Greensborough at Intervals

A brief outline of the history of Greensborough

1835 to 1935

By D. Medhurst – Annie May’s father

Faye’s Great Grandfather

The old order changeth,

yielding place to new.

 Tennyson

June 6th 1835

Greensborough

The Forest primeval

Batman’s Treaty.

As a matter of historic interest, Greensborough, in relation to the founding of Melbourne, can lay claim to precedence.

About twenty four hours prior to John Batman selection the future sight of the Metropolis, the famous phrase, this would be the place for a village, there was enacted on the banks of the “Plenty River” adjacent to the present ruins of the old flour mill, a transaction in real estate that for romance and magnitude has no parable in history. All records agree that Batman was a man of strict integrity, an accomplished bushman with a practical knowledge of direction, distance acquired by a long official experience in Tasmania where his knowledge of such conditions were utilized by the Government, to trace and capture outlaws, and also to act as supervisor and protector of the aborigines.

A careful perusal of his journal, (Melbourne Public Library) detailing his journey in search of natives to sign the Treaty, will show that his account relative to time, direction and distances

clearly point to the bank of the Plenty River about five miles north west of the present township of Greensborough, as the scene of the transaction, when for about Two hundred pounds (£200) worth of tomahawks, knives, hand mirrors, blankets etc, (These or similar gifts to be received annually) an area of Six hundred thousand (600,000) acres, extending from where a huge tree was blazed as a starting point, is the present site of Geelong, was exchanged by a number of reputed Aboriginal Chiefs. In passing, on this area are about a dozen Cities including the Metropolis, the very spot where the treaty was signed forming a portion of the Greensboro Ward, of the newly proclaimed City of Heidelberg, and as a sidelight on the wonderful development of Melbourne, inch frontage of a building block in any of the principal streets is equal in value to the goods exchanged for the whole 600,000 acres.

The story of this enterprise promoted by a Tasmanian Syndicate, from it’s inception to it’s consummation, observed on the banks of what Batman in his journal describes as a beautiful stream, which the “Plenty” undoubtedly was before it’s head waters were diverted to supply the Yan Yean Reservoir, is a fascinating study.

In support of the opinion that the Plenty River was

the scene of this romantic traffic in real estate, the late Gaplio Turner in a paper ready before the Victorian Historical Society (Melbourne Public Library) states, that with Batman’s journal as a guide, he personally traversed the route described therein and was convinced that on the night of the 5th Batman and his party camped at what is now known as, Plenty River. From this point the journal continues, as they camped for the night they noticed the smoke from a native campfire in the east. In the morning they made for that spot, and discovered a solitary native and his family, small gifts were made and the native offered to guide them to the main camp.

Then follows the account of travelling some distance in an easterly direction, and the arrival at the bank of a beautiful stream, and the detail concerning their reception and the ceremony of signing the Treaty.

The detailed account of the return journey is distinctly and convincingly corroborative.

The journal states now that after leaving the camp we travelled in a south westerly direction, We crossed to creeks (The first would be the Darebin, presumably near the present Plenty Road and the other the Merri, in the vicinity of B quarries) The journal continues, We now crossed

a beautiful Park like country, which “Sutherland”, early Victorian historian, says was undoubtedly “East Brunswick”. We now crossed some undulated country “Royal Park & North Melbourne”, when we reached a swamp, (West Melbourne) and shot some quail, we had travelled about twelve miles.

If a rule is laid across a scale map, and we be found, that this estimate of distance travelled is approximately correct, further it is alleged the Treaty had been signed on the bank of the Merri Creek as though about opposite the present site of the Old Colonist Homes, where are the two creeks the journal says they crossed? Whilst the distance to the would be about half, and in a westerly direction.

It may be considered not worth while, but it would be more satisfactory if a committee of inquiry investigated and endeavoured to authoritatively and definitely cleared up this at present only conjectural opinion.

The Pioneers

The availability of fresh water has always been a dominant factor in the choice of a new settlement. Williamstown, adjacent to Batman’s final anchorage might probably have been the site of the Metropolis but the lack of fresh water, and on the memorable

7th of June 1835 when after rowing some miles up the newly discovered river “Yarra” (a tidal river) they found fresh water on the other side of the Falls (since demolished) opposite the present Customs House. Batman states in his journal that whilst the men were filling the barrels, he went ashore and after strolling about remarked, “This would be the place for a village” some months after “J P Fawkner” as a result of information gained, made for this identical spot undoubtedly influenced by the proximity of abundant fresh water, and founded a village destined to become what is claimed to be the queen City of the South. The question as to who founded the city, is easy determined, “Batman” selected the site, but undoubtedly “Fawkner” founded the settlement.

“Anthony Beale” 1st Pioneer

Less than four years later in 1839 “ Major Anthony Beale” formerly an official in charge of Napoleon, a prisoner at St Helena records in his diary that after consulting “Fawkner” he decided on a block of land near the Plenty River. In passing, the fact of the Plenty River being well known in the infant settlement

of Melbourne, points to the conclusion that “Batman” had made it’s existence known and is a corroboration that the Treaty was signed there.

‘Beale’ after inspection, and attracted by the rich black soil, and the adjacent abundant water supply decided to settle there and in memory of past associations named the area, ‘St Helena’. In these days of electric railways and ‘rapid’ motor transport that practically of at least comparatively annihilates distance, it is hard to realize the isolation and loneliness of the locality at that period, and many have been puzzled at the choice, particularly as at that time land was available nearer the township of Melbourne, however to this day 96 years after St Helena notwithstanding the transition, from a bullock dray trek and solitude, to the latest in bitumen roads and adjacent industrial and business activity, still retains it’s peaceful rural character, with opportunities prospect of industrial development. Yet this spot will always be a link with the past and the joy of the “Antiquarian”. The original residence built of imported weatherboards, with it’s chimneys of locally hand made bricks is still in “good repair”. The quaint diminutive Church also built from bricks made

in the vicinity, and originally designed for private worship, is a complete replica of hundreds of Village Anglican churches throughout England, the builder was dedicated to his wife, and known as Rose Chapel. Within there is a tablet recording the death by drowning of a son, Onesiphorus Beale. The Church was later handed over by deed of gift to the Anglican authorities. The transfer costing the Mrs Beale £40 in law expenses and has since been regularly used for public divine worship, and renamed “St Katherine”. Another thing of unfailing interest, and possibly at the present day the only example of in Victoria, is a small graveyard on the Church premises. Originally intended for family internment only it was later opened for public burial, therein be the remains of G S Wingrove who for 46 years was Secretary to the Eltham Shire Council, also Walter Withers, noted artist and Graham Webster whose tablet records him as the last of an unbroken line of 700 years. St Helena is also of special interest to the Geologist, on Lannons Hill adjacent to the Church and homestead is a deep deposit of sand indicating an upheaval of the sea bed in the remote past.

The existence of the fairly accessible fertile and well watered locality soon became known to new arrivals at the young settlement on the banks of the Yarra, and within a few months, the Beales had neighbours. By careful sifting of data to hand we are able to place the newcomers in approximately chronological order.

A little later following Beale’s Settlement in 1837 Mrs Flintoff senior purchased land also north of the river, know to this day as the Black Hills, the old residence second in the district was recently destroyed by fires, Meager & son were the next arrivals late in 1839 and settled on the north side if the river and named their estate Willis Vale, the old picturesque two storied residence, was built of hand made bricks from a clay hole in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The interior walls and ceilings were lathe and plaster, and most of the interior fittings, including large cedar bookcases and marble mantle pieces were imported and bought from the ships in bullocks drays, the usual method of transport in those days, the large wrought iron kitchen oven and boiler in the detached kitchen is still in use, after 96 years constant service.

The old Orchard reputedly the first planed in Victoria for marketing purposed, was planted almost

The oven and Boiler was made in and imported from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Of note one of the early settlers was one Robert Whatmough. Whatmough had been a member of the Charteris Movement in England – a body of men who battled and fought for better conditions for the middle class and working people. The Charteris Movement was instrumental in obtaining a vote for the general public at a later date.

In 1842 the rich men of England who at that time controlled the country uprose against Charteris and his lieutenants and scattered them to various parts of the country. Charteris himself went to Spain but later returned to England and started his movement afresh. At the time Whatmough came to Melbourne and settle in a hut at the corner of Spencer and Flinders St. This was in 1841. He obtained employment as a lamplighter – the 1st Melbourne had. (Kerosene) He lit the kerosene lamps in Bourke St and Collins St then did roads and footpaths. A point worthy of recording is that numerous blacks roamed Melbourne at this time. They were very much opposed to the lamplighters and they would dig large holes in footpaths and roads, cover them with bark, leaves and dirt trying to trap the lamplighters (Whatmough’s family were very proud that he was never caught in one of these traps.

In 1843 Whatmough came to Greensborough and settles on the south side of the Plenty River in the vicinity of the present township. The property is a present occupied by Alan Partington and family, a descendant of Whatmough.

Immediately at least 95 year ago and the old tree left still yield a large amount of fruit.

This old property was later occupied by Robert Whatmough, another old identity, who after a short period settled higher up on the opposite side of the river, then some 80 years ago the late Charles Partington senior, who had been \_\_\_\_\_\_ of the Toll gate, on what is still know as Toll Hill purchased “Willis Vale”. At his death his youngest son “W J Partington” purchased the estate from the Executors which is now know as the “Willis Vale Studd Jersey Farm”, this estate is an interesting link in early Victorian history.

Mr Usher now appears on the scene as one of the earliest pioneers, and settle on the west side of the bend, on the river, now occupied by “Middleton Brothers”. Usher erected a stone wall, partly enclosing the property. This wall was s constant source of interest to the local boys of that period, all various angles in the wall, buildings know as “Lean twos” that served the purpose of sleep outs, a bake house, tool sheds, Smithy etc. It was nicknamed the stockade and the home the “Castle”. A portion of the old wall is still in existence. A transaction of far reaching importance was pending, in the early portion of 1841 Mr E B Green

Purchased a section of land from the N.S.W government and the present sites of all the recognized township of Greensborough, the name being derived from the original owner.

The boundary was roughly from a point at the river opposite Grimshaw St, along that street to Blacks Corner then top of Toll Hill, \_\_\_\_\_ along the present lane, to the Plenty river to the starting point, after the subdivision into 1.2 – 1.8 acre blocks, most of it was quickly sold and materially promoted settlement. At the time of the purchase of this property from NSW Government all the country south of the river was virgin bush, between and dividing Greensborough from the section opposite was a Government road, (A bullock dray road), which subsequently became Grimshaw Street, starting from the Plenty Road right down to a ford a the river and according to old identities continuing right on to Kangaroo Ground.

When Green subdivided the estate, then a virgin forest and now known as Greensboro what is now known as the main road to a ford at the river and subsequently continued on to Diamond Creek, Flintoff, Church and James St also from Grimshaw St to the river, William, Edward St were also on the plan and another 33 feet lane at the extreme western boundary from

what is now known as Blacks corner, to the northern lines, the cross streets were Eliza, now Hales St and Carter Street (Para Road). Mr Green also recognized his responsibility re Grimshaw St, by giving his share 33 feet from the main road, Jessop’s corner to its junction with Carter St near the river , all these streets were under the control of the old road trust and were subsequently taken over and administered by the Heidelberg Shire (now City) Council the 80 feet at eastern end of Grimshaw St included.

In the meantime Mr C Buck had settled on the river above, “Willis Vale” which in common with properties extended east to St Helena road, the road to Diamond Creek, was subsequently cut through those properties about 1860, also bridges constructed.

Five other old identities may be mentioned here Messrs.’ Todd and Booth, who each rented and farmed portion of Flintoff’s property, Whatmough previously mentioned also rented a portion and planted what later for many years, was locally known as “Bosch’s Orchard”. In connection with this orchard there is a legend that will die very hard, to the effect that an apple tree on this orchard, noted of it’s size and production was planted by ‘Batman’ and was the first tree planted in

Victoria. The fallacy of this idea is proved by the facts that prior to these times, the orchard was planted by Whatmough, many of the early settlers in Melbourne had imported fruit trees from Tasmania which were planted on township blocks and flourished where now are huge buildings and suites of offices.

It is certainly on record that about 1836 a J Batman personally escorted Mr Gellibrand, and one or two others of the old syndicate and promoters of the famous treaty to the river. It is said that Mr Gellibrand on that occasion gave the name of Plenty to the river, to show them the starting point of the area thought to be secured by the treaty, which as a matter of history was never acknowledged by the N.S.W. Government, but there is a record of a tree being carried by the party and planted at a spot 2 miles away. Moreover the orchard wherein this tree was planted, and which by the way is still bearing fruit, was set out at a later date than Maugers of “Willis Vale”, so the old story of the tree the fruit of which was named (Whatmough’s Fancy) is affable.

Owning to “Green’s” subdivision and the possibility of getting small blocks, settlement was rapidly increasing in fact so many settled here within a short period, that it is almost impossible

To give exact precedence, it being in most cases merely a question of days, weeks or it may be in some instances a few months. James Chapman lived in a bark hut, where the late J S White’s house now stands. Chapman has a lasting memorial having built what is locally known as Marble Hall, this brick building of two stories was a prominent landmark, and was regarded as the last thing in architecture and building enterprise.

Originally built of a Public house it has had many vicissitudes by way of service, being in turn Public house, General Store and Post Office, Butcher’s Shop with slaughterhouse at the rear, Lodge Rooms, Boarding House, Concert Hall etc. etc.

Change and decay applies to al things material, and from being the pride of the Village it is eclipsed by many far more imposing buildings and now serves the purpose of a second hand shop or as the more artistic describe it an “Antique Shop” where it will eventually serve the purpose of that apparently necessary adjunct to civilization \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ a pawn shop remains to be seen. Mr Grimshaw from whom Grimshaw St derived it’s name, may be mentioned here also

Mr Butters who lived in the farm, now occupied by Mr Eric Whittingham, this property at that time about 1843, extended east and formed “Beale’s” at St Helena. Butters Son, “Michael” had a craze for gold prospecting, when only 14 years of age, he walked to the Bendigo diggings, and in 1852, he obtained from a claim 33 bags of gold. He also mined at Diamond Creek for nine years and later as a bullock driver, he received up to £155 per ton for carting flour to the Bendigo diggings. Garthwaite, another old identity, also a bullock waggoner, in the early fifties, carted Greensborough grown potatoes and onions at £90 a ton cartage rates also to Bendigo. It can be left to the imagination to estimate the price realized. It is said that onions particularly were almost worth their weight in gold on the gold fields.

Stirring tales were current about their journeys across the virgin forests, it is related that bullock drays were bogged for weeks whilst crossing the Black Forest, the return journey, with hundreds of pounds in cash from the sale of produce, was also a nerve racking time, with bushrangers on the prowl in every direction.

Mr Jonah Britnell now settled on the property later knows as Bill Poulter’s, and in those early

days soon realized quite a small fortune paid and vegetable growing, and general farming. At that period compared with today, almost fabulous prices were realized in the old “Paddy’s Market” for garden produce, normally up to £2-10 per cart for potatoes, and £3-10 per cart for onions, other vegetables and fruit in proportion.

After Mr Britnell’s retirement his son W C Britnell carried on for several years and then it was purchased b the late William Poulter. This land is considered to be one of the most fertile spots in the district, and after some 90 years continues cropping and yielding good returns under the present ownership of Mr Bruce Pope. Mark Ewart occupied what is locally knows as the log paddock, which extended right across the Plenty Road. McLaughlin Snr had settled higher up the river on a large area contiguous to Dry Creek. This farm was occupied by descendants of the family until recently when the property was sold. At this period in the early fifties, encouraged by the high prices ruling for farm orchard and garden produce, many of the blocks in Green’s subdivision has been sold and put under cultivation and Greensborough was on the map.

Those were the days of horse and bullock transport and the blacksmith, wheelwright and harness maker flourished.

W Lodge established his Smithy on the site now occupied by Thomasetti’s bakery, where it functioned under successive ownerships of over 80 years. A few years ago the smithy was moved to it’s present site in “Hailes St” now conducted by Mr Westlake. Several other old identifies may be mentioned here, Granny Chapman noted for her physical strength lived in a bark hut close to the Church, her water supply consisted of a huge wooden barrel and water from the downpipe of the Church. Mr J Jolly at first lived in a slab hut on a rise known to this day as Jolly’s Hill. He had the credit of planting a “Sweet Briar” hedge round his property, thus introducing the sweet briar to the district incidentally later to become a certified noxious weed. It is said that in those primitive days there was intense rivalry to secure plants and any plant found in a paddock was eagerly taken home for transplantation.

James Burrows had a small farm on what was named Wesley hill, at the top of Edward St.

Charles Partington Snr was lessor of the Toll Gate half way up Toll Hill and lived in a cottage adjacent, a large oak tree still marks the spot.

Henry Mitchell with his mother and W Poulter Snr moved over from Lower Plenty (Mrs Mitchell’s husband had been shot by bushrangers) with families and household effects on bullock drays across “Montmorency”, then a forest , fording the Plenty below the present Railway Bridge. Mitchel settled in Eliza Street, and Poulter on a block opposite the present Greensborough Railway Station, the present site and yard was formerly part of the property.

Several names occur here of families of German nationality, who had settled at and about St Helena. Shultze, Wisner, Roy, Gritchner, Schuster, Grindle, Rufus and others.

H Splatt built on land at corner of Grimshaw St and Lovers lane, for many years. Later this property was occupied by the late Mr & Mrs Gideon Poulter.

About this time another old identity Mr F Gordon settled at the top of Eliza Street (now Hales St).

Religion and Education

At this juncture we would like to note that from the outset of settlement, the religious needs of the community were amply catered for, prior to building the Church at St Helena, Mr Beale as soon as he settled in 1839 promptly

began holding divine service and Sunday School every Sunday in the ‘barn’ which as time went on was freely attended by new arrivals of the Anglican fraternity.

Mr Mauger a staunch “Wesleyan” in 1846, also held Diving service and Sunday School in the barn at “Willis Vale”, which right to this day is a stronghold of Methodism. As population increased larger and more central premises was required and in the middle fifties the Wesleyans built a small wooden Church in Eliza St opposite the Cemetery. The preaching appointments being supplied by the then young combined Circuits of Preston and Heidelberg, years later in the 70’s when the present Methodist Church was build of brick, hand made in the vicinity the old building was purchased by Mr Britnell, (who had given the land it was build on), and is still in use as an outhouse at “Dunbar” corner of Hales and Church Streets.

At this time two Wesleyan local preachers, Messrs Cantrill and Phillips, frequently came from town, and in order to catch non church goers, conducted service under a huge box tree on the site if the present Post Office, it is related that occasionally the rough element tries to break up the service, but both preachers were sturdy determined men and the attempt to disturb them

Never succeeded. The regular appointments were partially supplied from the Brunswick circuit. This was before the advent of motor cards, and if was the custom to meet the preachers at certain points with a horse and spring cart, designated for these occasions, “The Gospel Chariot”. Old identities will recall the tribulations of some of these journeys incidental to the state of the roads, and an occasional wet Sunday. At the top of Jolly’s Hill, about in the present site of Cr Santon’s residence, a particular Baptist Church had been erected, and was attended by a few adherents, of that select and rather austere denomination. Eventually the services were discontinued and the worshippers gradually become absorbed with the Wesleyans. The latters S.School was, with helpers, presided over by Mr Britnell Snr. About this time a series of revival services was conducted by the Rev Tuckfield resulting in a marked addition to the Church membership and the Sunday School, some 50 years ago Mr Britnell resigned and Mr Henry Mitchell was appointed Superintendent of the Sunday School which position he held for 46 consecutive years, until age and physical infirmity compelled his retirement.

In recent years the Church has been renovated

and a Vestry added, also a new commodious S. School building, the site for the Church was generously donated by Mr Green at the time of the subdivision.

The Roman Catholic authorities have to date not built a place of worship in Greensborough.

Hitherto the facilities for worship at Heidelberg, Eltham and Diamond Creek have apparently been considered sufficient, although a Roman Catholic Church has recently been established at “Montmorency” that now accommodates adherents of that faith.

It may be noted here, that recently within the precincts of the town, a huge Seminary of 500 rooms has been erected under the auspicious of the Jesuitical Fathers, an is now in occupation by over 80 Students. (Loyola College)

At the time of the subdivision, Mr Green also allotted a site for educational purposed, her in the 1845 the first day school in Greensborough was erected, built of hand made bricks from a clay hole in the vicinity. Up to this time a small day school had been conducted by a Miss Scott and her sister at her private residence in Church St. Mr T Johnson conducted the new school for many years until the State School system was established, a few of the old scholars are still connected with Greensborough and have Grandchildren attending the present building.

The Anglican authorities were given permission to use the school building for Diving services and Sunday School, the old building got into such a state of disrepair that in 19 the present Church was built and recently a S. School Hall has been added and the Anglican Authorities now hold undisputed possession of the land.

In \_\_\_\_\_ the present State School was established where for a time Mr Johnson acted as Head Teacher. Mr Tanner succeeded him followed by Mr L Amiet who held the position of Head Teacher for

Since then the Education Dept. apparently favour frequent changes, but whether this policy is of benefit to the scholars is an open question.

A few years later through the energy and foresight of the School Committee, with the late Mr Gilding as correspondent, an additional 1 acre of land was secured for a playground. Although the old building has twice been enlarged, as in evidence of the steady increase of population, notwithstanding that State Schools have been established at McLeod and Montmorency, accommodating many scholars who previously attended at Greensborough, the school is again congested necessitating hired an adjacent Hall at the present time 1935. The Parliamentary members, then

district Municipal Councilors for the Ward, the School Committee and Mother’s Club are endeavouring to induce the Education Dept. to build a new commodious and up to date School. In passing we wish to note the fine service rendered by the Mother’s Club, by strenuous efforts funds have been periodically raised to provide additional comforts for the school including the recent purchase of a first class sewing machine, for use by the girls, an also repeated supplies of sporting materials for general use.

Some Early Settlers

In return to early Settlement, Greensborough in the fifties began to attract members of the professional class. Dr Dimmick built a home in Eliza Street and practiced in the district. John & Mrs Scotland from New Zealand build and settled in Eliza Street and named the property “Mayfield”. Mr & Mrs Scotland became actively identified with civic, social and Church (Methodist) affairs, Mrs Scotland dying at the ripe old age of 95. Mr J T Smith the first resident JP in Greensborough build on the hill known as “Bonnie Doon Hill” opposite the Park. The steep hillside leading to the house was terraced and planted with Grape Vine and Geraniums, the grapes when in leaf and covered with cluster of

purple grapes, was one of the beauty spots of the district. The property was later purchased by the late W Duncan JP also a councilor for 6 years and was also licensing Magistrate and President of the Heidelberg Shire. There was now a steady influx of new arrivals, that although in a strict sense not pioneers, can yet be regarded as old identities.

George Gilding, boot maker, occupies a long shop and residence in the present site of Jennings grocery shop. For many years, when occupied by the son of George Gilding, W Gilding this spot was recognized as the local Forum, where sport, politics, in fact all subjects under the sun were discussed, the debates on the path, talking thro the long open window with the arbitrator, with uplifted hammers at his bench. “Gravenall” kept a butchers shop in Marble Hall Lodge had left Smithy opposite , Mann & Son succeeding him. J H Starling had build a residence and shop next to the Methodist Church and conducted a combined general Store, Post Office and Newspaper Agency. Mr Starling was of an inventive frame of mind and his work shop at the back was familiarly known as Germany.

Elliot Bros had opened a butchers shop on the present site of C. C. Jessop’s garage. Wiggens a

carpenter of the old school, build for permanency, lived in Hales St. He helped build the present Methodist Church, the beautiful ceiling and heavy beams were his work also some of the seats, he made still in use.

One example of his skill is a beautiful chest made from the trunk of an apple tree which had been uprooted (from Mr Whatmough’s Orchard) whilst carrying an enormous crop of fruit, by a flood, which inundated his orchard and left the tree stranded on the bank opposite Wiggen’s house. Lately I heard this truck is still treasured by descendants of the Whatmough family.

This flood has always been locally regarded as the largest flood know, it occurred at night owing to some break or defect at the Yan Yean Reservoir, many orchardists and other settlers along the river bank suffered immense loss, hundreds of fruit trees, in full bearing, were washed out whilst drowned cows, pigs, furniture and tons of cut firewood were strewn for miles along the river bank. Even this tragedy had it’s humorous sides, it is related that Mr Gilding was awakened by a neighbor, to find the water a foot deep at the bedside, the water rose so quickly that a magpie in a cage on a bench outside, soon went floating down the stream, the magpie appropriately whistling. There is no luck about house the well submerged by the bench striking the bridge.

In the meantime at the Bundoora end and along what is known as the Greensborough lane, several small farms had been established, including John Picaninny Jollys. McNamara, driver of one of Cobb & Companies couches. Shillinglaw & cooper on the corner of the Plenty road. Mr Emms had established a general store and post office and newsagency and Brown & Son, a blacksmith and wheelwright shop to cater for the heavy traffic, to and from “Yan Yean” and Whittlesea.

The Greensborough Cemetery site had been given by Mr Poulter Snr, and a Mr Aldridge was the first interned therein. A present day glance around the old cemetery will reveal the names of many old identities previously mentioned.

Two other old identities occur here. Messrs F Ely and H Passy, both lived in the township on the Main Road. They sank several shafts on what is know known as “Green Hills”.

Here they toiled for years and rumor had it they were making their “fill”, but keeping it quiet, they go enough gold to just about keep body and soul together as undoubtedly they passed away poor men.

“Distance lends Enchantment”

This applies equally to retrospect on the future. Elderly people believe that they very air was more

Invigorating in the past than now, that even flowers had more fragrance. Their Mothers were better cooks turning out nicer pies and puddings. Some say the beer was of better quality. Many affirm that “Girls” were prettier in the old days and required less aids to beauty, by way of lipstick and face powder. This may be put down to the glamour of the past but there is no doubt that the strenuous times and conditions, incidental to pioneering, brought into play qualities of resource and fortitude and that mechanical aids, appliances of the present day have rendered life easier for the present generation.

As befitting the primitive conditions of the past, the Mothers, Wives and Daughters, in common with their menfolk, were endowed with courage and physical endurance. It is related that some 80 years ago, in an urgent case, and the nearest bridge a great distance away, a nurse was carried across the river on a mans back, to attend an expectant Mother.

Another epic centers around another similar case “The Plenty being in flood” the Nurse had a rope hooked under her arms and was dragged through the swirling waters by men on the other side. This heroine was none the worse for the immersion and rough handling and cheerfully performed her duties.

Again as evidencing the grit and stamina of the Greensborough girls in the early days, it was a common occurrence for young women either along or preferably with a mate to walk up what was locally known as Melbourne Gully (at the north end of Edward St) across what is know known as McLeod, then along the Plenty Road, through the village of Northcote, into Collingwood or Fitzroy carrying baskets of eggs, butter, etc disposing of them making their purchases, and unless fortunate enough to get a ride in a returning empty wood dray, walking back home the same day. Can we image the modern young lady facing this ordeal and regarding it as eagerly looked forward to, as a pleasant break in the monotony of daily existence?

Then again the wives and daughters of the early settlers, seem to have been endowed, with stronger nerves, than the average female of today.

The vicinity of the river was the camping and hunting resorts of the Lower Plenty, “Yan Yean” and other tribes of aborigines, and tales have been handed down about uninvited guests in the shape of black fellows suddenly looking in through the open doors or windows begging for flour and particularly “baccy” a rather nerve racking experience if their men folk were away.

The Natives were always pleased to be given any

discarded clothing and one native was an old identity who occasionally appeared fully dressed in a pair of old boots, a loin cloth and an old bell topper hat.

A New Era

In the sixties population was rapidly increasing in Melbourne and the Suburbs. Nearly all the trees had been cut down and burned and firewood had to be obtained from districts further out. This opened up foresting, and important industry known as wood carting.

At first sight the term important may be considered an exaggeration, but it must be remembered that hundreds of men and horses were engaged in this work, with corresponding employment to the farmers for horse feed, Blacksmiths and Wheelwrights for shoeing, making any repairs to vehicles, the Harness maker, the boot maker for abnormal wear and tear of shoe leather with subsidiary employment in every suburb at retail wood yards. This district with it’s immense forests of box, red gum etc was one of the first to cater for the demand, and although not mentioned before, we have now to introduce one or two of the best known of the old identities of Greensborough. As the emergency invariably produces the men, when wood carting become general in the early sixties Mr G Iredale Snr took the \_\_\_\_\_ as it \_\_\_\_\_ and established what was virtually a Caravanserai, catering for both man and beast. The old Farmers Arms Hotel (now the site of

the present palatial Greensborough Hotel) was built with an enormous water trough in front (At this time as the Marble Hall opposite was a licensed Hotel, Iredale could only obtain a special license to sell beer, whilst under the sign board was inscribed, Live and Let Live to this building was attached a bake house, a butcher’s shop with slaughter house at the rear, a general store including , Books, drapery, crockery ironware etc. A blacksmiths ship, a Hay and corn store and a livery stable were part of his enterprises. Here ensued a period of business activity that by comparison tenders local business of today, lame & commonplace. Wood carters arriving at all hours from the outlying bush of Diamond Creek and it’s environs, other transport with farm and garden produce, going or returning. The daily couches and vehicles arriving with stores from Town made up a scene of noise and bustle, hardly describable. Large areas to the North and North East were being settled and cultivated, each now having it’s own business centre, such as Diamond Creek, Yarrambat, Hurstbridge etc. In those days the bulk of the traffic stopped at Greensborough enroute to the City, mostly via the Plenty Road. Also Greensborough catering for most requirements was regarded as the business centre for the district. As time went on “Iredale” could hardly

cope with the trade and at this juncture a rival business was established at the op of the hill in Church St by Mr F Ellis, the recently burned down delicensed hotel was built and became the new headquarters. Another bake house was built in fact all the lines catered for by Irelade were copied and new attractions introduced.

It had become customary for many to attend to urgent matters at home for the greater part of the day and start for town with a load of wood arriving at Greensborough after dark. To meet this practice Ellis built a large hut with beds in tiers ship fashion. A man was on duty all night in the stable and no matter at what hour the Woodcutter arrived their horses could be stabled and fed, the men have a sleep and make an early start for town usually about 4 to 5am. As a matter of course, in those days, either solid or liquid refreshments was obtainable at all hours. Both Ellis and Iredale also took contracts to supply wood and farm produce, but Ellis, who by the way was an ex mounted Constable, secured several important contracts to supply Government institutions with firewood, fruit, hay and general farm produce and gradually gained ascendancy in trade.

By many wood carting was adopted as a sideline only. There were bad seasons for fruit and other crops and the few shillings earning by wood carting was a welcome addition to

the family exchequer. In some cases quite young lads of 14 and 15 were “pressed” into the service pilot loads of wood to town, which at times became akin to slavery. Experiences are related of a glut of firewood happening at time and mere lads having to hawk their loads around the suburbs after dark getting back home more dead than alive, with about half the anticipated cash and in dread of being accused of spending some of the money. Notwithstanding those and many other drawbacks, it is well known that the job had a fascination all it’s own and that once a lad started wood carting he preferred it to any other work.

In the course of time, as railways were extended, up country mills cut firewood into 1 ft lengths and gradually in common with every district near town, local wood carting became a decayed industry, and both Ellis and Iredale closed own every branch but the Pubs. In the meantime Marble Hall had ceased to be a hotel and Iredale go the licence and named the hotel “The Farmers Arms”.

Recreations of Early Days.

In these days of Wireless, Talkies, Gramophones etc the question sometimes occurs How did the early settlers find amusement. In reply it must be remembered that life was not as complex and that tastes were simpler, gossip, the pedigrees and habits of their neighbours was a never failing topic. Political happenings or Market fluctuations

appealed to many. Dancing had it’s votaries, Cricket could be played for about 8 months in the year, there were also periodic gatherings for Athletics, Tug of war and wood chopping contests etc, that formed never ending subjects for discussion. Certain humorous happenings were perennial sources of fun. Let us here refer to one lone settler was torted for his disregard of the principle of mine and thine. One day a neighbour missed his wheelbarrow and some weeks later on paying a casual visit to the other, noticed his barrow in an open shed. There ensued nothing so crude as an accusation of theft, nothing so unneighbourly as that. Walking over to the shed the rightful owner put his hand on the barrow and remarked, “Old chap if you are not back home to tomorrow a constable will come for you”. Now whether by invitation or some other occult force the barrow was in the owners yard when he got up next morning, providing food for amused conjecture and comment for many years after. Another occurrence of a later date is laughed about to this day. The Brother of the owner of an orchard on the river bank discovered some town visitors stealing fruit one of them became insolent and was promptly thrown into the river, the funny part was this man couldn’t swim and had gone down twice, when the thrower in had to leap in to rescue the man from drowning.

There was a large room in “Marble Hall” and a small hall attached to the old Greensborough Hotel that sufficed and was

frequently used in the early days for Concerts etc, and after all amusement is only comparative and undoubtedly the old magic lantern and the simple pleasures afforded as much enjoyment as the movies and other methods of today.

Arrested Development and Nineties

During the next two decades of the eighties the township as far as business was concerned had become a veritable Sleepy Hollow. Certainly the surrounding country had been opened , Orchards and Farms were being established in all directions, with a corresponding increase of population but with the collapse of the firewood carting boom and although there was a large and increasing stream of traffic mostly to market with fruit and farm produce, provisions of all kinds were purchased in Town and brought home on the return journey, as that a small general store kept by Mr J H Starling in conjunction with the local P.O. and news agency and a small butcher’s shop kept by Mr H Elliott supplied the emergency need of the Community. Fresh bread was supplied daily by the Bakers established at Diamond Creek. P Burke & J Rose, the only public convenience, to or from town was by coach which went through to Heidelberg in the morning and returned at night. Kerosene oil lamps made a pretense of illuminating the main road through the township, the roads and footpaths were in a deplorable state, particularly in winter and every house holder was his own sanitary contractor with the back yard for a depot.

Water for drinking and household purposes had to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in underground wells and iron tanks. Almost every summer washing cloths took place at various points along the river whilst frequently drinking water, had to be obtained from the stand pipe at Black’s corner and was carted and charged for by Mr B Splatt at 1/6 per barrel.

It might be mentioned here that Druids Lodge 1870 had been established and was held at Marble Hall, whilst in 1871 the Rechabite order, which had been established in, had built the large Hall, afterwards purchased by the Masonic fraternity. Shops and a large upstairs lodge room was added and is now knows as the Masonic Hall. It is still the largest hall in Greensborough suitable for public meetings or entertainment.

Forward \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ “Railway”

It is said the most depressing part of the night is just prior to the dawn, so with communities. New men with a larger outlook were taking up residence in Greensborough and infusing new ideas for development. The first idea of importance was the agitation for an extension of the Railway from Heidelberg to Eltham. Public meetings were held in Greensborough and in response to extensive correspondence and numerous deputations to the Railway Commissioners, preliminary surveys were made and the question of route, cost, etc was considered. The Kew

Mental Asylum had become inadequate and the Government had decided to establish a larger institution at Mont Park. There was therefore no difficulty re-securing land for Railway requirements as far as the avenue, but as soon as Greensborough territory was entered, the value of land for the surveyed route soared to great heights. Protracted negotiations between property owners and the commissioners held up the project for about two years with no prospect of settlement.

At this juncture Mr Nell, the owner of Grace Park estate offered a route, through Grace park free of cost to the Railway Department, this new route was actually surveyed and found to be practicable. Greensborough then woke up to the fact that if this new route was adopted, it was inevitable that a Railway Station, in Grace Park, would become the reclusion for a new township, leaving Greensborough practically isolated. Hastily convened meetings discussed this menace to established order and land values soon conformed to the official valuation, although loud and deep was the discontent. When amid great local reforming the line was opened to Eltham in 1907, and for some time after the timetable was adjusted on very conservative lines. There was no train left Eltham early enough to enable working men to reach town in time for work but after persistent effort and a guarantee the Commissioners granted a workman’s train which immediately paid it’s way. The railway immediately had an appreciable

effect in settlement, the huge estate of Montmorency, 920 acres with one dairy farm “Britnell’s” in occupation was subdivided and practically all sold in record time. The subsequent development has been almost phenomenal. It has been divided into two districts “Briar Hill” and Montmorency and is almost self contained with three Churches, five State Schools, Post Office, Stores, Railway Station etc. from its close proximity Montmorency was until recently regarded as part and parcel of Greensborough and it’s rapid progress by way of population and establishment of public utilities, by way of roads, water supply, electric lighting etc deserves this passing notice.

Subdivision of “Run Paddocks”

Another momentous land transaction directly affecting the development of Greensborough occurred about this time via the purchase and subdivision by Dr Scelenmyer” of the large paddock known locally as the “Run”. This land was quickly sold on from 2 acre blocks upwards, which has since been again subdivided into ½ acre and building allotments promoting largely increased settlement. The new comers mostly business men of the City soon influenced new ideas and aspirations into the life of the community. The absence of a public recreation ground was soon brought under notice

“Origin of Greensborough Park”

At a public meeting, two site were submitted Twenty acres in the nearly subdivided “Run” and now known as “Laidlay Park” and thirteen acres on the Plenty River bank owned by the late J. S. White And Mr L A \_\_\_\_\_ . Those rival sites gave rise to a long heated controversy, eventually the river site was chosen and the purchase money £260 was raised by public subscriptions, entertainments etc by a Park Committee, which managed it’s affairs until taken over by the Heidelberg Council. At the outset many enthusiasts, and in this respect (Mr J H Starling and his Sons Harry & Berg merit special mention) by working bees and individual effort cleared and to a certain extent graded the ground, planted shrubs and ornamental trees, which by the way were mostly eaten by grazing cattle. Later when the Council took over the Park, many improvements were effected, including the enlargement of the arena, proper grading and the erection of a “Kiosk”, and at this particular date, efforts are being made by a joint Committee to establish an up to date swimming Pool and dressing sheds. And now the Greensborough Park, with it’s beautiful River frontage and the hill overlooking the arena, which when terraced will form a natural grandstand, capable of accommodating

Thousands of spectators, is admired by all visitors and will increasingly become an attraction and a valuable asset to the township.

Formation of Progress Society

About this time another distinctly forward movement was the formation of the original Progress Society which although perhaps not quite realized at it’s inception was destined to play a definitely important part in shaking Greensborough out of the rut of being satisfied that what was good enough for the old people, is good enough for us; and giving the lead to an ambition to develop into a go ahead community.

Just here in recognition of the persistent and consistent voluntary exercise of his time, energy and business knowledge to securing the main objections of the society and which will now be referred to on some detail, the name of Cr A H Price, a former President of the Society, should be mentioned with every mark of respect and appreciation. We now record a few of the Society’s achievements

Railway Facilities – After extensive correspondence and numerous deputations to the Railway Commissioners concessions by way of a more frequent service alterations to more convenient hours, reduced fares etc were gradually obtained.

“Water Supply” – This was only obtained after a stiff uphill fight. It took almost incredible persuasion and arguments to abandon the then underground wells and iron tanks, with their uncertain supply, that had sufficed for their Fathers in favour of a continuous, abundant supply of pure Yan Yean water and when partial victory came it was largely discounted by certain tactics, that compelled the laying down of inadequate main, sub main pipes that has since had to be replaced at considerable expense by a larger type.

“Street Lighting” – The crude primitive system of kerosene lamps, with blackened chimneys or quickly extinguished directly there was any wind was a defect that the Society’s continuous efforts, was somewhat remedied by the introduction of carbide or acetylene gas and an unsuccessful experiment with the Gloria light, these makeshifts have since been superseded by the installation of the electric lighting and power system.

Sanitation – The benighted methods of disposing of night crib in the back yard, strand to say had many adherents opposed to a change, however a few visits of Government Health Inspectors at the insistence of the Society soon affected a change to the present pan system, that by no means

Equal to the sewerage system, is the best that can be done under present circumstances.

Mitchel Road – Two fatalities at the level crossings at Grimshaw St and Watsonia led to a determined effort by the Society to obtain a new road to obliterate traffic crossing at these dangerous points. A rough survey was made to determine the practicality of continuing the main road across the newly settled Sellonmyer subdivision and through Grace Park to Watsonia, but the cost was considered prohibitive. After a deadlock had almost been reached Mr Henry Mitchell suggested at one of the meetings the possibility of securing a roadway through Witticks property, entering from Grimshaw St above the crossing and re-emerging at Watsonia. Negotiations were promptly instituted and successfully carried through – Mitchell Road was constructed by the Council. This road has been and will continue to be of incalculable benefit, as apart from the primary objection of safety it is an easier grade and quite half a mile shorter. Apart from these larger concerns the Society has been identified with securing many other minor advantages, by way of drainage, better footpaths, road and bridge repairs, increased Postal facilities and numerous other improvements that although not spectacular yet make for the common good.

Development – Within a radius of say 4 miles from Melbourne the southern half of the circle doubtless owing to early railway facilities, has had first choice of settlement. Further advance in this direction is practically precluded by the seafront. In those days of rapid motor transport the districts in the Northern half are receiving attention. In this connection Greensborough is rapidly losing its rural aspect. From being virtually a pastoral community with the products of the Orchard and farm, it’s chief distinction now, with perhaps the exception of supplying present local requirements for fruit and dairy produce and the poultry farming industry, it is rapidly becoming a strictly residential district. The area along the railway route from Heidelberg onward recently forest country and grazing paddocks is gradually being filled up with modern dwellings supplied with up to date interior fittings including fresh water and electric light. Whether manufacturing industries will ever be established in the district is a matter for conjecture but it is safe to assume that with good roads, rapid motor transport and fast electric trains our present empty spaces will be occupied.

Looking back 100 years, to the “Batman Treaty episode” and the subsequent, new development for about 80 years the substantial progress made during the past two

Decades, is by comparison encouraging and an augury of future advancement. Coming down to present day conditions Greensborough has the distinction of being as regards area, the largest ward comprising 31 square miles of the largest city in the world.

Heidelberg with it’s 2 square miles of territory, and comparing past and present Greensborough now enjoys most of the amenities and also many of the luxuries of civilization.

Apart from sewerage it may be claimed that the main essentials which constitute to both private and public comfort and convenience are available and equal to the city or suburbs.

A frequent electric train service and an abundant water supply, good roads and footpaths, electric light and power, a sanitary service, good postal facilities including delivery, an up to date Baby Health Centre. A State School with an efficient staff combined with an alert school committee and sympathetic Mother’s Club, and excellent bank (business and savings), a well established Estate Agency, an enterprising Development Co that within 7 years has speculatively purchased land and erected 80 good class residence in the district. A commodious public hall and two well equipped Motor Garages, a highly qualified M.D. and a Chemist Ship, a splendid Park and Recreation ground, and electric supply depot, a fortnightly cattle sale, two old

Established Benefit Lodges “Rechabite and Druids” also a Masonic Lodge, two Churches and Sunday Schools, Methodist and Anglican, a Blacksmith shop. Good Hotel accommodation, abundant shopping facilities, Grocer (4), Butchers (2), Bakers, Boot makers, Hay & Corn Store, Barbers, Fruiters and Greengrocer (2). An up to date Newspaper Agency combined with lending Library. A second hand establishment which the ultra refined to refer to as “An Antique Shop”.

The social life of the community is catered for by social evenings, organized by the Churches, Mother’s Club and a local branch of the Austin Hospital Auxiliary. A \_\_\_\_\_\_ Club has recently been formed etc. In the immediate township there is a well equipped Private Hospital and at this present juncture there is not an empty shop or residence in the district.

Up to date Municipal Statistics give the population of the Greensborough Ward as 2,585 and Houses 850, Valuation £33,500. Largely contributing to the comparatively recent development are the modern 1st class roads from the Metropolis and the important suburban centres via Heidelberg and Preston, through the Greensborough township to the Diamond Creek, communicating with Yan Yean, Arthurs Creek, Hursbridge, Queenstown, Kinglake etc or to Eltham on to Kangaroo Ground, Panton Hill

Christmas Hills, Yarra Glen etc while apart from local traffic are availed of by literally thousands of motorists on route to the places named.

Equal in importance to the roads are the first class bridges at St Georges Road, High St Northcote, Heidelberg Road and particularly the bridge over the Plenty River Greensborough. This bridge giving access to Diamond Creek, Eltham etc was constructed in 1860 and a footbridge was added in 1920. Therefore going has direct and particular reference to the township of Greensborough and it’s immediate environment. The long established township of Diamond Creek which as far as shopping facilities, Post Office, State School, Railway Station, Churches, Police Station etc is self contained and in conjunction with the rising settlements of Yarrambat and Plenty, from part of Greensborough Ward are of sufficient importance to merit a special history.

The Future

What the future as regards civic importance may have in store for Greensborough is in the lap of the Gods. If say 50 years back, anyone had ventured to predict that at that time insignificant villages of Northcote, Preston and Heidelberg would in turn within that period become important cities they would

have been considered very imaginative. Yet Heidelberg the last proclaimed and most rural of the three is about to erect a Town Hall and Municipal Offices to cost £50,000. It may be as one crying in the wilderness, but we venture to predict that although at present the least imported from the point of view of population, houses and valuations, the fact remains that out of the enormous area of 42 square miles comprising the city, the Greensborough Ward including the township of Greensborough, Diamond Creek and the minor settlements of Watsonia, Bundoora, Yarrambat and Plenty occupy 30 square miles approximately three fourths of the whole city area and will inevitably develop into a separate municipality. An agreement in support of this is the fact that apart from the immense size of the Greensborough Ward and recognizing that the eleven square miles covered by the Fairfield, Ivanhoe and Heidelberg Wards in in itself an out size City area there is the incontrovertible fact that the general outlook the domestic and public requirements and aspirations incidental compact communities such as those three wards named, areas very distinct and dissimilar form those of an only partially developed semirural district.

A glance at the latest published figures (1935) of the Municipality show that from every aspect Greensborough Ward renders the City economically unequal and physically unsymmetrical.

Fairfield Ward Population 8,703

 Houses 2,166

 Valuations £82,928

Ivanhoe Ward Population 10,270 Selected

 Houses 2,768 as

 Valuations £150,891 Civic Centre

Heidelberg Ward Population 4,983

 Houses 1,095

 Valuations £66,056

Total for 3 Wards Population 23,957

 Houses 6,029

 Valuations £33,599

 Area 11 square miles

Greensborough Ward Population 2,585

 Houses 850

 Valuations £33,599

 Area 31 square miles

With the immense area of 31 square miles in mind and with the personal recollections of the 11 square miles containing the other three wards and it’s transformation from virgin forest into farms, orchards and grazing

Paddocks, thence into populous portions of a city nothing seems to visionary, and there is a possibility and even a probability that in the course of time this ideal residential district may develop into two distinct municipalities with head quarters at Greensborough and Diamond Creek respectively

 D. Medhurst