

### Early days in Chapman Street, Macleod

This is a wonderful story by Graeme and Lorraine Collins of Macleod. A story of a young couple selecting their block of land, building their first home together and raising a family in the home they still occupy today.

Graeme was a 19 year old from Preston and Lorraine a 17 year old from Sunshine when they met at a work picnic in Melton in August 1953.

When rain came, they were among five people who took shelter in a friend's car. After the others got out, Lorraine and Graeme stayed and kept chatting, so in a sense they can thank a 1934 Vauxhall for bringing them together.

After a happy and very proper courtship of three and a half years they got engaged at Easter 1956 and were ready to settle down as Mr and Mrs Collins. Liking the area they decided to find a block out this way. They looked at Watsonia, which had cheaper blocks available, but it was mostly paddocks. Instead they chose Macleod, which was a bit more established.

The block cost £550 and they were fortunate that Lorraine's father financed the building of their home up to lock up stage in 1956. They got married and moved straight into their new home in early 1957.

With another piece of luck, Lorraine's employer at the time was a solicitor in Sunshine and gave them a personal loan. Only when the house was finished did the State Bank deign to value it and grant them a mortgage, so that Lorraine's father and employer could be paid back. The interest rate was 4 ¼ % and the mortgage repayment was £4 a week.

All up the home cost £2,750 to build and that was with Graeme doing all the plumbing himself. How times change. A similar vintage house nearby recently sold for around \$700,000.



Installing the weatherboards  
(Chapman Street, Macleod - 1956)

The family pitched in to help and Graeme painted the home, inside and out. Facilities were basic with an open wood burning fire, sheets for curtains, polished boards throughout the house and lino in the kitchen.

## Oral History

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When they moved in, there were houses on about half the blocks in the street. All the roads in the area were unmade except for Erskine Road, Torbay Street, Carwarp Street and down near the Macleod shops. Lorraine recalls pushing a pram through the mud of the unmade roads down on the way down to the shops.

There was no sewerage. For the first five years, until 1961, they made do with an outdoor loo in the back yard and regular visits from the nightsoilman.



View from the front of the house

Graeme and Lorraine were both so busy working hard to establish themselves that they didn't do much socializing in the neighbourhood.

Later Graeme played one season of football for Rosanna in 1959. He played cricket for Greensborough in the early 1960s, as a chap round the corner, Alf Montford, was captain there and asked him to play.



Nearly there - the house at lockup stage

Lorraine and Graeme continue to share the home they have cherished since 1957 and I thank them for sharing the story of their early days in Chapman Street, Macleod.

**John Gibson**  
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John is the Society's Treasurer and in addition to his official duties, has interviewed a number of local residents and documented their oral histories for the Society's archives. Volunteers like John are essential to the activities of the Society and without them, the living history and memories of the local residents would be lost. Many thanks for your work and time John.