands and Claremont area. This line would have provided public transport, for passengers, bound for the Crawley Bay Swimming Baths, and or the University. Though I can only vaguely recall, that those swimming "Baths" were there. Poking out into the Swan River, from the Crawley Foreshore, at the southern end of Kings Park. I seem to have clear mental pictures, of the jetties and buildings, that were there. Why I remember this, I do not have a clue, except to say it might have been, because of an early school excursion. Or maybe we went there for school swimming lessons. But whatever the case, that establishment stays half hidden, well down in my memory banks. Those "Baths" were later removed, well before I got to know a lot about that area. There is now a figure on a spit post, in the river, that marks the spot where they were.

In years to come, as I approached my teenage years, Trolley Busses replaced some of the Trams, on some of the Western routes out of the city. Those Buses, driven by electric motors, utilized the same overhead electric wires, as their counterparts, the Trams. However the old tram cars, remained the only public transport, for us, for some time to come, on the southern side of the river. However gradually the omnibus, began to service suburbs all around Perth, that were not served by any Tramcar Service. Eventually, the more manoeuvrable omnibus, superseded the Tram, as they did not require rails to run on, or need special overhead electrical wiring. Which meant, that they were not affected by any failure, of power supplies. So could operate independently of it!

As my maternal grandparents, had been forced, by those river floods, to move to new homes in Rivervale. When we chose to visit them, we had to walk to the Causeway, and catch an omnibus, whose route took it along the Great Eastern Highway (formerly Ascot Rd) towards Midland. Other suburbs also became likewise served by motorised buses. There were, from memory, three main bus companies that operated in Perth that I can recall. Although deep down in the memory banks, I seem to recall at least one other. The North Beach Company, which served the northern beach side suburbs. But the main three were, the Scarborough Beach Bus Company, who had articulated vehicles, in their fleet, and served some western suburbs. Kosteria's Kalamunda Bus Company, who catered for people, living in the hills of the Kalamunda, Lesmurdie area. And the Beam Bus Company who catered for the population, along the Great Eastern Highway out to Midland and Bellvue. Therefore the Beam Buses also served the suburbs of Rivervale, Belmont Redcliffe, and Guildford. But until the M.T.T came into being, we could still mainly only travel into Perth by Tram. The Scarborough Bus Co, operated from ranks in Murray St, while the Beam buses to Midland, and Kosteria's, Kalamunda services, to Kalamunda and the Foothills, operated from ranks in St George's Terrace. near Government House. But as I said, we had to walk down to a Shepparton Rd. bus stop, at the Causeway, if we wanted to catch a bus to Rivervale.

In that day and age, with the majority of the population, dependant on public transport, one's world could become clearly defined. For example! Living near the river, my immediate world, was mainly bordered, by the rising land of Victoria Park, in the East. Dominated by the Swan Cement, and Hardie's Fibrolite factories, with the Red Castle Brewery, to one side, on the northern skyline. The shore line of Mill Point, in the South, and Perth City, and King's Park, in the West. An area which duly represented my world, up to my pre teenage years. But those boundaries, did not restrict me in any way. I was always well aware of my surroundings, and roamed through them accordingly. These days, those two factories, and the Brewery, are no longer there, and the Burswood Casino, is what dominates that northern skyline today. I have distinct recollections of, that area of river front, where that Casino now stands, being a rubbish dump, in my later years. And I often wonder, if the people, who now live in the housing, that graces the site, of those two factories, are aware, that one created Asbestos products, and was also the location for a dump, of its waste material.

Outside of school hours, there was always plenty to occupy a small boy. (And we did not have Computers, T. V, mobile phones, and or X Boxes.) There was always the river, and the collection of bottles, to sell to Marine dealers for pocket money. By today's standards, rewards were not spectacular, but values were a hell of a lot different then.

The river gave rise to many of my childhood activities, a great deal of my spare time was spent there. Doing the things, that most small boys of the times did. Alternately on Saturday afternoon, there were matinee picture shows, at the local theatres, which mainly catered for kids. Either at the Hurlingham Theatre, in Canning Highway, South Perth, or the Broadway theatre, in Albany Highway, Victoria Park. I do not know if the "Savoy" theatre ever did.

That was not to say, that I was not unaware, of what the western end of Victoria Park contained, other than the Broadway Picture theatre. I knew that in Leonard St there was, and still is, an Anglican church known as St Peter's. My parents were married in that Church. The priest at that time, was a Reverend Ralph Thomas. They had their reception, in the then Victoria Park Town Hall. Which was just off the corner of Rushton St, on the northern side of Albany Highway. I have vague recollections of other events being held in that hall. Some, I seem to remember, were associated with the nearby Primary School. Yet others were Christmas Parties, for the children of the staff, of Boan's East Perth Furniture Factory, where my father worked. These being organised by the factory's Social Club. Although the entrance to that hall was in Albany Highway, there was an emergency exit, into nearby Rushton St. In the street verge, adjacent to that exit, I have memories, of a very large Norfolk Island Pine tree, that grew there.

Opposite the Victoria Park Primary school, slightly to the west, on the corner of Twickenham Rd, there was an early car dealership, run by a chap called Oliver W. Strang. Naturally enough, it was known as Strang Motors. I have distinct memories, of an olive painted building, on that north western corner of Twickenham Rd., carrying the name of Strang in yellow lettering. That name always stuck with me, because of its similarity, to the word "Strange". I could always imagine it, being referred to as the "Strange Motors". Slightly to the west of Strang Motors, was Mead and Son's Funeral parlour. And further up Albany Highway, on the same side of the road, on the corner of Harvey St, was a business that dealt in Canvass goods. Almost opposite that on the western corner of Mackie St was Ray Read's Chemist shop

My father at that time was also a keen Lawn Bowler, and was a member of the Victoria Park Club, which in that era, had their "Greens" on the corner of Shepparton Rd and Rushton St. I believe that is or has been, now a Croquet Club. Further up Albany Highway on the corner of Harper St. opposite the Broadway theatre, was the Broken Hill Hotel. That was one of the first Hotels, that I knew existed in Vic Park. I later became aware, that further up the highway, there was the Victoria Park (Other wise known as the State St,) and the Balmoral hotels. The Balmoral likewise, was on one corner of Balmoral St, and Albany Highway.

On the eastern corner of Leonard St, was the Victoria Park Fire Station, and on the western corner was Clark's Clothing store. The Victoria Park Post office, resided on the corner of Duncan St, with the police station a few doors further east. I also seem to recall my father, as being a member of a lodge of sorts. In the memory banks, the word Rechabites floats, through my mind, with regard to that. This could explain why he never ever indulged in strong liquor. And I do know, that the Mason's organisation, had their Masonic hall, on the corner of Temple St. Probably why that street, was called that. At one time, I believe my parents shared a house in Temple St, with my mother's, sister's family. Further up Albany Highway again, opposite Mint St was the East Victoria Park Primary School. On a corner of Mint St, was the Savoy, the "Park's", second picture theatre. Just east of the Savoy, was the Victoria Park Ice works, and opposite that, the East Victoria Park Post office, on corner of Canterbury Tce.

Again from the dim dark recesses of my memory banks, are vague recollections of a Produce Store, located in the vicinity of Armagh St, down near the Causeway. I was aware of this, because a neighbour of ours raised chickens, and he used to buy his chook food there. I seem to recall the proprietor of that establishment, was a Ned Harold, and it was more in Armagh St, than Albany Highway. I also recall a Fish and Chip shop that was down that way too! Most likely to have been on the corner of Oswald St. or nearby. In a triangle of land, between Albany Highway and Shepparton Rd., opposite those establishments, was a display of Brisbane and Wunderlich's Terracotta products, which incorporated a replica Dutch Windmill and a wishing well. That piece of land is now called Asquith Reserve. It takes its name from the street, that run along its eastern perimeter.

Also from those dim dark recesses, the name Mellancelli, or something similar, seems to have connections with two other memories. One, with the aforementioned Fish and Chip shop, and the other with members of its

family being involved in playing Baseball, for a Victoria Pak team, at Raphael Park, in the 1940's. From memory, that was played on the portion of the Park, that was also used by a Rugby Club. Adjacent to that Bunya Pine, I spoke of earlier.

My early schooling was done, in the Victoria Park State School, on the corner of Albany Highway and Cargill St. Considering that my early schooling would have begun, at around age five. I seem to remember, that I usually walked both ways to school on my own, from our home, in Canning Highway. I walked across Raphael Park, and entered the school, through a back gate in Geddes St. In those days it was the most normal thing to do. No such thing as school buses. Shanks pony, was the only form of transport, to and from school, those days. There were never any thoughts of "Stranger Danger" then either! I would have been in the fourth or fifth Grade at least, when in 1951, for circumstances beyond their control, my family had to move to South Guildford.

The subsequent move to South Guildford, for the next few years, virtually ended, my own personal connection with the "Park". However there were still members of both my families, living in the "Park", which bound me to it! My paternal grandparents still lived at the Canning Highway address, and I had two maternal aunts, who also lived in the "Park" or its environs. One in Moorgate St., behind the then East Victoria Park Primary School, and the other in Memorial Ave Carlisle. A third maternal aunt and uncle, subsequently owned a house, in Nottingham St. East Victoria Park. Quite close to the Collier Pine Plantation in Jarrah Rd.. A house, where in 2005/6 they both ended their days. One significant fact about that, was that at one time, the fast bowler of Cricketing fame, Dennis Lillee, lived right next door to them.

My father subsequently built our own house, in Wynyard St Belmont, and the family moved from South Guildford to there, in 1955. This brought me back closer to the river, and the "Park". As well as, to two male cousins of my own age, who lived in Rivervale. I spent a lot of time, during my weekends, hanging out with them. In doing so, I learned that Burswood Island, had never truly been an Island. But had been created, by a canal, that was cut through a large bend, in the river's eastern shore. Possibly to reduce effects of river flooding, on the Goodwood and Belmont Racecourses, as well as the sewerage treatment plant, that was there.

That canal may have also been used to transport Oyster shell, to the Cement works. At that time, the canal, ran from Goodwood Pde, in Rivervale, south to the other side of that river bend, to slightly just upriver, from where the Casino now stands. At the northern end of that canal, there was a small road bridge, that carried Goodwood Pde, over it. And like wise there was a small rail bridge, for the adjacent railway line. Goodwood Pde was the only access to the Goodwood and Belmont racecourses. But like the canal, those two bridges no longer exist. But simply remain, like the rest of that area, as memories in my past!

In those teenage years, I can also recall at least two old, derelict, wooden barges, that lay alongside the river bank, near the northern end of that canal. I can only assume that these barges, were what were used, to transport the shell, from the waters round Heirisson Island, to the cement works. Maybe, via that same canal, but at least by the river.

Just upriver from where those old barges lay, was a rough sort of slipway, that could have been used, when unloading the shell. This is only supposition, though it seems to fit the scenario. The land to the west of that canal, as I said, had apparently once been home to a sewerage treatment plant, and the Goodwood Race Course, which also no longer exists. But, though signs of the sewerage plant did remain at that time, the site of the Racecourse, had largely become a rubbish dump. And there was no real indication of its existence, other than a wide open space, with a circular track around it. Waste coal cinders, from the coal fired, East Perth Power Station were, being dumped, on the extreme north western side of that area, from a spur line of the railway, which crossed the river at that point. I have many memories of our escapades, in and around, that whole area as a teenager.

There was also a foot bridge, on the northern side that Rail Bridge, that crossed the river there too. What purpose it served, I haven't got a clue, except as maybe a pedestrian access from East Perth, to the Belmont, and or Goodwood Racecourses. However on fine days, I often made use of that footbridge, on my push bike. It was basically a short cut, from Belmont, to the P.M.G's (Telecom's) Training School, in Lord St East Perth, where I did my training, as a Telephone Technician. But it also, no longer exists. A road bridge, that carries the Polly

Farmer Freeway into Perth, now passes over exact spot, where it was located. In those days, as I have said previously, Goodwood Pde was initially, the only access to the Belmont Racecourse. But the Polly Farmer freeway has now cut that access off, and the Racecourse is now reached, direct from the Great Eastern Highway, via Victoria Park Dve, on the southern side of the railway.

In fact that whole area, which in my teenage days was virtually waste land, is now developed, with a Stadium, Golf Course, State Tennis Centre, Cafes, Restaurants and the Casino etc. It has come a long way in those six decades! And now has another footbridge, that connects it to East Perth, for pedestrian access to the stadium. So the once man made Burswood "Island", has just reverted, to the bend in the river, that it originally was !

I have recollections, of a time in the late 1950's, when as a Senior Scout, in nearby Belmont, I did an all night stint, in a security detail, at one of the early McCallum Park Carnivals. The only incident of note that night, was the discovery of two lovers, caught in flagrante delicto. And the less said about that, the better.

I can also recall, that in the early 1960's, the Boy Scouts Association, held some events on the Swan River, that they called "The Swan Tiki's". These were two day events, involving basic rafts, made of wooden poles and metal oil drums, all lashed together with rope, that were sailed, and or paddled, up the river from the Causeway. One such event, I remember, started from the western shore of Heirisson Island, above the Bridges, and went all the way upriver, to Sandy Beach in Bassendean. It involved an overnight stay, in the Aeroplane Hangars of the old Maylands Aerodrome. As the Scoutmaster, of the Belmont Scout Troop at the time, I had boys who were participants in those events. That flotilla of rafts, in all shapes and sizes, on the waters just beyond Heirisson Island, at the start of those events, were really a sight to see.

I married in early 1961, and our first child, a son, was born later that year. He was born, in the private maternity hospital called St. Ives, which was in Hubert, East Victoria Park, but now no longer exists. That hospital was sold a year or two later, demolished, and replaced with a high rise development.

That was the end of an era for Victoria Park families. Even now, it would not be hard, to find someone, who had either been born at "St Ives", or knew about it. Subsequently, our two daughters, were born at St Anne's in Mt Lawley. But then again, prior to the 1940's, home births, were the accepted thing. So it is highly likely that, like my sisters before me, I was born at home, in the 58 Canning Highway house. My kid brother, who was born in 1951, was born at the King Edward Memorial Hospital.

Likewise most of the land along King George St, at the lower end of Victoria Park, which overlooks Perth Water, and the Swan River, has also undergone a similar type of high rise development. The commanding views, over the river, made that land ideal for sale, as large scale development.

Then in the late 1960's, and early 1970's, during the course of my employment, as a Telephone Technician, with what then had become Telecom Australia, I found myself working in the Victoria Park Telephone Exchange, in Teague St. During my time working in that establishment, I saw many changes. Mainly, in that Telecom, had previously embarked on a program of modernising, its automatic, telephone switching equipment. This in most cases, was a "Catch 22" situation. The new equipment had to be provided, and operational, before the old equipment, could be shut down and recovered.

This required space, that most older telephone exchanges, did not have. Victoria Park included. So to this end, the property adjacent to the Victoria Park exchange, on the corner of Axon Ave, was purchased by Telecom. A new building was then built, alongside the original Exchange, with access between the two. Victoria Park, was one of the last metropolitan exchanges, to be converted to that new mode of operation.

When the new equipment came into full working mode, I became part, by virtue of my previous experience, and training, a junior member of the exchanges Supervisory staff. My experience dated, from being on the staff at the Ascot Exchange, in Belmont, when it was converted in the early 1960's. I went on, to spent the best part of ten years, on the staff of the Victoria Park exchange, before being transferred elsewhere.

Additionally I still have some contact with Victoria Park business people. Right from about the 1970's, I have been a volunteer worker, on a used postage stamp Project, run by the Rotary Club of Victoria Park. This was through the auspices of Vin and Netta Nairn, who at that time, were once the proprietors, of the Victoria Park sign writing business, called "All Signs". Vin and Netta Co-ordinated the collection, and processing of used postage stamps, for the project. My job was, and to a certain extent still is, the cutting of stamps from the waste envelopes, that were gathered from other businesses, by them. The postage stamps so accumulated, were then sold to dealers, to fund Rotary's Projects in Third world countries. Stamps though, these days are not used as freely, as in the past. So the supply has somewhat diminished.

With respect to the Albany and Canning Highways. Progress and commercialisation has all but completely changed the face of them. A large number, of the residential properties that once graced their paths, no longer exist. The land on which they reposed, was considered, far too commercially valuable, to simply just house families. Even the railway line has undergone extensive changes, to render the three local level rail crossings in the district, safer.

When the wooden Causeway bridges were replaced, with concrete structures, in the 1950's, a traffic round about, was then created at its eastern end. Mainly to cater for the three main routes into the city, from our side of the river. Great Eastern Highway from the north, Canning Highway from the south, and Albany Highway from the east.

From the Northern side, of this traffic round about, a new section of Great Eastern Highway, was constructed to, and under, the Armidale train line. This new underpass, removed the previously notorious and dangerous, level crossing, over that railway line. There were no boom gates, on rail crossings, in those days. And that crossing, being right on the crest of a hill, made the danger more acute.

The old section of Great Eastern Highway, which had then been bypassed, was renamed Burswood Rd. This effectively meant, that the historic old Red Castle Brewery, that stood on the corner of Kitchener Ave, just south of that railway line, was now in Burswood Rd. Not in Great Eastern Highway. But the Beam Bus Company still used Burswood Rd, as part of its route to Midland.

The Red Castle Brewery was another iconic building, on the northern outskirts of Victoria Park, that is worth mentioning. The whole building, was painted a dull brick red, and was somewhat like a castle. Which I suppose, was the reason for its name. At that stage, it was the only brewery, east of the Swan river. The Red Castle Brewery was taken over, by its western rival, the Swan Brewery in 1952, and ceased to produce its beer shortly after. Although that building no longer exists, its name lingers on. There is still today, a Motel immediately north of the railway line, in Great Eastern Highway, Rivervale, that bears its name.

The Swan Brewery which at that stage, was in Mounts Bay Road, just south of where the Narrows bridge is now. That Historic building, still stands there on the river bank. The Swan Brewing Company, in 1927 had previously taken over another Perth brewing company. The Emu Bitter Brewery, closer to Perth, in Mounts Bay Road on the corner of Spring Street. The Emu Bitter Brand continued to be produced, as a separate entity, until 1978. A maternal uncle, once worked for the Emu Brewery, as a painter. Probably on any signage that they needed doing. The Swan Brewing Company, subsequently moved its operations, out to the Canningvale industrial area.

In the later years an over pass at Shepparton Rd, was created, to allow traffic on the Great Eastern Highway, to have a direct access to Canning highway. The traffic Roundabout at the eastern end of the Causeway, thus became redundant, and was replaced by the overpass, and its associated slip roads.

Decades later, after my subsequent retirement in 1997. I moved to the south west town of Northcliffe. It was there, that I came in contact with two people, who became our friends. Robin Routley, who had once been a monitor, at the East Vic Park Primary school, in his younger days, and remembered that bomb trenches, were dug in the school yard, in case of air raids (?), during WW2.

The other was a lady, a few years my senior, whose family had lived in Dane St, and had had, an early romantic connection, with the future husband of a cousin, from that maternal family, who had once lived in Moorgate St. Jeanie Hutch,(Nee Arthur) did her early schooling at the East Victoria Park Primary, and often referred to my Cargill St school, as the "Bottom School", in derogatory terms. However, Jeanie's "Top" school, no longer exists, where she knew it to be. A modern shopping centre, now graces that site. Whereas my "Bottom" school still remains virtually unchanged. Which only goes to prove, that it sometimes can indeed, be a small world!! Jeanie has since gone to that great school yard in the sky !

Doing some research for this story, to clarify certain aspects of it, I came to realise, that one of my fellow P.M.G Telephone Trainees, Harold Coppock, was also initially a Victoria Park Kid, and had done a story on the Red Castle Brewery. Harold now lives in the great southern town, of Albany. When I was down there, on holiday, in 2024. I caught up with Harold, and talked of old times. Particularly about the Victoria Park Telephone Exchange.

So in all reality, even though I left the "Park" when I was barely ten years old, and have spent the greater part, of my present eighty four years, living elsewhere, I have always had, in one form or another, some sort of a connection, with the place of my birth. Victoria Park! Even if it was only just to dig worms, for my fishing bait. (Not of Late Though!) One can pack on a whole raft of memories, in eighty plus years. Over the years I have become somewhat of a poet, and a lot of my life's experiences, are reflected in that poetry! As evidenced in previous Local History competition entries. (2015 & 2023)

Aloha

Les Stevens

Memories

Memory is a wonderful thing
 Memories do such pleasure bring
 Memories which one may recall
 Can bring a smile, to one and all

Memories bring about the sighs
 Of things one saw with one's own eyes
 Memories like a place of birth
 A little east of good old Perth

A river which provided all
 For all young boys to have a ball
 Great Memories of Crabs and Fish
 That catered to a small boys wish

Memories from a distant past
 Of childhood days that did not last
 Halcyon days when he grew up
 And life did choose to fill his cup

Memories cherished, kept alive
 All stored up in a mind's archive
 Memories of a varied kind
 That often wander through his mind

When memories are brought to mind
 There is no end to what he'll find
 Things he thought he had forgotten
 Stashed away like wrapped in cotton

Memories which come flooding back
 Of days long gone, or down the track
 Memories cherished his to keep
 Of times to laugh or times to weep

Memories that were stored away
 To think about another day
 Details were written there to last
 Making their windows in his past

Decisions thus he will have made
 Is Memories may never fade
 For Memories that shine like gold
 Are things he can forever hold