

Recollections

For Greensborough resident Vera Lay, the 1950's were the start of new beginnings in a small outer suburban township starting to awaken from its rural slumber. Vera has given us a wonderful insight into the Greensborough of that era and the character of those people who worked hard to make the town into the suburb it is today.

My connection with Greensborough began in 1955 when I was offered employment as a stenographer with the legal firm of R.D.J. Bennet. Dick Bennet's office was upstairs in, what was previously known as Marble Hall, on the corner of Carter (now Para Road) and Main Streets Greensborough. At this time the building was owned by R.H. Dean who had an Estate Agency on the ground floor. His wife conducted an adjoining plant nursery. Another tenant was the dentist, Ian Hansen.



Marble Hall (circa 1950 - built in the 1850's)

Occupiers were: Top left - Dentist. Top right - Solicitors.

Bottom left - Nursery. Bottom right - Real Estate Agent.

(From original photograph owned by John Mackey)

The legal practice was sold and operated by James Ryan under the name of R.D.J. Bennet, Ryan and Co. At a later time a new partner, John Mackey joined the firm, then becoming Ryan, Mackey and Co. This practice is still operating in another building in Main Street, as Ryan, Mackey & McClelland.

My recollections of the Main Street include a Newsagency and Milk Bar operated by Fred Butterworth, every morning he would be seen at the railway station selling the daily papers. Stubleys owned a produce store selling hay and grain, Willett's butchery, S.E.C. office and yard, Stan Ashley selling menswear, the Commonwealth Bank provided other employment for locals. Other Estate Agencies included Jessop's, A.H. Lock and Frank Murphy on the corner of Flintoff Street. The weatherboard police station was situated in

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Grimshaw Street near the corner of Church Street.

Parry's Trading in the Main Street below the railway line manufactured perfumed toilet blocks, the local air was permeated with the rather distinctive odour of their products.

Constance (Connie) Burkett was the local hairdresser, her husband Horrie the SP bookie who would operate out of the local hotel. The Greensborough Hotel remains today as a last reminder of the old Main Street, with many buildings now demolished.

One included the Greensborough Methodist Church and Post Office/General Store run by Ron Hall and his family. One of the postmen, "Wingy" Edwards, so called because of an amputation, would deliver the business mail, on foot, from a bag slung over his shoulder.

In 1956 I noticed a hand written notice in the post office advertising a vacancy for a postman. My father, on hearing this, applied for and took up the position. He was horrified that there was no written record of residents' names or addresses, it was all from memory. So my father, Ron Johnson, took it upon himself to extract the information from the mailmen and wrote up "walk books". Mail was delivered to a large area around the town, including an area known as Grace Park which covered homes and properties in the Elder Street, Plenty Lane and Nepean Street areas. Much of this was open paddocks occupied by farms, unmade roads were common, not easy in the winter riding a PMG pushbike. During my holidays I would take my bike to Greensborough by train and join my father in delivering the Christmas mail.

The original Diamond Valley Hospital in Grimshaw Street has seen many changes over the years, my youngest sister was born there in 1952 and my three children in the 1960's. The Cordner family home near the hospital is still a landmark to this day.

In the 1950's Greensborough was the shopping centre for residents from smaller towns in the area, many travelling from Wattle Glen, Diamond Creek, Yarrambat and Plenty for their supplies. One such couple, who were friends of my parents, would do a weekly run down to Greensborough in their vintage soft top tourer and make a point of waving at the Marble Hall building hoping I just happened to be looking out of the window.

No doubt there are many more memories, and photographs, out there in the community and hopefully they will be shared with the Historical Society.

Vera Lay.
23/3/2011

Many thanks to Vera for her recollections of life in Greensborough in the 1950's and thank you to June Hall, leader of the Society's oral history group, for getting Vera's story to us.