

"CHANGES IN VICTORIA PARK OVER THE LAST SIXTY YEARS"

As seen by past pupil, Jacqui Brophy (nee Green)

A stroll up Albany Highway in 1994 brings back memories in abundance of years gone by, and it is my privilege and pleasure to share some of them with you.

Mr Oliver Strang's block of shops, on the corner of Twickenham Road have made way for a car wash; John Hughes used car yard on the corner of Teddington Road used to boast a medical practice, shared by Doctor G. Ashburton Thompson, who brought the writer into the world, and who went on to be an obstetrician/gynaecologist; and Doctor Hamish McMillan, who subsequently specialised in dermatology.

The school tuckshop, at that time run by Mr and Mrs David John and their daughter Doreen was opposite, near the corner of Cargill Street, a short distance from the school.

The Town Hall was on the corner of Rushton Road, and it was there that most of our school concerts were held. Mr Dick Meehan's billiard saloon and "S.P. Bookie" shop was on the other corner of this street, where there is now the inevitable pizza parlour. The chemist shop on the other side of Albany Road was, at that time, run by W. Ray Read. From the barber's shop on the opposite corner of Mackie Street, we travel past Calder's woodyard to the Library Hall, which is now an Indian Restaurant, and opposite is the Broken Hill Hotel, one of the more constant reminders of days gone by.

On the opposite corner of Harper Street was the Broadway Theatre, now a Business Building. Behind the theatre, where the Department of Social Security now has its Victoria Park Office, was an open air Picture Gardens. A little further along was the furniture store owned by Hearn Brothers and Stead. On the corner of Leonard Street and Albany Road was the Fire Station, next to which Mick Raphael had his dental surgery. A small arcade of shops occupies this corner at present, and one of the local politicians, Dr Geoff Gallop has his office at the rear, in Leonard Street.

Continuing our little journey, and crossing Albany Road once more, we find the Post Office on the corner of Duncan Street, still as I remember it in the 1930-1940 era, but the grocery store that was on the opposite corner and run by the Ashbolt family has made way for a branch store of Sands and McDougall.

Returning to the South side, between McMillan and Temple Streets, was another outdoor theatre garden, called the Amusu Gardens. Films were screened in the evenings at these gardens, and most popular with the younger generation were the Sunday night sessions, which were not allowed to be commenced until after 9pm, because of the district church services, and for which the admission charge was "a silver coin". The locals used to save their "threepenny bits" (3d or 5 cents) to pay their fare into the Gardens, otherwise they would have to spend the princely sum of sixpence, or even a shilling.

Another well-known local doctor, Doctor William Peacock, had a surgery and two storey house on the corner of Albany Road and Manchester Street, where Youngs Holden now occupies that block and more. Further up Manchester Street the Manning family had a Dairy, where the neighbours could take their jugs and billies and get milk virtually straight from the cow.

On the corner of State and Washington Streets were horse stables, and the headquarters of the 10th Light Horse Brigade. A large development of Units is now on this corner, and extends through to Tuam Street.

The Victoria Park Hotel was, and still is, on the corner of State Street and the corner of Albany Road, and the service station and garage of well-known Victoria Park identity, Mr Cliff Style, was on the corner of Sussex Street and Albany Road, and was demolished to make way for office buildings, occupied at some stage by A.G.C., but now a Video Store.

From the opposite corner of Sussex Street to the corner of Basinghall Street was the land occupied by the East Victoria Park, or "top" school, with the exception of another Doctor's practice, Dr Thomas ("Tommy") Meagher, who was, at one time, the Lord Mayor of Perth; and a small shop and Post Office Agency right on the corner of Basinghall Street, run by Alf Menzies and his family. Although there is still a Doctor's practice, a dental surgery and a chemist occupying part of this land, and the Westpac bank and offices where the little shop used to be, the school was demolished to make way for the "Park Centre" shopping centre, which was opened in 1977.

On the other side of Albany Road, Miss Effie Maloney, whose brother, Cyril, had a haberdashery and drapery store not far from the "bottom" school, had a ladies dress shop.

Our nostalgic trip along Albany Road and environs concludes with the Savoy Theatre, which was opposite Basinghall Street, on the corner of Mint Street, where there are now several shops, including Archie Martin-Vox and Marlows. The writer worked in the evenings in the ticket box at the theatre for some years, while her husband cared for their young family. The Hon. Kim Beasley, member of Federal Parliament, has his office a short distance along Mint Street from these shops.

I wonder if it is significant that the most constant and enduring reminders of these past sixty years are the Hotels and Funeral Directors..... All the "pubs" I remember walking past as a young girl are still there, and the names of Mead and Purslowe have had exclusivity in their profession for as long as I can remember, although my older sisters tell me that, at one time, a Mr Gibb formed part of the firm of "Mead, Son and Gibb".

Without giving the subject much thought, one might be inclined to say that nothing much has changed in Victoria Park to East Victoria Park area, but, on reflection, it would have to be said that the changes have been numerous and varied.

Footnote: Another twenty years have gone by, and I could probably safely say that the changes have again been numerous, but that is not my "stamping ground" any more, and I have lost touch, so, at 88, I will leave it to others to enumerate on these, and bring the history up to date.

Cheers, and good luck,

Jacqui Brophy.