Feature story

***My Greensborough***

*This wonderful story of growing up in 1920’s Greensborough*

*by Valma Simpkins (nee Poulter) is a reminder of an era*

*where life may have been a lot slower than today, but*

*certainly not easier. Valma’s delightful childhood memories*

*are sure to be familiar to those of you who grew up in similar*

*rural communities. Many thanks to Valma for sharing her*

*family story with us. Enjoy.*

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I was born in Poulter Avenue in the 1920’s and at that

time there was a mid-wife, Mary Anne Morris, who

carried out her professional duties throughout the

Diamond Valley on a push bike. After my birth, my

parents then shifted to a dwelling house on the north

side of Grimshaw Street and at the end of McDowell

Street. My grandparents’ cottage was 120 metres to the

east and on the corner of James Street and Grimshaw

Street. James Street was named after my uncle, James

Poulter who at the age of 19, was killed in France and

this is noted on his mother’s headstone in the

Greensborough Cemetery.

The area between our house and Pop’s was always

cropped and when I walked from home to Pop’s, nobody

could see me because the crop was higher than me.

I loved going across to see Gran and Pop. They would

make me feel very special. Nan would make me scones

with jam. The scones were always perfect but Nan’s jam

making was just ordinary but I dare not tell her.

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Pop would take me by the hand and walk me through

the cottage garden. He would then show me how to

smell the various flowers. Many would recall the large

oak in the centre of the front garden and the

pomegranate tree overhanging James Street.

My grandmother would lean on the front verandah

balustrade and watch another wagon coming down the

hill towards Greensborough loaded with family and

furniture. She would say, “I hope they’re not staying.

This is Poulter land”. She would point out that there

were 12 Poulter families and 28 others all related. The

female Poulter’s had married Lobb, McDowell’s

Brooks, Snow, Splatt, Godwill, Iredale, McColl,

Aldridge, Jolly, Brown, Chapman, Logan, Pettit and

others.

My mother would also walk me along to the corner store

on the southwest corner of Grimshaw Street and Henry

Street as my other grandmother had operated this store

for many years, grandmother Clayton. During my

schooling at Greensborough State School 2062, my gran

sold this shop and business to Mrs. Hunter.

In the 1920’s, Smith Street Collingwood was a popular

shopping centre for Greensborough people and second

choice, High Street, Preston.

My mother would hitch up our white horse called

Queeny to a jinker and we would go shopping to either

Collingwood or Preston. On arrival we would tie up

Queeny, give her a bucket of water and a hessian feed

bag with chaff and lucerne for her to eat while we went

shopping. On one occasion as we passed Watsonia, the

steam train gave a great blast of the whistle and Queeny

reared several times and it took mother some time to

settle Queeny down. After that incident we travelled so

as to avoid train times.

We frequently travelled by steam train and there were

times when the driver was not familiar with the area or

there was an exceptional load, the train would fail to

make the hill between Marsh’s house and Grimshaw

Street, so the train would then reverse to Greensborough

station, stoke it up and get a run up the hill.

We shifted house to Henry Street and I enjoyed my

school days at Greensborough State School 2062. The

Headmaster was Mr. Carse and the residents of Henry

Street were: Huitt, Iredale, Hutchinson, Orr, Spears,

Coles, Fullers, Jones and Webb.

Greensborough shop keepers: Joe Poulter – mixed

business and picture theatre; Harry Ryan – butcher,

apprentice Lyle Clayton; Mr Tomasetti – baker and later

Wrights; Fred Butterworth – newsagent; C. Jessop –

Estate Agent; Mr Harris – fruit and vegetables;

McMillan sisters (2) – private hotel; Amy Clayton –

Henry Street corner store and later Mrs Hunter then Mrs

Barber and Ford.

My mother was Olive Clayton Poulter, sister of Clayton

brothers, noted Greensborough gold miners. The father,

Fredrick Clayton was known to all as “King”. The mine

opposite the Yarrambat Primary School was the

“Golden King”, later operated by his son, Bill and the

“Golden Stairs” on the top of the plenty hill operated by

Wilfred Clayton. Both mines were very profitable as

Bill always drove the latest model Chevrolet and

Wilfred’s wife Ivy always drove the latest model Buick.

In those days if you drove a motor vehicle you were

wealthy.

*“My Greensborough”*

*Valma Olive (Poulter) Simpkins*