

'Earlier days in Greensborough' by Jean Luxford

People have settled in Greensborough for several reasons, frequently for business opportunities, and this was the case with our family. My father, Wallace Luxford, and Mr (John) Cecil Jessop had been friends in the First World War. Both were involved in a concert party called 'The Anzac Coves'. Mr Jessop was the secretary, and Dad, the electrician. Others acted, dressed as clowns. The group even performed at Buckingham Palace!



The Anzac Coves, 14 June 1918, Cecil Jessop top left, Wallace Luxford top right.

Sgt. J. Davey, Baritone.
 Gunner Les. Williams, Bass.
 Pte. H. Ross, Tenor.
 Pte. Ben Davies, Tenor.
 Pte. Ralph Sawyer, Danseuse.
 Pte. J. Gibb, Monologist.
 Dvr. Donovan, Pianist.
 Rannall-Carlisle, Manager.

Electrician, Pte. Wallie Luxford. ◊
 Property Master, Cpl. Bower.
 Engineer, Dvr. Smith.
 Cinema Operator, Pte. J. H. Shaw.
 Scenic Artist, Gervais Cooper.
 General Staff, Ptes. C. Jessop (Treasurer), *
 W. Hollowell, R. Seagraves,
 R. Watson.

Stage Properties by Cpl. Bower.
 Electric Lighting Effects by Pte. Luxford. ◊
 Costumes and Dresses by John Hyman,
 and Ptes. Reade and Roberts.
 Dances arranged by Fred Reade.
 Wigs by Clarkson and John Hyman,
 Leicester Square, London.
 Music from Francis Day and Hunter.
 Programmes by 23rd Battalion Press.

- and his CAT. -

XMAS, 1917.

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My father met my mother, Isabel Waugh, in England during the War, I think through my aunt. She worked in the box office of a London theatre. Mr Jessop, perhaps as secretary of 'The Anzac Coves' needed to have some dealing with the theatre and met her in that way. Mr Jessop was already engaged to a lady called Kate Robinson whom he married when he returned to Australia. He said to my aunt

'Why don't we go to the theatre? You bring your sister and I'll bring my friend.'

His friend was my father. The sister was my mother. They liked each other and she was willing to come out here.

They were married in England after the War, in July 1919. They left for Australia in December of that year and arrived in Melbourne in February 1920.



Wallace and Isabel Luxford (third and fourth from right) heading to Australia on the Port Napier in December 1919.

They lived in my grandfather's house in Abbotsford. I was born in East Melbourne while my parents were living in Abbotsford.



Isabel Luxford with daughter Jean in the early 1920s in Clark Street, Abbotsford.

Childhood memories

We came to Greensborough in 1926 at the invitation of Mr Jessop. He had already established an estate agency in Greensborough. As my father was an electrician, Mr Jessop suggested that as the electricity had come through in the early 1920s there would be plenty of work and there was a house for us to rent in Main Street. So we came and both my brother Keith and sister Margaret were born while we lived here.



The Luxford home in Main Street, Greensborough, rented from Mr Jessop. Chemist Warehouse is now located there.



Jean's brother, Keith Luxford in their backyard about 1929. Mr Jessop's Greensborough office can be seen in the right rear. It was located on the corner of Main Street and Grimshaw Street, where the pest exterminator business operates in 2017.



All Saints Anglican Church kindergarten group in the vicarage garden in 1930. Jean is in the third row, with white ribbons in her hair. Keith is at the right of the front row, looking away.



Cecil Jessop driving his car, next his wife Kate, then Isabel Luxford holding daughter Jean.

Things were good at first but the Depression of the 1930s brought hardship to many families including ours. Some government assistance was provided, known as 'Sustenance', but we didn't receive this. A playground rhyme of the time reflects the hard times.

*We're on the Susso now,
We can't afford a cow,
We live in a tent,
We pay no rent,
We're on the Susso now.*

An alternate version of the Susso rhyme was:

*We're on the Susso now,
We can't afford a cow,
We live in a ditch,
We'll never be rich,
We're on the Susso now.*

During the Depression I used to see men going up to Mr Jessop's office at certain times. They seemed to have bags with them and I'm not sure, but I think there must have been some sort of food distribution to people. We could have probably done with it, but my mother wouldn't accept this. I don't know how it was allocated, I think to people in straightened circumstances. People were hard up in Greensborough in those days. I can remember children going to school without any shoes in the Depression.

Keith and Margaret went to the Greensborough State School. I never went there. I was sent off to Ivanhoe Grammar as a very small child but after about two years I had to leave because of the Depression then I went to another little school at Heidelberg called Coreen to Grade 6. I then went to Eltham High for two years and to University High for three years.

My mother became active in various organizations in the Anglican Church in Main Street and my father was the organist there for several years.



All Saints Anglican Church, Plant Stall Ladies, 1935, from left Jean Luxford, Doreen Olly, Margaret Cordner, Mrs Henry Ryan, Miss Cox - known as 'Queenie'.

The Poulterers lived next to us. One stray cat had eight kittens in the box thorn bush between our house and the Poulter's house. The Poulterers had two children, Ray, who was contemporary with my sister, and Lorraine, who became Mrs Coates and has only recently died. The Poulterers were related to the Roys. Mrs Roy's lovely Victorian house, which was in Main Street, is long gone.



Jean Luxford in father Wallace's arms in their Main Street backyard, with the partly built Poulter home behind.

In 1932 or 1934 the Plenty River flooded. I remember as a child standing on Greensborough Station and seeing Poulter Reserve inundated. A house further along in Poulter Avenue was partly submerged. In Main Street, a lady from a house near the Plenty River reported that her piano was standing in 1-2 inches of water.

In 1935 the Anglican vicarage was occupied by the Binns family with whom I was friendly. There were three children who were corresponding in age with us. Keith was friendly with Greg, I was friendly with Ruth and Margaret was friendly with Phyllis. When I was about 13 we'd go for walks on a Sunday afternoon. As the Ryans had established a butcher's shop and dwelling in Main Street, Nancy Ryan was our friend too.

For entertainment, apart from playing sport, there were other ways of enjoyment. We gathered wild flowers - spider orchids, cowslip orchids, nodding greenhoods, chocolate flowers and egg and bacon. I remember going for walks, gathering blackberries and there were bonfires on Guy Fawkes Day. You could buy many kinds of sweets, some even for a halfpenny. There were comics, collections of footballer cards etc.

Besides playground games like marbles and hopping, was skipping accompanied by the rhyme:

*All in together
This cold weather
I saw Jack
Peeping through a crack
Shoot! Bang! Fire!
And you all ran out.*

This was another popular rhyme amongst children:

*Giddy giddy gout
You're shirt's hanging out
Five miles in
And six miles out*

The circus came to Greensborough in the 1930s but we didn't go to it. It always pitched its tent in Grimshaw Street and had cages for its animals. I think the men from circus used to come down and catch yabbies' out of Starling's Pond. I don't know if they ate them or whether they fed them to some of the animals.

Three places of interest

Starling's Pond was where the former swimming pool was located and where Watermarc is now, below the house we lived in. Mr Starling lived in Flintoff Street and owned the land. I remember old Mr Starling. He was white haired when I knew him. His garden in Flintoff Street had a fountain in it. He used to sit outside at the back of his house, in a sunny spot.

It was probably Mr Starling who planted the whole row of quince trees that grew along one side of the pond and beyond it. They were old trees but fruitful. Though neglected, they bloomed each year. The boys from the State School used to come down and get 'quangers' as they called them to eat, and yes, we took some too.



*Keith Luxford in the family backyard in January 1950.
Mr Starling's row of quince trees is in the middle distance. Grimshaw Street is at the right rear.*



Another view of Keith in the Luxford backyard about 1950, shows the Cordner home at the right rear, the Splatt home in the centre, and then the Stopford home next to it.

A church record of 1925 tells that Mr John Starling had played the organ in the Anglican Church for 50 years, so he must have played in the old school when it was used for services, and in the church built in 1912.

Mr Starling had old shed next to the pond. I think in his heyday he must have been a clever man and he had a lot of things in that shed and a weathervane on top. Above the pond, all the piece of land opposite Cordner's house belonged to Mr Starling. Next to the Cordner's was the Splatt home, then Mrs Stopford's. Some families had their own cow, some had hens and roosters. There were stray dogs and cats about.

The Saleyards were located behind the garage in the Main Street, and entered by a lane which ran alongside the garage. You could walk right through the lane to Flintoff Street. Numbers of cattle pens were there, the wood bleached by the sun, and there was an open shed with cages on its walls for people to place the poultry in which they brought for sale. Every fortnight a red "Sale" flag went up outside in Main Road advertising the Wednesday sale. When they weren't occupied, we used to go down to the Saleyards and climb on the rails there.

I was friendly with Heather Franklin, the hairdresser's daughter, who was related to Roy Franklin who with Mr Jessop was an estate agent. His house was in Grimshaw Street, on the corner of Warwick Road. Later it became a dentist's.

The river below Willis Vale was the spot where many children enjoyed swimming and learning to swim.

Main Street

I will mention some of the buildings in the 1920s from the school, along the Main Street, down to the railway bridge.

The State School (No. 2062) on the corner of Grimshaw and Kerr Streets (the latter no longer existing) was opened in 1878. Between the school and Church Street were paddocks, except for a rambling weatherboard tea rooms run by the Misses Milne, on the corner of Grimshaw and Church Streets, with a horse trough in Grimshaw Street. One night the building was destroyed by fire with only the well in Church Street recalling the tea rooms' existence.

In the 1850's, Edward Green gave a large piece of land to the Anglican Church for a church school. This land extended from the south corner of Church Street to, and including, the area now occupied by Hoyts Theatres. A school on the corner of Church and Grimshaw Streets was built in 1855 (No. 268), but was no longer used as a school when No. 2062 opened. It was demolished in 1924 and a tennis court was made on the site. The Anglican land also had a vicarage built in 1889, a rough cast and weatherboard church built in 1912, and a weatherboard hall built in the 1930s.



Old Anglican Church School (No. 268), built 1855. Photo about early 1920s.

Next to the Anglican land was a paddock (owned by the Post Master General) and next to this, the brick Methodist Church built in 1873, with a weatherboard hall behind it. Going down Main Street in order were a house, a brick grocer's shop with a Post Office agency in the back of the shop, a sweet shop, the two-storey Masonic Hall, a boot repairer's shop, a brick house on a substantial piece of land, a chemist's, then more land, a butcher's shop and the hotel. On the south corner of Hailes and Main Street were a hardware shop with a dwelling, some vacant land, Tomasetti's bread shop with a bakery behind, and Mr Franklin's hairdresser's shop. The

blacksmith's house and forge were in Hailes Street. (Later, near the chemist's, Mr Henry Ryan built a butcher's shop and dwelling alongside it, and the State Electricity Commission built a shop.)

Opposite the State School on the corner of Grimshaw and Henry Streets was a mixed business, on the other corner of Henry Street, a house, then a large paddock (where the circus in the thirties set up the tent), then Mr and Mrs Harris' mixed business, dwelling and shed, a house with a shop front, and across Grimshaw Street, on the corner of that street and Main Road, Mr Jessop's estate agency. There was much vacant land between Mr Jessop's office and our house, then a paddock, then the Poulter's house, another paddock, then Mrs Roy's house on a substantial piece of land (with a well behind her house). Below were the Commercial Bank and dwelling, then vacant land, then the garage, the newsagency, and Marble Hall.

Mr Bannerman's little weatherboard estate agency stood in Para Road, on the corner opposite Marble Hall, where Para Road turns off Main Street. This office faced up Main Street but it's long gone.

Mrs Dean had that Rose Bower and sold plants in one section of Marble Hall. The Pringles lived in that house for a while. They had quite a number of children. I think Doctor Langdon was there and even fish and chips at one stage.

Services

To get milk, householders placed a billy can near the front gate and milk was delivered by the Partington family. Faye Partington was in my class when I was a student teacher in Greensborough.

Shops were closed on Sundays and I think most on Saturday afternoons.

Mr Harris took greengrocery orders and delivered fruit and vegetables to homes in his truck.

Mail was delivered to houses but I'm not certain about whether the houses were numbered.

There was no rubbish collection. Households were responsible for getting rid of their rubbish.

The Nightman, or Pan Man, delivered clean night soil pans to households as a weekly service. This happened at night. His high sided horse drawn vehicle had squeaky wheels, which served as a warning to householders that he was coming.

The adult train fare to Melbourne in the 1930s was 1/6 pence. I know of one man who once walked to the city. Some men rode horses, some had horse drawn buggies. There were trains, but if you missed one, there was none for an hour (at certain times of the day). My father had a motor bike and sidecar. Not many had a car.

The first resident doctor I remember was Dr Sinclair, who lived and had his consulting room on the corner of Alexandra and Grimshaw Streets. Dr Cordner came into the district in the early 1930s.

In Grimshaw Street below the Diamond Valley Hospital site is a large weatherboard building. I think this belonged to the Butterworth's. In this building, Sister Hernal had a small private hospital, and this was later taken over by Sister Avery.

I understand that Dr Mills, the dentist from Heidelberg, came to Greensborough from time to time. He had the use of a room in a private home in Main Street.

As well as providing opportunities for worship and instruction, the churches met the social needs of their people. Sunday Schools had fair attendances. The Anglican Church had an annual prize-giving for attendance, and a picnic. Vans with children from other places came on Cup Day to the lower park. There were guild meetings, fetes to work for and organize, choir practices and concerts and, in the 1940s, clubs for boys and girls. The Sunday School anniversary was an important occasion for the Methodist Church. The first funeral that I remember, I was very young, was of a cyclist, Roy, who was killed. It was a sad event.

An annual district picnic was held which went to the beach at Mordialloc. A special train took the travelers from Greensborough and perhaps from as far along the line as Hurstbridge, Wattle Glen and Diamond Creek. It collected people along the way and went into the city. These picnics were well attended. I did go once in the 1930s. It was an important event.

Swagmen passed through Greensborough carrying a swag and billy. A lady who lived in the vicarage at Greensborough in the 1930s told me that one came to ask for food at the vicarage. She thought he slept under Mr Jessop's office. In the 1940s, I remember one coming to the Sutherland Home. Hawkers with clothing in cases also came, to sell their goods to the householders. There was also a Rawleigh's man.

After World War Two, Greensborough began to develop. Returning soldiers and others bought blocks of land, some built their own houses, no-one had much money.

Jean's Career

I think my mother always had wanted to be a teacher and she wasn't able to be. She felt that teaching was a very secure job so I became a teacher and taught for many years. In teachers' college I was always so busy with studies and teaching rounds. I really can't tell you what else I did much. I never married.

I suppose my activities were in the Anglican Church mostly, never went to dances. My mother said '*Oh you don't go to a dance without a partner.*' The Masonic Hall was greatly used for dances but I never went. I didn't want to go.

In those days things were different with teaching. The normal plan was that you were a student teacher for two years. You were appointed to a State School under other teachers. You had to write lessons in your own time, give them in a class and the supervising teacher would critique them. You had to study the principles and techniques of teaching and send specimens of your artwork and sewing in and do an exam at the end of the year.

This normally went on for two years so you had experience in all the grades - Prep to Grade 8. But because of it was wartime and the male teachers were away at the War, the poor student teachers had to be sent to these tiny little places in the country to take charge of schools. I was appointed to assist at Panton Hill in 1941 and each day I went there with the mailman. He picked up the mail from Darebin Station in a private car, took it to the places that were not on a railway line. Eltham Post Office then was I think at the back of a shop up near the hotel so he also picked up mail there.

I had to catch the train from Greensborough to Eltham and he picked me up there and we went on through Research, Kangaroo Ground, Panton Hill where he dropped me off then went on to Kinglake. In the afternoon the reverse happened. He brought the mail from Kinglake then Panton Hill and me and dropped me off at Eltham Station. That happened for a year. My second year I was fortunate enough to be at Greensborough for a term. The Watsonia Army Camp was full of soldiers and they were marched down Greensborough's Main Road to the drum and the children who sat near the window would all stand up and look out at what was happening and one day the Infant Mistress (I was in her room) said 'Stop!' and they never did it again.

I was then sent out again in 1942 to take charge of one of these little schools. It was Budgeree South East and it was a disaster. Dad got in touch with the Anglican Minister at Morwell and he and his wife took me there right up on top of a hill but they wouldn't let me stay. He said it was terrible and wasn't fit for me to teach in. I was young and he made the decision. I caught the train straight home from Morwell and I went up to the Department and I told them. In those days you had to write down on a piece of paper what the problem was and you had to sign it. *'I have the honour to be your obedient servant, Jean Luxford.'* By that time I was upset so I asked if I take the paper home and write it at home and he said I could.



Jean Luxford at Mentone Station Gardens in 1942.

Then I went back to Greensborough State School for about a week then it was the May holidays after which I was sent to Howqua out of Mansfield. Dad did the same thing. He wrote to the Anglican Minister at Mansfield, an Irishman named Mr Brown. He picked me up and I stayed at the vicarage that afternoon until the Clark's with whom I was to board came in their truck and took me back to Howqua. I had seven students and it was a clean little room.

After that I spent the first year in college doing the Trained Primary Teacher's Certificate in 1943 and 1944. There were 32 of us. In college those who wanted to teach in a high school, if they had

high enough marks, could get a place at the University and study. Or you could do, and my brother did this, Trained Special Teacher's Certificate which was teaching the intellectually disabled.

I was always in the Infant (Primary School) Department. In 1945 I was appointed to Welshpool School in South Gippsland. That was the end of the earth too right near Yarram. Strangely enough the headmaster's name there was Mr Amiet. He must have been related to the Mr Amiet in Greensborough.

Mr Amiet had a wife and two children and they lived next to the school, in the school house. I had to board with some people. Welshpool was a town compared to Howqua, where there was just bush and farms, no shop and you couldn't buy anything.

I was at Welshpool until Easter 1946 then was appointed to the Sutherland Home for neglected children in Greensborough where I taught until 1951. It was very difficult to get to as we had no car. I got lifts with all different kinds of people. Men would stop in trucks and offer me a lift. I even got a lift home once with the Pan Man. I was setting off from Sutherland Homes and he was returning with his load of pans. My mother came out of the house and she said '*How could you! How could you come home in that!*' But I did. I always say that I've had a ride in transport that most people have not travelled in.



Jean's mum, Isabel Luxford, in their backyard in 1953, with the Poulter home behind.

In 1951, it snowed. I remember walking from the Sutherland Home corner to Greensborough about 5pm and seeing snow which had fallen in the morning still lying in the paddocks.

In 1952 I retired from teaching and went to the Melbourne Bible Institute and I studied there for two years because I thought I was going to do missionary work. It didn't work out like that and I returned to teaching. I taught at Firbank which was a private school at Brighton for a year and then I rejoined the Education Department in 1955 and was sent as a temporary teacher to Briar Hill for a term and then to Dalton Street in Eltham for a term, then to Montmorency where I stayed for nine years.

Next was Watsonia then Merrilands in Reservoir, where I became a Vice Principal, then to Manningham in Doncaster then to Grimshaw in Bundoora in 1985 after which I retired. It was quite a big school but it's been demolished since. I wasn't always a classroom teacher, you rise up a bit in rank.

I'm disappointed about the way that Greensborough is changing. They're pulling down the old houses and putting up, in my mind, not beautiful units. The history of a place is reflected to some extent in the houses and it's going to make us look as if we've got no history if they demolish all the older style houses.

We used to have Victorian houses here. Mrs Stopford's house is gone. It had a bull nose verandah. The Splatt house between Cordner's and Stopford's. It had a bullnose verandah. It's gone. The only one I can think of is the Ely house, the next one down from the corner of Eldale Avenue and Grimshaw Street. It's still there and has a bullnose verandah.

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My thanks to Jean for sharing with us her memories of earlier days in Greensborough.

John Gibson
6 June 2017

(As revised with Jean on 5 June 2017)