A HISTORY OF
CROYDON

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Shire of Eltham

River Yarra

S H I R E OF L I L Y D A L E

Lilydale

SHIRE OF DONCASTER & TEMPLESTOWE

Hollaway Rd.

Kalinda Rd.

Croydon

Mooroolbark

NEW

CROYDON SHIRE

Colchester Road.

CITY OF RINGWOOD

Dandenong Creek

Foreword

This history was compiled primarily as an offer of a permanent account of the first landowners to take up grants in the district of Croydon before records and factual stories handed down by pioneers become lost beyond recall. With the co-operation of descendants a picture of the early scene in Croydon is depicted; it is hoped it will present in miniature some of the trials and perhaps a little of the triumphs often to follow tribulation.

Concerned in the record, also, are other accounts of varying nature that appear to be in demand. Data from which inferences are drawn, and details by word of mouth are, to the best of the writer's knowledge, as accurate as much research can make them.

The book is being produced as a souvenir in this, the year of Croydon's breakaway from the parent Shire of Lillydale.

MURIEL McGIVERN
Mount Dandenong Road,
Croydon.
1961

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SEVERED

CHAPTER I—SEVERED

"SEVERANCE—then we've got it?" came doubtfully from the cautious ones; but "Oh, what a Christmas present . . . !" roared from the throats of others. The shout vibrated in the heated air of Main Street, echoing in and out of the old buildings and the spanking new ones; it exhilarated the atmosphere and lightened the sky so that even the old sun seemed to smile on tired shoppprs with freshening effect. The furtive wind, moaning lightly and wandering fitfully about in its summer fashion, paused, caught it, played with it then tossed it exuberantly, sending it ringing around the hills of Croydon, sensing its importance. The ears of the fearful ones twitched with consternation; they studied the news with pain then with lips set, primly tightened their belts resignedly, apprehensive of the future.

It was not only the excited shouts and ringing responses that the wind lifted and sent dancing like spirits of joy; it was the invigorated discussion that followed in Main Street, with the Severance Committee, the Chamber of Commerce and the resident councillors on the fringe perhaps the most emotionally aroused of all. For the Committee had worked with undaunted perseverance for a breakaway in the face of opposition, fully cognizant of the benefits to the community that would accrue and aware of the spiritual advancement of a body standing on its own feet. Trade also is of paramount importance; some races make it a long-drawn-out game of haggling and bartering, raising it to a favourite pastime. Trade is as old as the ancient human and an occupation stretching from the East where

camels are bartered for brides, to the West where currency trade for livestock holds sway; it is one's daily mate.

From earliest history civilizations had a centre of trade, the market places; radiating from them were the homes of the little men, making up the big whole. Men of trade are accounting spirits trained by their calling to weigh commodities; they are a necessity. But to be complete a community must include citizens at the top with aesthetic acumen to lay a restraining hand on trade for trade's sake alone, ones with vision in a municipality to arrest such horrible happenings in the future as the recent tearing out of part of the flank of the lovely Mount Dandenong (if they can), leaving the bleeding gash for dwellers to the west to gaze on, horrified—a wound that, by its nature, is destined to fester and become deeper, and never heal.

But the battlers of the Croydon Severance Movement made their plans with exalted purpose aware of the need for beauty of environment in conjunction with bustling business. Their town is a well-loved hobby, the new Shire of Croydon will be their pride and joy; nothing in the town's future can detract from them the glory of a hard battle fought and won.

Croydon lies in a lovely valley; discriminating people show vision in a strong urge to keep it so.

"The story of Croydon ought to be told now that the place has gained a new individuality," someone suggested thoughtfully.

"If someone tells it," put in a second person quickly, "for goodness sake let it start at the beginning!"

"Very well, then," came a third voice, "we'll tell the story; and—what about the Paleozoic Era?" with fine revenge.

"If you must dig down your fifty feet!"

"Well, it all started under the ground—in fact it continues; why disregard such an important sphere of activity?"

. . . .

Geologically the hills of Croydon and the bedrock forming most of the district belong to the Paleozoic Era, the third oldest and middle one; such old strata inclines to the belief that Australia is one of the oldest bodies of land on the planet. In that era Silurian and Lower Devonian beds were deposited in various areas, and geologists studying the earth's crust and strata have found evidence of these occurrences in many places, the Croydon district being included. Wicklow Hills and Birt's Hill are composed of Silurian sand-and-mudstones, a now decomposed rock; Wicklow Hills, 650 feet above sea level, and Birt's Hill, 550 feet, remain to-day in their form because the rock formation has withstood erosion better than the surrounding countryside.

There is geological evidence also that the area now the Dandenongs was once composed of this Silurian sedimentary matter and at a later period in the Paleozoic Era (Devonian) became volcanic. A fault or seam developed in the earth's crust and in the upheaval the Dandenongs were thrown out of the bowels of the earth. Rock of this later period (upper and lower toscanite, basalt, hypersthene dacite, rhyodacite and granodiorite) intruded into the Silurian sedimented rock of the upheaved area, forming the mountains.

Much of this rock is of extremely hard composition and has withstood millions of years of eroding influences. Several quarries producing material for road construction lie on the lower slopes and near foothills of the Dandenongs, and of the rock quarried from them none is considered harder-wearing for roads. It is used extensively in the district, samples submitted withstanding periodic tests in the laboratories of the Country Roads Board. A seam of this rock runs snakelike but at varying widths beneath the undulating countryside and reaches Black's quarry at Coldstream, with one break in the vicinity of Cave Hill Quarries at Lilydale which it bypasses. The rock in these last-named quarries is of another composition and of a different colour (beige-pink) while the harder rock is a mixture of blue, brown and orange tints. The former beige-pink rock is of a much later period (Tertiary), a significant point when considering its softness.

Violent temperature changes occurred in the earth's crust during the Paleozoic Era; rapid cooling of the interior caused shrinkage and crumpling. The strata in a quarry in Liverpool Road, Kilsyth, shows evidence of its birth pangs; great slabs of glistening rock lie at many angles, athwart each other, oblique, or standing on end. To the south-east of Croydon the Silurian beds give way to this same hard rock near the old junction of Liverpool and Colchester Roads, now Miller Road, and Albert Avenue. At a spot in Liverpool Road farther north and biting deeper into the rise of mountains starts the snakelike line of upper and lower toscanite stone.

But apparently the uplands of Croydon escaped the violent volcanic upheaval, for they do not show evidence; they are of much gentler composition than the other severe contortion. A quarry was once in working order on Birt's Hill and another at a spot where now stands the Croydon Monastery. The strata here lies mostly at the one angle, vertical; the colour was yellow and the texture spongy and matt-surfaced. In the vicinity of Stirling Road were some clay pits where an industry of handmade bricks was once carried on. In Mt. Dandenong Road, about 100 yards west of Liverpool Road, stands an old, cream-

washed brick house; the hand-made bricks used in the construction were made in the back yard of the house sixty years ago; probably traces of the clay-pit remain to-day.

The flat portion of Croydon showed no evidence of igneous matter; where a plain takes drainage from a mountain, there is always silt left after flooding and this alluvial soil mixed with organic matter in patches formed the black loam of the flats which cracked in summer when the hot sun baked it, and was sticky in winter. Because a rank grass grew, the locality was dismissed as worthless scrubby land with poor soil; places much farther afield were settled long before Croydon.

When later a handful of settlers, braving the inhospitable terrain to cut firewood to sell in Melbourne, finally decided to knock up shacks and stay for a space, they planted fruit trees in home gardens and then found to their astonishment that not only did the trees grow, they flourished to a degree undreamed of on the slopes rising from the flats. Then it was subsequently discovered that simple treatment of the sticky black soil yielded giant crops of maize; adjoining this dark loam on the flats was an acreage of whitish, salt soil in the vicinity of the old Recreation Reserve.

P. Kildren, of Nelson's Hill, and the Smiths, of Plymouth Road, were the pioneers in fruit growing; many others followed until the locality developed into a vast area of first-class orchards and vegetable gardens. From these came naturally an organization interested in horticulture; one was formed and orchardists paid a bounty of a few pence per dozen for the eggs of sparrows, starlings and minas. In 1913 the Horticultural Society was formed, embracing members with deep interest in home gardens and beautification; there is an annual show, sometimes two, and the specimens exhibited are very fine. O. Hewish and the late A. Chandler and more recently the Broughtons showed practical interest in the affiliation. But all this came much later than the events narrated in the following chapters.

NOBODY WANTED IT

CHAPTER II—NOBODY WANTED IT

CROYDON, in its babyhood, bore comparison with the human being starting life handicapped from the cradle—the place had frightening beginnings. In the early nineteenth century it was a wild, desolate, ignored, and even derided locality south-west of the flourishing vineyards of the Lilydale environs.

It was unpeopled, the only permanent residents being koalas, wombats, bandicoots, native cats, opossums, birds, snakes and the passing wallaby.

White settlers, searching for productive land, hacked a way from Lilydale through the dense bush to the rich red volcanic soils of Mooroolbark and the northern slopes of the Dandenongs; they explored, gazing on the strange, silent, unknown part now called Croydon. They used their picks experimentally, turning over the ground. Finally they slung the implements high on to their shoulders again and went thankfully back to Mooroolbark.

Croydon, in the 'fifties, was thought little of by Warrandyte also, as gold was not reported as being embedded anywhere around the hills and lowlands; the primitive locality was treated with added scorn. Men asked themselves what on earth the place was good for? In fact, history suggests that nobody cared two hoots in this gold-crazy period. The flats and undulating land were considered barren, hungry, and fit only for cattle-grazing; Croydon was, indeed, part of a cattle-run extending to Bayswater and Ferntree Gully, run by William Gardiner who took up a grazing licence after discovering good land near Mooroolbark when searching for stray cattle. Another man, William Turner, ran a few cattle as a hobby in the district; these pastoralists operated around the 1840's.

Legend has it that cattle-duffers used the heavily-timbered hills between Warrandyte and this valley for hide-outs; as cattle grazed in the myriad valleys, it is not unreasonable to suppose that these grazing activities were mother to the misdeeds and that law-breakers did operate.

It is obvious that Croydon was never a watering-place; there was no river and the creeks were of such paltry size that they ceased flowing altogether in the hot season. Even the aborigines tabooed the place. There is no evidence, however, that this was for accursed or even sacred reasons but simply because all primitives follow the water and they had long ago discovered the lack of it; naturally it was no place to camp.

In those pre-history days, blacks of the Yarra-Yarra tribe and others from the plains towards the sea wandered the lyre-bird haunted creeks and fern-gullies of the Dandenongs, broodingly to the east; or they took their walkabouts to the Brushy or Deep Creeks, or Yarra River—in their language the river meant "water running through trees and shadows." It is probable that the bucks speared wallabies and other native game as they passed through the valley of Croydon and more than likely that this was all the truck they had with the locality.

In the 'fifties eager immigrants were arriving at the port of Melbourne, anxious to join the gold rush. Pastoral holdings began to gradually give way to settlements, for only a favoured few made fortunes out of gold and the rest were obliged to abandon the search and seek more remunerative occupation.

Should a traveller, journeying the Lilydale track and stopping off at the Burnt Bridge Hotel, be more curious than his fellow-men and go wandering off into the bush, he might gain a rise in the vicinity of the present Alto Avenue. In those days he might even have proceeded inquisitively a little farther and come out of the dense bush on to the point of highest eminence overlooking the cold-shouldered valley, the Croydon of to-day. From these Wicklow Hills he took stock.

If it were the blossoming season he looked down on a valley in flower; the flatter terrain was covered closely in a dwarf, silvery-white plant or coarse grass, tussocky and tough. The plant was *Danthonia Pallida*; when in flower a hairy down shows. It grows on land needing only a little treatment to become fertile, but early settlers did not know this. They called the grass White Top, or Silver Top, and they named the silver-brushed valley White Flats—those settlers living on the fringe but keeping their dungarees free from flapping about the confines of the barren valley.

Mt. Dandenong, also, was not settled on the western face;

timber invaders, searching for building material much in demand for houses in the new Colony, had explored from the plains stretching away from the base, but they were not wood-cutting pioneers. Messmate grew on the western face and the finer mountain ash on eastern and also more protected sides.

Through this wilderness of primitive Croydon, dismissed by all discriminating settlers with the name of White Flats, came finally a road! In 1857 portions of the Parishes of Ringwood and Scoresby were surveyed by one N. M. Bickford, and the road was shown on this early map. It is the well-known Mt. Dandenong Road of to-day. But it was marked on the map as Sawmill Road for in the bush a mill for the production of building timber had been set up, and roads frequently take their names from their destination.

Early in the State's history the road east out of Melbourne was known as the Main Gippsland Road, later to become the Whitehorse Road, for in 1853 the famous Whitehorse Hotel was erected on the corner of this Gippsland Road and Elgar Road, Box Hill, in that part now lying between the highway and the railway line. The publican, so the legend goes, had seen and greatly admired a magnificent white horse passing by, and so he hung the white sign outside his inn; and the road from Melbourne to Box Hill became Whitehorse Road. The track to Lilydale also became loosely designated thus, without significance; or alternately, the Lilydale track as of old.

It continued so until the Country Roads Board gave the portion east from Box Hill a name redolent of meaning for the first time in history—Maroondah Highway. Previous to this the Whitehorse Road name was without significance east of its birth place, Box Hill. Maroondah Highway traverses a few miles of the new Croydon Shire, but it does not touch the town proper by a mile.

Sawmill Road became known as Oxford Road after sub-division of Crown Allotments; in later years the Country Roads Board took the road over as a Main Road and records it as Mt. Dandenong Road—from Club Hotel corner to Olinda. It is the most direct approach from Melbourne to Croydon; its junction with Maroondah Highway has always been known locally as Club Hotel corner ever since the hotel was built close by. The corner is important to this record because it is at this point that the road starts, winding 2½ miles to Croydon through pretty country. When the antimony mines opened in 1869 on a hill overlooking this corner, the spot was a hive of industry. The mine worked three shifts a day, forty men a shift; endless horsedrawn vehicles of all kinds, including those of timber-getters, used the bullock-tramped Lilydale track

straight on from the corner, up and around the hill to the mine.

The track became impassable with deep holes, mud and slush and vehicles ditched to the axles. Traffic began to use an alternate track to the mine—the Sawmill Road; turning right at Club Hotel corner, it proceeded for about a quarter of a mile then turned left and so gained the workings from the other side (now Mines Road).

Soon traffic to Lilydale also took Sawmill Road, as the older track was an unusable quagmire. Sawmill Road was traversed as a deviation; at a point about a mile from Club Hotel corner the deviation branched off the Sawmill Road and joined again the original Lilydale track less than half-a-mile farther on. This little portion became known as the Lilydale Road and to-day it is called the Old Lilydale Road for reasons here stated. In time the original portion of quagmired track was metalled and traffic diverted back again and the name of the little piece slipped into history.

But in early days its two corners were famous; where it joined Sawmill Road the junction was known as Hardidge's corner; the finger-posts now located at Club Hotel corner were once at this corner; they read: "Healesville and Warburton" (pointing left) and "Mt. Dandenong" (pointing right). The old cottage once occupied by William Hardidge and his family still stands to-day, a trim little gable with floors of differing levels. There was once a church on Sawmill Road, also, opposite Hardidge's corner, the Plymouth Brethren. Folks on the fringe of Croydon attended here. The other famous corner of the Old Lilydale Road was the locality of the now-delicensed Burnt Bridge Hotel, a favourite in bullock-teamster days. A store is now conducted there.

After shaking the dust—or mud—of the deviated Lilydale track from its feet at Hardidge's corner, Sawmill Road meandered on towards Croydon. When Corranwarrabull on top of the mount changed its name to Mt. Dandenong, the names of many of these roads trembled in the balance, for by this time the route had passed through White Flats and linked up with the track at Montrose that the Jeeves family, resident at Corranwarrabull, had formed down the mount.

The name, Mt. Dandenong, comes from an aboriginal one, "Tanjenyong," meaning high or lofty hills.

When Club Hotel corner is turned and road users traverse the first part of Mt. Dandenong Road, hidden history shrieks; those born and bred in the district know that mine tunnels are

still in existence beneath the road. An old resident of the district who, in the past, personally engaged in the contract of filling in the more dangerous of the antimony mine tunnels, stated recently that those under the road perforce remain untouched, being some distance from the adits. A group of men once made a second attempt to work the antimony mines. Pumping operations were commenced, but, owing to vigorous complaints from landowners that creeks were becoming fouled, they were obliged to abandon operations.

History also prods those who remember at another point en route to Croydon; at a bend, Mt. Dandenong Road passes a locality where once stood the brick kilns of the Pottery and Insulator Works. They were about 150 feet off the road; when demolished in the depression years they were owned by Andrew Morrow. A little east of this spot is the boundary of the Shire.

But before these works operated, a member of the Cutts family engaged in obtaining from the earth a special kind of clay which was sent to Melbourne to be moulded and baked.

Short tunnels from these various operations still riddle the hill at certain places. There was also a broom factory in the vicinity; sword grass once grew in abundance in the district and until recent years another broom factory, engaged in making the common household broom or whisk, was in production in Croydon, in Lusher Road.

On the site of the old kilns of the Insulator Works modern homes have been erected; obvious traces of the industry are no more.

In 1868 a private surveyor became active in the environs of White Flats. The news spread and immigrant settlers living in the Burwood and Warrandyte districts took notice.

Here was a new part. What was it like? The menfolk came and inspected the district; they saw possibilities. Many decided to take a chance and took up land grants without delay. Some purchased land on heavily-timbered rises running down to the white flats; others bought on hills. Around the 1870's there was a great influx of immigrants, but they were the right sort. They came to stay; not to despoil, but to cultivate. After blazing identifying marks on trees on the boundary of their chosen lots, they returned and acquainted their families. Then shelters from the weather were erected, shanties at first, often wattle and daub with hessian lining; then sawn timber later, brought across from Tasmania.

The district began to be noticed. At Woods Point, a locality

buried deep in the heart of some of the wildest country of the Great Dividing Range nearly 100 miles from Croydon, gold mining was in feverish operation. Would-be miners, suppliers, and transports carrying gold to and from the mines were obliged to traverse the roundabout route through Seymour and Alexandra to reach the place as there was not a road over the Blacks' Spur, a steep peak beyond Healesville.

A few bullock teams carried supplies and passengers to Healesville, deposited them, and buggies carried them over Blacks' Spur, but frequent boggings were the outcome and in the main people went the long way round. In 1867 the Upper Yarra track over the Blacks' Spur was constructed; immediately bullock teams took the new road through Lilydale to Healesville, thus cutting off many weary miles of slow and laborious travel.

New bullock-team routes were opened up; fifteen miles out from Melbourne the waggons made off in every direction; some even took the Sawmill Road through White Flats and so up through Mooroolbark. The place gradually became better known.

An old identity of Croydon recalls that teamsters often camped on the hill beside his home between Croydon and Mooroolbark in the closing years of last century; wheel-rut impressions can be seen to-day on the side of the road near his house (Hull Road). The air was often redolent of the odorous language of "bullockies."

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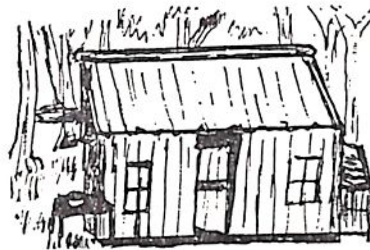
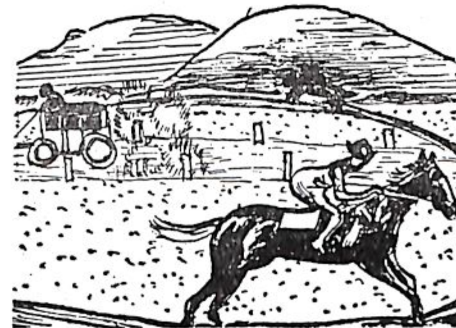


EARLY CONDITIONS

CHAPTER III—EARLY CONDITIONS

IN coach days the first stopping place after Club Hotel corner was the Burnt Bridge Hotel on the Lilydale track, 1¼ miles; then came the Prince of Wales Hotel, 4 miles, and the hotel at Brushy Creek (in reality the Black Springs Hotel which was later re-built at the foot of Black Springs), 5 miles from Club Hotel corner. Toll-gates were erected at vantage spots and toll-money used to finance the making of bush roads. But an old identity recalls that evaders of the law were active then as now and many deviated along the creek to avoid payment of toll fees.

Brushy Creek was quite a settlement; there was a school and a Wesleyan Church; a store run by David Bilcock and a blacksmith's with the hotels, the Dew Drop Inn and several settlers' cottages. A little community had spread out from the creek. To this day tall, brushy, indigenous tea-tree still lines the creek banks and the hamlet is situated in an attractive setting backed by the blue hills. A pity its historic name was changed to a satellite one! Race meetings were held at the hotel at Brushy Creek in the 1870's; settlers converged



on the course from early in the day, agog with expectation. Wire was taken down from fences on both sides of the road and the racecourse took up a half-moon from each side. As the horses raced around the track they had, perforce, to cross the road each lap!

Towards the end of the day the excitement mounted to fever pitch for everyone was allowed to participate in the last race. Shrieks of laughter followed the amateur jockeys on their grass-fed hacks.

Earlier in the day aborigines would wander in, giving exhibitions of boomerang throwing and fire-lighting with their firesticks; they patiently brought the tiny flame to birth, watched interestedly by all the country folk. Some of the more experienced blacks gave exhibitions of spear-throwing; gins and black children hung around, all smiling white teeth. Brushy Creek, in the 1870's, bid fair to be the nucleus of the next town after Ringwood; but its star was already setting, or being eclipsed by a bigger, brighter one, not seen as yet but nevertheless in the sky between Brushy Creek and the mountain range.

After Sawmill Road was surveyed through White Flats and linked up with Mt. Dandenong, Brushy Creek hamlet yearned to connect up with the new road; a bullock track already ran to White Flats so they called it Dandenong Road right to Sawmill Road. But when the railway came the name was changed to Station Street, then later to Croydon Road, which it bears to-day. At one time the Croydon Road name extended right to Tate's corner from Maroondah Highway before the name, Main Street, came into being.

Remnants of the name, Oxford Road, still linger like voices of the past; it is found on billheads and Shire accounts. But the name is gradually becoming obsolete and modern maps now without exception print the road's name as Mt. Dandenong. The highway brushes Main Street, Croydon, at the southern end then continues on to its highland destination.

When white man first set eyes on Croydon it was forested densely except for the flats where scattered trees made a park-like terrain; on rises there were soft-contoured spurs of messmate and apple-gum, and the foothills were bush-haunted in various species. The eucalypt, symbol of so many things Australian, grew in abundance; it grew denser and to giant size on the mountain where, in pre-history days it provided leafy shelter in humpie form for aborigines. To house pioneers, slabs of the timber were pit-sawn to provide floors and sometimes walls of settlers' shanties. In modern times sleepers on

railway lines are hewn from enormous trees, and mountain ash is used for fine floors and cabinet work.

The chartreuse tint of the waving plumes of gum-trees has stamped Croydon; to prevent a sad day of reckoning for loss of our heritage of natural beauty, shire councillors will surely exercise their power to restrain the spoilage of private as well as public indigenous growth.

Original tillers of the soil were obliged to thin the bush in order to erect huts, fences and outhouses and to cultivate the soil; they ploughed under the white plains of Croydon, often with bullock teams. The terrain began to alter; when Mt. Dandenong spilled tears for this despoiling of her lowlands—pouring copious rain into the myriad little streams running west from her ankles through the lower ground—all the flats situated south from Mt. Dandenong Road filled and the place became a huge stretch of water, glistening where the light caught it from high vantage points on the hills of Croydon.

When heavy rain occurred the lake always filled and then Croydon, the aborigines' Place-of-no-permanent-water, gained for a fleeting, infinitesimal space the atmospheric character of a lake district. Myriad wild duck skitted over the surface of the water and hundreds of washed-out venomous snakes could be seen stretched along the rails of fences in pioneering days. At such times human inhabitants of the district rushed to the spot, for the new-born if temporary lake with its wild-life occupants was one of the sights of early days. Even at the present time the flats fill after heavy rain, creating a lake, but not to anything like the same extent as of old. A scheme is afoot to drain the Dandenong Creek and prevent the continued flooding of many localities; town-planners and councillors of municipalities concerned have had conferences, for the creek rises near The Basin and empties in a bayside stream.

The life of one hardy pioneer of the land in Croydon was synonymous with the lives of most others. All left protected homes in old civilizations, saturated with tradition; they could not hope to see them again. Tiny sailing vessels took months to reach anchorage in unknown country. Most of the menfolk were inexperienced in pioneer labour and many were unfit physically for it; they started off with little more than the courage of the traditions of their race.

The arrival in port resembled the arrival of the migrant to-day in one respect—at both periods there were brief sojourns in camp before assimilation. The menfolk of 100 years ago and more blazed trees in the virgin bush then returned to the port to collect their families. Human freight, precious possessions, and an allotment of food to get them started—a bag of flour, groceries, a bag of sugar and usually a sea chest—were piled on to a dray and they set out to their selected land via a wavy road, potholed, muddy, dusty in the strange savage summers, rutty and rough. A few lucky ones carried tents but many were forced to rely on crude shelters at first, erected on clearings hacked out of the wilderness by the sweat of their brows.

Primitive fences of saplings enclosed the house environs against the depredation of bounding wallabies; native cats ravaged the precious poultry despite precautions. The bush at night emitted weird sounds, totally unlike those of the forests of Europe; they often struck terror and added to the appalling loneliness in the hearts of pioneers. Even the cry of the crow by day was one of strange melancholy. An enemy was the seasonal bushfire; uncontrollable, they often burned for weeks. They engendered panic; settlers knew only too well the frightening spectacle of Mt. Dandenong ablaze with burning patches lit up luridly on hot and breathless nights. Tales were told fearfully of "Black Thursday"—6th February, 1851; the writer's pioneer ancestors arrived in Melbourne on this day and thought they had sailed into hell. Victoria was swept by a devastating bushfire; smoke blotted out the sun, embers fell on their ship. A northerly swept the stricken colony, carrying remnants of burning trees as far as Port Phillip. Birds dropped dead from trees, poultry perished, animals, native and domesticated, were incinerated. The fierce wind raised the temperature high, to 117°, but it was a temperature falsified by the holocaust.

Early settlers did not have water tanks; they had to rely on water holes, stored for summer use. Occasionally a spring occurred, and then the settler was indubitably lucky; but most had to make do with dams. In summer these became low and muddy.

Cooking was done at first over open fireplaces; damper was often eaten. Later came colonial ovens and home-made yeast bread. Bakers belonged to the future. Settlers killed a sheep occasionally, or a pig; when no allotment of beef came, they killed poultry, and if they grew short of that, wallaby meat was tackled. Records of the use of hams of kangaroo meat are in evidence.

A crude bench was always knocked together outside the shanties and on it stood permanently a wash-basin, piece of home-made soap, and a bucket to gain the water from the dam, or, later, to hold under a hand pump at an underground well.

Once a week a tin bath of small size—often used as well for carrying chaff to the cow from the storage bin in between times—was brought to a position in front of the household fire, and in it the children were bathed in the lowliest shacks.

There was never a certain time for teamsters to arrive in primitive districts with supplies; if bullock waggons failed to carry the expected merchandise, settlers were forced to wait until they came the next time, to go without. In early days, improvisation was the fashion.

Timber was delivered to Melbourne by bullock-waggon; many settlers engaged in pit-sawing after felling the trees. This was done by hand-power—a very laborious task. Gradually they cleared enough land to commence farming on a miniature scale. Butter was produced; some settlers hawked it, others delivered their produce up to hawkers of dairy produce; after collecting it, these delivered it to various parts of Melbourne.

Wives of settlers might count on obtaining certain sums of money from their sales of butter; should production fall, with serious threat to the pocket, butter would instantly be taken off the menu at home and dripping would substitute—seasoned with salt and pepper. Bland explanations from mother would be that that new rig-out for Anniversary Day at Sunday School might be non-existent should butter sales fall.

On Sunday evenings at tea there were always neighbours; they often lived miles away. Jellies and other delights were set the night before, placed in their moulds in buckets, and lowered into the coolness of wells. Pre-wells, they were set over night in the cool air, then brought in and placed in the draught in the fireplace. They often melted. Later, Coolgardie safes appeared; they were square with hessian sides and tin roofs four inches deep. Into the roof was poured water; strips of cloth hung over the sides of the roof and dripped water, thus cooling the inside contents. They frequently succeeded!

Ants were more of a menace than the pest sounds. There were bulldog ants, mainly attacking the menfolk who worked in timber; there were frequent spectacles of one or other of the breadwinners suddenly bolting for cover to drop his nether garment in desperate hurry as myriad bites punctured the skin. They produced lumps as big as small eggs at times.

There were jump-jacks, ants about three-quarters of an inch long; they were black in colour and they stung painfully. Then there were the white ants—termites—which ate your dwelling by degrees by undermining the foundations and then setting-to on the walls. Last, and thought by mother to be the worst, were the little black ants; sometimes they had a brown tinge, but no matter what the tint, they luxuriated in, swarming into foodstuffs with identical intent. If a wet spring was in store, settlers knew it by these ants; they infested houses, trails extending into cupboards. Wet weather always followed; much the same condition exists to-day. In early days the legs of food cupboards were set in tins filled with water; the ants met unexpected death by drowning en route to the treacle tin.

Sometimes, in a heatwave, the family returned to find the water in the tins dried up or lapped to a finish by the cat; then the jar of jam being currently used would be a swarming black mess of ants in various stages of dying a sticky death.

When David Bilcock opened his store at the corner of the Lilydale track and Lincoln Road—the last-named was called South Wandon Road, a different spelling to the township of Wandin—the burdens of many settlers' wives were lightened.

Bread was sold at the store and there was a newsagency in addition to a post office. Naturally enough, the store became the meeting place for settlers from miles away; also, children passed it on their way to school at Brushy Creek, the first State School. There is no doubt that this primitive store was a life-line to pioneers of the Croydon area.

In 1874 Cobb & Co. inaugurated a coach run, passing through three toll gates—Brushy Creek, Whitehorse Hotel, and Kew; women went shopping to Melbourne; fare, 4/- return. The doctor at Kew was also within easy reach now. A rival coach line operated by Mitchell & Co. was commenced. A Battle of Fares began and finally the return fare dropped to 1/-, offered by Mitchell & Co. The rival line, Cobb & Co., retaliated by offering the trip for the same and threw dinner in free; the result was exit for Mitchell & Co.

Cobb & Co. wiped the sweat from their brows and gradually, by unnoticeable degrees, raised the fare again to a paying proposition.

As time went on the roads in the district began to lose their mud and slush—and in summer choking dust—character as coarse metal became the material used for surfaces. The slogging knappers travelling from place to place as needed with their heavy, crude tools for breaking stone, began gradually to recede into history as crushing plants took over. Vehicles, hauling produce from outlying farms, lumbered along more easily; ditching to the axles became out of date, and the rawness and crudity of Croydon were giving way to a less uncivilized environment.

At the present time Croydon fortunately remains forested sufficiently to protect the rural atmosphere; possums still scamper amongst the branches of the loftier gums in the silvery magic of moonlight, and on summer evenings the mopoke hoot can startle a person walking along footpaths where trees overhang. Wallabies are not seen, but bellbirds strike a melodious note, chiming their natural call in trees along creek banks.

Citizens of Melbourne believe that theirs is a favoured city with a mountain playground as near as the beloved Dandenongs seen to the east faintly as banked, uneven, light blue scollops; if this be so, Croydon is doubly favoured with the range close enough to be metaphorically hugged. All the beauty that lies in the heart of the Dandenongs can be feasted upon after a short car run; buses ply to and from Croydon at regular intervals, carrying sightseers, shoppers and business folk.

While the mountains are a backdrop to the mushrooming Croydon, they remain a compelling feature, their lovely line arresting attention on the south-eastern skyline. At close quarters they emerge as two round-contoured hummocks larger than the rest, with the little ones falling away on the sides into misty-mauve distance—the last satellitic but equally lovely, equally important. With these contours still heavily timbered and appearing little altered since aborigine days save for television spires, they look benignly across to the hills of Croydon —Graham's, Birt's, Wicklow, Nelson's and Cheong's. The old Graham homestead was demolished and Miss McBeath re-built years ago on the summit of this small but steep hill and from here is considered almost universally to be a view surpassing those of other hills of Croydon.

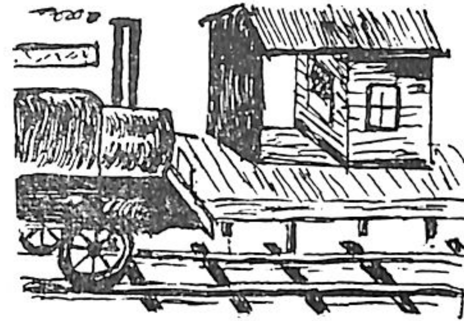
All of these uplands to the west extending to East Ringwood guard the town from the bitter cold of westerlies in winter; a person might stand in Main Street when a westerly is blowing —gentle enough at this spot to be scarcely felt—then he could take the route over Nelson's Hill along past the Monastery, coming out on higher ground near Maroondah Highway and emerging into different weather, for on the exposed heights a

strong wind would be blowing, cold, biting, on the rampage in unprotected parts.

The chain of hills gazes placidly down on the town cuddled snugly in the lee; the busy centre, built on the skirt of Wicklow Hills, trims the hem with ever-more swiftly gathering decorations, embellishments that twinkle and glow spangle-like after dark, the commercial glitter eyed from above resembling glow worms at the feet.

Motor traffic in the busy town causes congestion; seasoned drivers have been heard remarking that one of their ilk could drive anywhere if he could negotiate Croydon Main Street at busy times. Recently a traffic officer was engaged to police on busy days a two-hour parking limit by-law; much of the congestion of parked cars was due to business men and city travellers leaving their vehicles in Main Street with very few bays left for shoppers. This was bad for business because a shopper will naturally trade in a good parking area. For a glorious but short space of time after the by-law came into operation empty lots were available to shoppers; but gradually all-day parkers got around the by-law by shifting their cars every two hours until the position commenced to worsen again.

Car owners pay enormous fees and taxes to keep their vehicles on the road; the lay-out of towns is deplorably deficient in parking space. Wise planners of go-ahead communities design many car-parks underground; shopkeepers should be allowed the amenity of a car-park free of the shopping bays yet close and handy to their places of business.



THE RAILWAY

CHAPTER IV—THE RAILWAY

IN 1882, following on the settling of the land with original grants being taken up by pioneers, the railway was constructed through what is now Croydon. When rumours of the iron-horse and its carriages first began to circulate, little White Flats lifted her head from the dust at her mother's feet, and with eyes red-rimmed from her lot in life, looked up with wild incredulity and hope of confirmation into the face of the parent who had suddenly been presented with untold advantages in embryo.

"It is quite true," Lilydale told the unwanted child, "we are both to get a railway—even you!" with that in her dignified demeanour speaking of astonishment at such an honour being bestowed on a lowly child. But White Flats lifted her head spiritedly and pointed out a fact cheekily with a young stirring of cunning later to show up as intelligence.

"Why are you so surprised, Mamma? Cannot you see that you don't get a railway unless I get one first?"

The settlement at Warrandyte heard the news with equal incredulity caused by a different reaction—surely this new and shining railway was not to bypass the famous Gold District!

Agitated protests began to season the air and rumble amongst the diggings and washings of the precious yellow metal; the railways could never do this to such a famous place; they wouldn't dare! What is the new Government of the Colony about? The indignant protests went unheeded, for Big Interests were winning the day.

The route of the new railway track after leaving the present Croydon was, at first, settled to be laid through lower Mont-

rose, then after skirting the northern end of the Dandenongs, proceed on to Silvan and so to the far mountains ultimately.

But vested interests at the town of Lilydale put forward a claim—the lime industry was flourishing and lime was being transported daily to Burnley by horsedrawn vehicle; many workers were engaged in the industry. Vineyards abounded; other claims came forward and the sum total was impressive. The snowballing claims became firm resolve to get the railway.

Lilydale won. The railway came through on the 3rd April, 1882; it was built from Hawthorn to Lilydale in one complete stage. The line was electrified in four stages:—

(1) December 17, 1922—Flinders Street to Box Hill.
(2) January 30, 1923—Box Hill to Ringwood.
(3) November 28, 1924—Ringwood to Croydon.
(4) Novemebr 30, 1925—Croydon to Lilydale.

But at the beginning puffing steam engines laboured the long incline from Melbourne, taking an hour and a half to arrive at Croydon, eighteen miles east of the capital.

After the opening of the railway the head of White Flats never again touched the dust; she now resembled a lamb in frisky heart and in the future saw to it that good, meaty flesh grew on her elevated carcase. This district, vaguely south of Warrandyte in the public mind, was to receive now the honour of an official name, also. Of all appellations it was dubbed Warrandyte! Its superior, famous gold-bearing Warrandyte was not to get the railway; this was clear. But the crowning insult was that a mere stripling with nothing individualistic about it was to be endowed with Warrandyte's name—as well as with the coveted transport! Hot tears of mortification mixed with the gold dust, temporarily neutralizing it, but they proved of no more avail than protests at losing the transport. "You wanted a railway," Warrandyte was told; "well, this is it." Nearly seven miles away! (Incidentally, present-day Warrandyte people love their rural atmosphere and would not change the peace for anything.)

History has no record of bloodshed in the past, however, for alleviation came from the least expected quarter. The frisky lamb suddenly and firmly decided that she did not want the name of Warrandyte, anyway. As the origin of the name suggests that natives once made the locality of Warrandyte a favourite meeting place where boomerang throwing was practised—"Warran" meaning throwing, and "dyte" the object aimed at, from the aboriginal—it seemed not applicable to White Flats, or South Warrandyte as folk had begun to call it. With the River Yarra running through the settlement, then, Warrandyte was a natural camping place where natives assembled

for their various purposes; White Flats couldn't claim the honour and so the name was inappropriate although spears were used there as the flats later to become a part of Croydon teemed with kangaroos. But in 1882 early settlers did not bother much about mystic aboriginal lore—there is a sad dearth of written records—they repudiated the name "Warrandyte" on their brand-new station for practical reasons; from a postal angle it was a darned nuisance! Pioneers looked forward with heartbreaking eagerness and outstretched hands to delivery of mail from "home" after long months in sailing vessels. It engendered hopelessness when letters failed to arrive, yet days later the mail came after all, having been delivered first to "gold" Warrandyte, then returned to Ringwood to be railed again to the *station* of Warrandyte.

Also, fishermen, new to Australia, bought rail tickets to Warrandyte to try their luck in the Yarra; they found themselves at a station seven miles away with a high cab fare to pay out to the river, instead of the relatively cheap coach one from Ringwood. The settlers living around the new station finally revolted against the muddle; a meeting was held and subsequently the Victorian Railways was approached for a solution. Two years after the trains went through, in the year 1884, a brand-new name was agreed on. The word, "South," appended to the existing "Warrandyte" was discarded—there had been enough confusion already! Also "White Flats" was no longer significant because enterprising settlers had ploughed under along the flats the white plant, *Danthonia Pallida*, turning up black alluvial soil.

At this stage in the lamb's capering concerning its name, parent Lilydale took a maternal interest; it was pointed out that the land on which the new station stood had been acquired by means of private negotiation and transfer, formerly held under selection-lease-purchase provisions of the Land Act 1869 by G. Lacey, who received a Crown Grant for the property on 10th November, 1880. (Western portion, part of allotment 43D; the eastern portion of Croydon station was Crown land, allotment 43, formerly leased by A. Geisler together with 43E. The Crown issued allotment 43 to the Railways Commissioner in 1927.)

As the new line bisected these properties, the Railways and Lillydale Shire called on those interested for suitable naming of the station. Gregory Lacey then made his historic suggestion; he proposed that the name of "Warrandyte" be changed to "Croydon" after the English town where his wife originated. Other settlers made suggestions, but they are of no account

now, for it is history that Gregory Lacey's suggestion was the final choice of the Railway Commissioners and the Shire of Lillydale.

It remains a great pity that pioneers did not take the trouble to find out from aborigines still to be found living in primitive conditions in the country the native name for the locality and subsequently naming the annexed terrain thus—even if it happened to have originated from the black fellas' description, "No camp here"! Native names help enormously in building atmosphere, making a place more distinctive. Overseas visitors on tour delight in these names, their interest accelerated; also, they engender pride in local citizens' breasts.

Take a girl of the South Seas; would a Hawaiian maiden with a lei around her brown neck have the same allure if Hawaii were a misnomer, called inapplicably after a distant town? Or Croydon, the valley in England, be aptly named with a South Seas appellation? The effort should be for names redolent of localities, allowing towns in the old civilizations to retain the full glory and charm of their individual ones.

The origin of the English Croydon's name might be of interest here, considering that this locality also carries it, quite proudly, be it said, in many people's minds. By courtesy of the Mayor of Croydon, Surrey, England (Alderman G. J. Cole, J.P.), and the Chief Librarian of Central Library in that town, the following is stated (from J. C. Anderson's Short Chronicle on the Parish of Croydon, published 1882):

"The earliest mention of Croydon is in the joint will of Beorhtric and Aelfswyth dated about the year 962." (But there is an even earlier mention in a manuscript referring to the year 809.) Anderson continues:

"In this Anglo-Saxon document the name is spelt *Crogdæne*. *Crog* is the Norse or Danish word for *crooked*. . . . This term accurately describes the locality; it is a crooked or winding valley . . . which runs in an oblique and serpentine course from Godstone to Croydon. The Anglo-Saxon *g* is equivalent to our *y*; and thus the name was pronounced in 962 exactly as it is now, with the substitution only, in the final syllable, of the letter *o* for the diphthong *æ*, a common and venial corruption.

"In any question relating to the meaning of names, the most ancient form of spelling them ought to have great weight."

There were other derivations from the same source:

"In the entry in Domesday Book relative to the manor, the Normans spelt its name *Croindene*; hence Garrow (an early historian of Croydon) supposed that the term originated in

the union of two Saxon words, *crone* (sheep) and *dene* (a valley)—sheep valley. Ducarel (another historian) considered that the name was derived from the old Norman-French word *cray* or *craire*, chalk, and the Saxon *dun*, a hill—meaning a town near the chalk-hill; but this surmise is open to the objection that, long ere the Norman language could have so prevailed, the place was known, as we have seen, almost by its present name."

The following, however, is the authentic definition: The English Place-Names Society's Volume on Surrey Place-Names published in 1934 says, according to Central Library:

"The name (Croydon) is a compound of old English *croh* (saffron), and *denu*, valley, c.f. the names, 'le Saffron Garden' 1579, 'Safforne Garden' 1599, in the Parish. (These are names of particular places.) To explain the spellings . . . Dr. Bradley suggested an alternative old English form, *Crogigan dene*, from an old English adjective, *Crogig*, derived from *Croh*." The Librarian goes on to state that "because of their standing and research this must, I think, be taken as the correct explanation."

So "Croydon" means the yellow valley! Still, whether it originally referred really to a winding, crooked valley, a sheep one, chalk hills nearby or the generally accepted one of saffron valley (probably referring to the crocus plant), the name is inapposite when referring to Victoria's Croydon, for this one is a wide basin rather than a valley, with its rim broken in two places—to the north and south—and its colour in flower originally white. Incidentally, the Research Department of the Public Library in Melbourne finds that "Croydon" variously spelt as *Crauedena* and *Crauudene* means "valley frequented by crows"; but this derivation, the English Librarian states, refers to Croydon-cum-Clopton in Cambridgeshire, another town.

An early station-master at Croydon (Victoria) was named Goble; his son was Wing-Commander Goble, born at Croydon at the old gatehouse situated where Crossways Hardware Store now is. Fanny Walton, the station-master's sister-in-law, operated the gates; this gatehouse was later removed then set down on the spot where N. Court's estate agency now stands. A level crossing still operates at the original spot; flashing lights and a striking gong come into operation, halting north and south bound traffic when a train is due. However, delays are short, an improvement on steam-train days when shunting operations caused lengthy waiting. Another level crossing was located at Mt. Dandenong Road viaduct, but ballast was later used to build up the line over the road. The highway bend here once took a narrow course, having been built for horse and buggy traffic; the late Cr. Watts, of Lillydale Shire, was instru-

mental in bringing to birth a scheme to widen the road at this point. His residence was situated close by, the third house east of Bayswater Road.

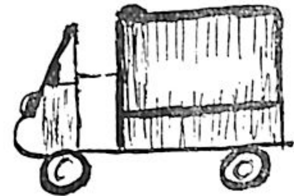
Trains are scheduled to take 47 minutes from Melbourne to Croydon in present times, but they are often late in peak hours; there is still a single track between Ringwood and Croydon. Train travellers from Melbourne have a sparseness of views of the Dandenongs except for a fleeting glimpse at Mitcham, thirteen miles out, the highest point on the line; but after Ringwood East is passed and the train rumbles its warning as it descends the guarding hills into Croydon, the full glory of magnificent panoramas embracing the whole range and the spreading valley of Croydon and Kilsyth bursts into view suddenly, the mountains a purple-tinted backdrop to the soft green of the undulating lowlands.

With the advent of the railway in 1882 Croydon graduated from a vague district with a satellitic name of South Warrandyte to a hamlet with another name borrowed from the Old World. It had been merely bush terrain with a few outlying farms and primitive saw-pits—and not a solitary store or shop! The nearest was at the present North Croydon. But three years after the first train went through, James Hewish came from Mooroolbark and with fine business acumen commenced to buy up land in Main Street with an eye to erecting shops.

The star that had begun fitfully to twinkle between Brushy Creek and the Dandenongs, suddenly shone forth with dazzling glow. Croydon had arrived.

In 1956 the Railways introduced a modern type of train—the blue Harris carriages; these contained wide doors, fluorescent lights, foam rubber seats and smooth, silent running. "Dog-box" carriages were to come off progressively; the knees of passengers in these touched at sudden lurches often to the embarrassment of dignified ladies. In 1960 even better ones were announced with floor tiles in tan tonings.

THE POST OFFICE



CHAPTER V—THE POST OFFICE

THE first mails were brought in to scattered settlers on horseback once a week. It is recorded that one Bradshaw Campbell aided by his sons conveyed the mails, later increasing the primitive service to three times a week.

When Cobb & Co. commenced the coach service along the Lilydale track, the mails were dropped daily at David Bilcock's store near the Croydon Road - Whitehorse Road corner, thus speeding up the service. But when the railway went through, the post office was managed at Croydon Station by the stationmaster in office; this was previous to the station building being re-built into a larger erection.

The first independent post office was situated on the grassy plantation that graces the environs of the present station building; this is an untidy approach to the railway still. The exact spot was a short distance from the present office of N. Court. The stationmaster's two daughters, the Misses Nankervis, were in charge of the first post office. Later a Mr. Broadley took over, then afterwards he built a brick building in Main Street; the P.M.G.'s Department paid him rent for the premises and he conducted postal and telephone exchange business, being paid a fixed annual sum for these services by the Department. In turn he paid employees out of the allowance, their number being according to the necessity of the period. After he died his daughter, Ellen, took over the post office under the same arrangement with the P.M.G. Some years later she married Mr. A. Pretty, an architect, who designed the new front, built in brick on to the Croydon Hall, the Baby Health Centre, Tate's Motors on the north-east corner of Main Street, and several handsome homes in the district. The old post office building is now occupied by a fashion house, for the P.M.G. has erected a fine new brick edifice opposite.

Up until May, 1960, Croydon 'phone subscribers were obliged to raise their metropolis numbers via trunk lines, an outmoded service for a go-ahead town, one that hamlets close by had not been compelled to suffer for some years past. Other services have also given the town a raw deal; it has been designated "country" when higher fees could be claimed such as for fire insurances, electricity, the daily bread; yet as within the metropolitan for motor fees when lower charges were operating for country areas previous to the recent 50 miles radius ruling. A universal ruling should long ago have been insisted on; the town is either country or metropolitan; it cannot be both.

A new telephone service was instituted in May, 1960, the P.M.G.'s Department naming it E.L.S.A.—short for Extended Local Service Areas; in operation Croydon subscribers would at last be able to dial numbers in the metropolis for a 4d. charge, in line with nearer towns. Figuratively all E.L.S.A. subscribers threw their caps up with delight and danced a merry jig; it changed to a funereal dragging of the feet, however, when it was discovered that only the person without a 'phone at his residence who made a casual call really benefited; E.L.S.A. looked a shady female when the first six-monthly rental accounts came in, for they had increased so much that the fact countervailed the difference in call charges on trunk lines.

Postage stamps rose from 4d. to 5d. at about this time, but minus the customary easing of ½d. less for postcards and unsealed letter flaps—all were now to be 5d. As the P.M.G.'s department had announced through the press a profit of over £6,000,000 in the preceding year, an incensed public considered that the raising of rentals and the price of stamps was excessive in view of the fact. But this profit, of course, was spread over the whole of Australia.

Many indignant protests were received by the P.M.G.'s department from far and wide, but without avail, for the public reaction is taken into consideration in advance before raising fees and tone allowed for. Also, undeniably, an advantage accrued from the ease of dialling in Croydon; other advantages came up. In 1960 mails on some routes were delivered by motor scooter complete with tiny cabin for weather shelter, an amenity speeding delivery by at least an hour. Twenty-five years ago it was delivered on horseback to streets around Croydon; earlier still, at places remote from delivery areas to west and south-west, fringe-dwellers frequently arranged to have mail forwarded to a postal depot nearer than the Croydon post office; this was Muldowney's, which was situated on the

present Maroondah Highway, one and four-fifths miles from Club Hotel corner, and slightly west of Murray Road. Folk calling at the depot gave it the colloquial name of Nelson's Hill post office, those taking that route. They walked through the bush from Wicklow Hills or climbed over Nelson's Hill through denser bush, heavily scented in spring with the perfume of wild flowers. James Muldowney, who conducted the depot, carried the mail from the Ringwood post office. The old house that once contained this depot still remains in the same position.

ELECTRICITY

EVERYONE knows the benefits of a good electricity supply, particularly those who have had to make do with kerosene lamps and one-fire stoves previous to the connecting of current. The first electricity supply in Lillydale Shire was in the Croydon area in the year 1915; it was extended later to Kilsyth and Montrose. In 1922 Lilydale was electrified and following this every town in the Shire of Lillydale had the utility extended to it. Although this Shire is not highly commercialised, each year big and important industries progressively buy land to erect factories and this is where electricity becomes a very necessary utility indeed.

GAS

IN 1960, in an imaginative new project called the Great Lower Dandenongs Project, the Gas and Fuel Corporation linked Croydon, Fern Tree Gully, Boronia, Bayswater, Ringwood, Lilydale and Mooroolbark to Victoria's gas reticulation system.

OWNERSHIP OF LAND

MOST people have possessions and some are of a rich nature and others are mediocre; but of all those inanimate it is probable that none result in more lasting contentment or make for such diminution of tension as the ownership of land. When all else fails it is balm to stand upon soil one owns and know that no matter what ills beset you, no man can gainsay your right to it. The person who but rents a property or one who lodges at another man's house has not the certainty that he will not be asked to vacate the premises at any moment; he is not the permanent owner.

The right sort of citizen has a great love of land even though the piece be but a small lot on which he has built his home; he grows to love it, he cultivates it, and pride of possession blossoms. In the house on this land he seeks refuge continually in his recoil from the wounds of the world; it is his treasured castle, the one spot he can retire to from the wound-dealers.

There is land even in Australia, the young country, which has been handed down from parents to children lovingly, generation after generation; often the acres are sub-divided ultimately, yet the family will cling to small portions, unwilling to forego traditional ownership. There are instances in which land has been held by the one family in Victoria ever since the State became a separate colony from New South Wales in 1851 and the Government released grants of land; there is great pride in such ownership and the right is guarded jealously.

The human who tills the soil lovingly knows a special kind of joy, a fulfilment; to watch a tiny plant burgeon or a shoot burst through the crust and unfold its downy leaves is to watch nature at one of her best tasks. It thrills because there is nothing artificial about the process; it causes wonder as to what magical powers are behind, causing the development.

The kindly rains of nature, and sun and moon and storm,
Entice from old earth the plant, its function to perform,
And God has taught since early times that woo the soil man must,
Or life itself is not sustained, this vital, precious trust!

To make the land productive was the herculean task of early Croydon settlers; great strength and spirit were needed to fell the trees, often of giant size; and this was but the first step. In chapters following are names of pioneers including a brief history of families who laid the foundation of the town that stands to-day, and whose descendants still live in the district; for if settlers with raised axes had not blazed the trail, there would be no story to tell.

However, in many instances, the kin of pioneers have disappeared from ken, therefore cannot be dealt with except for inclusion in the map of original land grants from the Crown, here shown.

THE PIONEERS

CHAPTER 6—THE PIONEERS

Tales told of the first white men to gaze on a district always command avid interest centuries afterwards; in the case of Croydon there appear to be four recorded—Daniel Bunce, a Tasmanian botanist searching for plant specimens in 1839 with the aid of aborigines who guided him to the top of Mt. Dandenong; William Turner and William Gardiner, who ran cattle; and a man named Thomson—these last operating in the early 1840's. But there is no evidence of these men having lived at Croydon; William Turner took up several land grants in 1856 as shown on map, but he ran a tailoring business in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, and lived there with his wife and family, the children being born in Elizabeth Street.

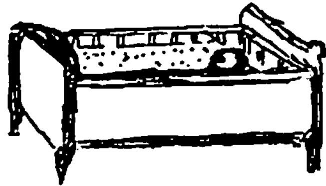
His cattle, kept as a sideline, often strayed as far as the foot of the strange blue range to the east, and as the Turner sons grew, it is easy to visualise William and the boys searching for the beasts and finding them by the bell around their necks, for undergrowth was high. One son, Thomas, was born in 1844; another, Hector, took up a land grant in Dorset Road, Croydon, in 1868; and it was in this road near the present railway bridge that the Turners set up a dry cooperage.

It is recorded that the brothers conducted this industry; probably the father was absorbed in his tailoring business and the boys, getting a taste of country life from cattle rounding, decided to settle on the far fringe of Doutta Galla district.

The casks were constructed of blackwood felled on the range, this timber being suited to staves. At the time there was an urgent need for casks for tallow, for a drought had come on the country and cattle were starving. Sheep and cattle were boiled down and the product shipped to England; the Turner cattle were in no better plight than others, thus the industry was started up.

Thomas Turner took up land in Mooroolbark, now Montrose. At the age of 39 he married Sarah Parr, aged 23. His occupation was farmer. They were married by a Salvation Army Chaplain at Hotham, District of Fitzroy, Colony of Victoria, in 1884. Children of the marriage were: Sarah (Mrs.

Davies), Thomas, Janet (Mrs. Oliver Hewish), Joshua, Catherine (Mrs. Paul), Rose (Mrs. Ball), Alexander, Bessie and Dorothy (twins), who became Mrs. Gill and Mrs. Sellick. Janet (deceased) lived at Croydon, also Dorothy (deceased) and Bessie. There are several grandchildren of Thomas Turner scattered about the district, and great-grandchildren.



THE FIRST WHITE CHILD

THE name of the first child born in any town has the distinction of holding a unique place in history; to the Jenkins family the honour is due, for it is claimed that Peter Jenkins was known to be the first white child born at Croydon.

The first Jenkins, also Peter, arrived in Australia in 1856; he came from Stirling, Scotland, but did not at first go to Croydon. It was later, in the 1860's that he took the Lilydale track and inspected land in the district. The portion to his liking he found half a mile east from the track now known as Main Street; his particular piece was situated on the south-east corner of Dorset and Mt. Dandenong Roads, extending south along Dorset Road for about half-a-mile until it joined the boundary of another early settler, Francis McGivern; eastwards the Jenkins land extended for a quarter of a mile, joining up with James Parr's land. But Peter Jenkins was not the original purchaser; William Jones owned it, taking up a grant of 80 acres in 1857 on this corner, then selling to Peter and Robert Jenkins in 1861.

It was here that Peter's son, Peter, was born in 1864, the first white child.

In early days, when Victoria was a colony of New South Wales, the latter Government effected a policy of granting colonists a pre-emptive right to a square mile of any land available they wished to acquire. They paid a nominal fee and possessed the right to occupy for a number of years and then to buy the freehold if they so desired. But after the Separation of Victoria, surveyed land was sold by Victoria's new Government at £1 an acre with outright freehold. However, settlers were not obliged to pay in a lump sum; they were allowed to pay off their holdings at 1/- a year—without

interest! Judging by these records, no doubt the Government was anxious to attract settlers to Crown land, with this the bait.

The first Peter Jenkins had a cattle holding and worked a dairy farm on the land; his son, Peter, had a milk round in Croydon in his early days, but later retired. In those days dairymen were not required by an act or any law to pasteurise milk. The product was delivered fresh to customers, but first it had to be water-cooled. On Peter Jenkins' farm the twin tasks of bringing in and milking the cows, then delivering milk to households were performed. After pouring it into cans, these were sunk into a well for the process of cooling in many instances; the particular well used by this family and the feed storage shed still stand to-day on an allotment in Bennison Street, Croydon.

Peter Jenkins, the second, sold some acres including this last lot to one Walter Hood. Reg. McGivern, a grandson of Francis McGivern, bought 25¼ acres from Hood. Later, part of this last portion was purchased by two New Australians. The son, Peter, had had his inheritance re-surveyed in due course and much of the land was sold as described. Attractive homes now stand on much of the original Jones land purchased by the Jenkins family in 1861. The original Jenkins cottage still stands on the south side of Mt. Dandenong Road, between Gordon and Bennison Streets; the villa which housed the son, Peter, and his family also stands on the west corner of Gordon Street. He had married Agnes, one of the youngest twin daughters of Francis McGivern (next chapter). When Peter died the widow continued to live there until, in ill-health, she left the district to reside with her daughter.

Peter and Agnes Jenkins had three children—Victor, Eva and Olive. Eva, now deceased, left three children; Olive (Mrs. McCarthy) also has three children, the son, Shane, being at Melbourne University.

Victor Jenkins was a school teacher; until his death recently he was head teacher at Hornby Street State School, Windsor. He was a highly-respected citizen of East Brighton; his likeable personality won adoration from pupils. When a young man he married a girl from the district of his birth, Miss Gwen Watson, of Kilsyth. They had three children; Donald, the son, is a student at Geelong College, and is the youngest in the family.

What hopes and aspirations regarding his son were in Victor's heart remained sacred to him, but it is known that the boy has no particular bent as yet for his father's profession

of teacher—he yearns to be a farmer. Such is the power of natural inheritance that here is a boy who, while not brought up on a farm and whose father had not the urge to farm, yet possesses the little germ of impulsion from his progenitors. Both of his great-grandfathers (paternal) were men on the land, Peter Jenkins and Francis McGivern. The district of Croydon knows the Jenkins family no more; they have shaken the dust of the place from their feet, but they hold a niche in this record because of the honour of the birth of the first white child in 1864. There is sadness in the thought that none of the Jenkins' early land is at present owned by a Jenkins, yet there is hope for the future when a strong love of the land begins to burst bonds in embryo farmers as in the case of this great-grandson of two pioneers whose land adjoined in a common boundary.

THEY DESCENDED FROM A CHIEF

CHAPTER VII—THEY DESCENDED FROM A CHIEF

AROUND the middle of last century two staunch Presbyterians, Francis McGivern and Mary Ann Downs, arrived in Melbourne from Tangeree, County Armagh, Northern Ireland. They were married in the Parish of Nunawading and lived at Burwood for several years where they raised six children—Mary, Eliza, William and Ellen (twins), Hannah and Martha. Their house, near the Elgar-Burwood Roads corner, was only recently demolished.

Rumours began to filter in of Government grants of land being offered south of the Lilydale track before reaching Corranwarrabull, the last being penetrated from the Lilydale end in pioneering days via the northern slopes.

The McGiverns were attracted by the rumours. In 1851 following the proclamation of a separate colony, the new Government had had proper surveys made of land and subsequently held periodic auction sales, the land bringing in an average of £1 per acre.

There were differing methods of taking up original grants; the most favoured of early settlers was a "selection-purchase-lease." This required them to live at least six years on the grant before purchase; land was alienated by this method to discover by trial if it was suitable for the pioneer before purchase. Francis McGivern was about to sign on the dotted line for all the Wicklow Hills land, but changed his mind in favour of Dorset Road as he considered it the more potentially productive piece. As the map shows, Wicklow Hills land was later taken up by Patrick McKean, A. Geisler, G. Lacey and the Loobys. The Kelly family later owned portion of this.

The McGiverns transported their worldly goods and precious human freight by horsedrawn vehicle over rough tracks and creeks from Burwood to the new district of South Warrandyte

in 1871. They took up the Crown grant of virgin land in 1883 after the period of selection. It lay on that part of Dorset Road half-mile south of Mt. Dandenong Road, the frontage twenty chains.

A shanty was quickly erected to shelter the family, then later was replaced by a cottage when shipments of timber arrived from Tasmania. This cottage stood until recent years; the Nan-org Hospital stands to-day on the exact spot where the early McGivern cottage was built on the grant of 84 acres. The McGiverns were one of the first three families to take up virgin land in Croydon; the dates on the map point to others, but these did not live on or till the soil in the district.

At this time the foothills were heavily timbered; the land stretching away south to Dandenong and the sea was park-like, dotted with huge gum trees; Croydon was a wild locality before the railway—not to come for another ten years. These settle- ments twenty miles out were far-flung parts of the Doutta Galla District, the name an aboriginal wording of the place white men called Melbourne. There is a Doutta Galla Province near the capital to-day; some records give the spelling as Dutigaller and a third interpretation is Dutergalla. As the aborigines had no written language, it was inevitable that differ- ing versions would evolve; the white conquerors of Australia could but write down and record the black Australian's speech phonetically. At any rate, the district was "outlying"; that is, it belonged to no municipality; shortly afterwards it was annexed to the newly-formed Shire of Lillydale.

On the map of original land grants the name, McGivern, is spelt differently (Magivern); but on the birth certificate of William, eldest son of Francis, the spelling varies again— Magriven. Which of the three was the original one of the pioneer Francis is lost in the mists of time, but this is immaterial, for, according to the Ulster-Scot Historical Society of Belfast, Northern Ireland, Woulfe's "Irish Names and Sur- names" states that all three names are included in eleven different versions of the one name, Macuidhrin, son of Uidrin.

It is an old Ulster surname. Early in the 12th century Macuidhrin was chief of Cinel Fearadhaigh in County Tyrone; in the 16th century the name was peculiar to County Down and even at the present time is confined to that County and the neighbouring Counties of Armagh and Antrim.

Francis McGivern and his wife added five more children to their family, making eleven in all—George, Isabella, Agnes and Annie (twins) and Francis. When adults, six left Croydon.

In any community men become known by strong character-

istics; the pioneer Francis was respected in the new district as a grower of first-class produce. His potatoes and onions in particular could not be surpassed and he was able to command a good price; his commodities were carted to market by horse- drawn vehicle. His youngest twin daughter, Annie, is still living, having recently celebrated her 80th birthday. As a child she remembers clearly her father's contemporaries speak- ing admiringly of his skill as a grower.

Francis McGivern did not live to see his youngest son, Francis, for the baby was born six weeks after his father met his death in an accident. Returning from father afield with a full load of manure for his precious garden one evening—for this settler with the green thumb found much satisfaction in furthering his occupation with thoroughness peculiar to pioneers —he, on climbing down from the driver's seat to ease his horse on a stiff hill, caught his foot in the entangled reins and crashed heavily to the roadway. He was found by James Jackson, another pioneer; he was dead, a wheel having passed over his head.

His widow was left with eleven children to rear, the eldest son being fifteen years old; this boy became the breadwinner.

From this time onwards early Croydon knew the heroic achievement of at least one courageous child — outstanding figure in a story epic in spirit, a saga fit for any record; it was not a passing act of bravery but years of gruelling work.

Shortly before the father's tragic death, arrangements had been made to construct the cottage in order to house the over-spilling family; a crop of potatoes and onions maturing, which the father had planted, turned out a bumper crop. The widow harvested the crop and sold the produce, using the money to purchase timber for the very necessary dwelling. A neighbour by the name of Morris proved his Christian spirit by erecting the cottage for the distressed woman. He and his wife later continued to offer friendship and were a much-needed moral support.

The boy, William, earned a livelihood by taking his father's dray out towards the foot of the mountains to collect firewood; he felled small trees and chopped them into chips, for this size the consumers demanded. He stuffed the chips into bags and carted the firewood home and finally to Melbourne to customers.

The mother, helped by two daughters older than William, continued to care for the family and keep in cultivation the market garden; the kitchen of the cottage was a three-sided annexe, an erection with slab floors which were scrubbed daily

with sandsoap and scrubbing brush. A colonial oven cooked the huge meals.

The boy, William, grew to manhood, despite his heavy burden as a child; one of his strongest characteristics was his phenomenal physical strength, born perhaps of the early conditioning. Many tales of this are still told by locals, the stories having been handed down by their forefathers. As a child he carried a bag of peas weighing a cwt. across the fields and through bush to the Maggs property at East Ringwood, a distance of two - three miles, on his back. When adult he performed a feat to astonish those who witnessed it. He had offered a plough at auction, but the price went to only 5/-. As the implement was in good condition, he became so disgusted at the proffered price that he refused to accept and in high dudgeon seized the single-furrow plough irritatedly and threw it with one mighty effort up on to his cart again to take home—with as much ease apparently as though it were a sheaf of hay.

Despite his rigorous upbringing, he was possessed of a fun-loving personality and became much in demand at functions to keep them swinging along. If a hostess wanted her party to go "with a bang" she invited Bill McGivern.

At twenty-nine he married Annie Bella Cowain, of Rushworth, a young horsewoman competing at various shows, and later living at East Ringwood. They had nine children—three girls (Dorothy, Myrtle and Christina, who have all married and left Croydon) and six sons (Frank, Reg., Alf., Les., Fred. and Bert.), four of whom are deceased. Reg.—the eldest living grandson of the pioneer, Francis, carrying the name of McGivern—and Fred live at Croydon.

There are seventeen grandchildren of the boy, William, and eleven great-grandchildren. When the eldest of William's boys (Frank and Reg.) were still in their early 'teens, history repeated itself, for the boys became the breadwinners for the large

family, the father having sustained an injury necessitating amputation of a leg. These boys carried out extensive road works in various shires, including roads throughout the Dandenong Ranges in order to support the family. A quarry is owned and operated by the family on a lower slope of the ranges at the present time.

Geoffrey, son of Frank, exhibited prowess on the football field when playing with the League team, Melbourne, in recent years; he lives at Croydon with his wife and infant daughter and son.

Alf's son, with wife and three children, lives in the district; he is Ian McGivern. His sister, Mary, graduated from Melbourne University and became a teacher of art at Geelong; she is married to a young man of English-Malayan extraction and they live at Canberra.

Margaret, the daughter of Fred, also lives at Croydon with her parents.

The youngest son of the pioneer Francis—the baby he did not live to see—grew up, married, and lived at Croydon. His only child was Lyndhurst, and she is now Mrs. A. Westcott, and lives at Croydon with her husband and two children.

All of these are the descendants of the pioneer Francis, still living at Croydon with the exception of Mary; the family enters the fifth generation. All own their own land in the district their ancestor helped to pioneer, and the one with the green thumb inherited from Francis is Reg. But, despite the absorbing occupation, the plants are grown only as a hobby.

In this family, one inherited the Gaelic colouring of blue eyes and black hair; several of the original settler's children spoke with a Gaelic inflexion handed down from Francis McGivern, though they were all born in Australia.

CHEONG'S AND NELSON'S HILLS

CHAPTER VIII—CHEONG'S AND NELSON'S HILLS

THE Cheong family and Cheong's Hill have long been familiar names to Croydon townsfolk. The first Cheong was Cheok; he did not take up an original land grant, for it was the year 1899 before he arrived in Croydon. He purchased, in three or four lots, land originally owned by W. Parr, J. Dynes and J. Maggs, bounded by Bayswater, Eastfield and Mt. Dandenong Roads, but there were other owners in between. The first lot of 150 acres was purchased from Dr. J. J. Kitchen and included the two houses which are still set atop the highest eminence at the rutty end of Montana Parade. Later Cheok Cheong acquired 12 acres from the Wiseman brothers, warehousemen; this was immediately behind the homestead and was purchased in order to extend Cheong land to Oxford Road; sometime later another 60 acres were purchased from the Wisemans and finally 28 acres changed hands between him and Hubert Maggs extending to "Ware."

Cheok Cheong came, when nine years of age from Canton; he was educated at Ballarat College and Scotch College. In later years he, in conjunction with Ah Ket, a barrister, was instrumental in suppressing the use of opium in Melbourne as young people were taking to it and it was beginning to worry the authorities.

Cheok Cheong had five sons and two daughters and at first the family lived in Melbourne. He was a very religious man and his children were made well aware of the fact. Following the Croydon land purchase, Josh and Nat as striplings decided, on a visit to the country home, to stay on and "bach"; Ben followed suit and stayed with them for nine months. But when the boys' parents came they found that Ben was running wild,

so they packed him forthwith off to Box Hill Grammar School.

Later Ben went to Burnley Horticultural College to learn the intricacies of pruning, for, after two years at the Box Hill school, he yearned to be back on the land. With the various land purchases, there were now 250 acres in all; this large estate was worked as orchard and farm in time. In common with other properties in the district it was found that the heavy grey loam with the clayey subsoil was peculiarly suited to fruit-growing. But a seam of another substance also ran through the property; this was kaolin, a fine white clay produced by nature through the decomposition of feldspar. The seam lies over Cheong's Hill in the vicinity of the old Pottery and Insulator Works and the strata extends in several directions including the Ringwood East shopping centre in Mt. Dandenong Road.

The kaolin was used at first for the whitewashing of chimneys but during and after the first World War when insulators could not be imported from Austria, clay pits were dug and the product baked in kilns at these works set up over part of the seam. (Site shown on map.)

Cheok Cheong was concerned in missionary work at Melbourne whither he repaired each week on Thursdays, returning to his Croydon estate on Mondays. One of his sons would drive him to Croydon station in the farm buggy to catch his train; on these Croydon excursions he might stand and gaze at the superlative view of the mountains and blandly suggest that a tree here or a bush there would be better removed to improve the panorama, while his sons would retort that a large belt of bush ought to be felled for the growing of crops—the artistic against the practical.

The eldest Cheong son, James, graduated B.A. and M.A. from the University of Melbourne; afterwards he went to Hong Kong for five years after which he proceeded to England where he took holy orders at Oxford. Then James returned to Melbourne; he was Bishop of The Riverina and was also Curate at St. Peter's, East Melbourne, the latter for 36 years. He was known at this High Church of England by the designation of Father James.

When the first Cheong commenced to divide his time between the city and the farm, 46 acres were planted in orchard; in 1923 an auction sale was held of some of these broad acres and the Cheong holding became smaller. The sons carried on as a hobby a sheep grazing acreage and a Jersey stud. At the time there were many greyhounds owned in the district and used for coursing purposes; let loose for exercise in rural

Croydon, these dogs were a menace time and again to farmers. They would pull the sheep down, where the animals lay stunned and injured; then fox terriers finished them off. Because of this ravaging, the Cheong brothers finally brought an end to their miniature sheep farm.

There was once an early church on Cheong's Hill, situated on the bend immediately above the present entrance to Montana Parade; here many pioneers and their children, grown to adults, were married. On Montana, also, the famous tennis player, Gerald Patterson, once lived; Dame Nellie Melba often visited the Pattersons.

Four of the Cheong sons have died—James, Nat, Joshua and Caleb; also the two girls, Grace and Christina. But Ben remains and is still a man who loves his land. Joshua married and became the father of three sons and three daughters; some of these have married and have children so that there is a fourth generation living in Croydon.

The family have perpetuated their name in "Cheong Park," a fourteen-acre portion of the original land situated on the north side of Eastfield Road on the corner of Bayswater Road, part of the Crown allotment taken up by William Parr in 1877. The Lillydale Shire purchased 7 acres in 1948 and the Cheong family donated the other 7 acres; belts of attractive bush fringe the sports oval and help to preserve the native atmosphere. There is also a tiny strip of precious land—about three acres—bounded by Eastfield Road, The Pass and the Ringwood-Croydon railway line presented to the Borough of Ringwood in 1952 by N. & B. Cheong, for it lay in that municipality; it has been named the Cheong Wildflower Sanctuary and it is a bit of unspoilt bush and will be improved on. The Monastery land was once a spot where wildflowers abounded, also, and as many as eighteen different varieties of orchids have been noticed growing in this scenic spot.

. . . .

Nelson's Hill is that portion of Mt. Dandenong Road extending from Bayswater Road to the top of the hill, but it refrains from following the highway farther and veers off to Maroondah Highway. It was called after a man of that name who, in early days, lived in a cottage in Richards' Lane, now Murray Road. The exact spot lay fifty yards from the junction of Mt. Dandenong Road and Murray Road where the road turns sharply to the left; farther on was Richards' boarding-house, noted for its excellent cuisine.

In present days only the portion from the railway viaduct to Murray Road junction is referred to as Nelson's Hill; in early days this was a very steep pinch. When the top was reached, Nelson's cottage came into focus and it is easy to imagine settlers commenting: "Thank goodness we've finally got up the hill—here's Nelson's!"

In approximately the year 1911 the top was cut off the peak and a cutting put through; engaged in this task were William McGivern and J. Houghton with their horse teams. It proved a heavy undertaking, for the well-fed horses emerged as too "rash" and were bent on pulling and straining with too much speed; a solution was hit on and Harry Lacey was communicated with. He brought his bullock team to the rescue with steadying influence; a son of W. McGivern remembers the names of the bullocks—Spot, Albert, Cocky, Larry, Johnny, Velvet, Paddy, Star, Prince and Baldy! And one reason for so recalling is the fact that, for a brief, thrilling space he was permitted, though only a boy of thirteen, to drive Mr. Lacey's fine, large bullock team.

A few years later, 1914-1915, the first piped water supply was laid through Croydon, commencing at Mitcham reservoir and extending to Woori Yallock. The huge pipes were dumped at rail vantage points between; they had, perforce to be carted to the line of pipe laying and W. McGivern, E. Paul and John McGee contracted for this, carting them by pipe jinker; then the M.M.B.W. laid the pipes. But it was not until 1920 that Lillydale Council was able to obtain a supply for Croydon township when the O'Shannassy system beyond Warburton operated.

With Cheong land on the left as Nelson's Hill was climbed, Michael Lane's grant lay on the right; later this land belonged to the McKay family. There was a working quarry on the land, although the metal used for the new cutting on Nelson's Hill was rail-trucked from Black's Coldstream quarry then carted from Croydon station by horse and dray.

DeGaris, the "dried-fruits" man, also owned original Michael Lane land later; he commenced to have constructed a recreation park thereon and screenings were carted for construction of tennis courts on the old quarry site. But DeGaris went insolvent and later his body was discovered floating in the sea.

The final owners are the Roman Catholics who built a magnificent monastery on the site in 1939; it ranks with the finest ecclesiastical buildings in Australia. The architect was Lionel San Miguel and his outstanding ability is very well displayed. Future missionary priests are trained at the monastery.

He Suggested Croydon's Name

CHAPTER IX—HE SUGGESTED CROYDON'S NAME

GREGORY LACEY arrived in Australia in 1870. He came from the quaintly-named Steeple Bumpstead in Essex. In 1880 he took up a selection-purchase-lease of land of 19 acres in Main Street, Croydon, and four years later it was at his suggestion that Croydon received its name. Gregory Lacey's land extended from what is now Devon Street to Nisbet's, across the railway (unbuilt) to Ellesmere Avenue where it right-angled, taking in a piece ending at Kent Avenue. In 1882 he purchased more land; this was situated on Croydon Road and extended from the corner of Smith Street (now Surrey Road) to Hewish Road - Main Street corner, down Hewish Road to Windsor Street then along this road to the boundary in Smith Street. There were 56 acres forming the rectangle. This pioneer also took up land in Montrose now owned by a grandson; there were 69 acres in this grant of land originally. The acreage on Croydon Road was not an original grant, being purchased from an early selection owned by John Cooper, then later by G. H. Smith.

A land sale had been advertised previously, Robert L. Hair, of Hawthorn, having been instructed by representatives of the G. H. Smith estate to offer several lots for sale. It was duly advertised by poster display. Perusal of the auctioneer's sheet of early days yields the following information:

"Land offered for sale ranging from 4/- to 12/- per ft.; deposit £5. Terms: 3 years @ 5%.

The sale was scheduled for Saturday, 2nd February, 1877, at 4 p.m. "on the Ground at the Township." James Warren was named as the surveyor of this land.

At a later date, on instructions from G. Lacey, Esquire, "who is leaving for Europe," Robert Hair held an auction of "57 magnificent business and villa sites in this rapidly rising and favourite district which for position and view cannot be surpassed . . . commanding splendid views of the charming mountain scenery for which Croydon and Lilydale are remarkable." (This last was obviously after the town was named in 1884.) The advertisement went on to state that "the skilful surveyor has laid out with special regard to the formation of the land; builders and speculators cannot go wrong in securing land in Croydon. The auctioneer will also submit for auction two magnificent paddocks containing 30 and 14 acres respectively adjoining this Mount View Estate." Terms were 10% deposit and balance up to two years @ 5% per annum.

Ordinary trains left Princes Bridge at 6.10 and 11.55 a.m. and there was also a special train calling all stations leaving Princes Bridge at 1.40. Free passes were offered for this land sale, obtainable from Robert Hair.

The land extended from Hewish Road to Lacey Street and so down to the main drain.

The original home of Gregory Lacey was built on Croydon Road, at almost the exact spot where the new Fire Station now stands, just slightly south, in fact.

Descendants of pioneers can recall stories handed down telling of the fine bullock teams owned by Harry Lacey—used for hauling timber along roads often quagmires.

When settlers on the land in Victoria after separation from New South Wales desired to cultivate their properties, they were obliged to apply for a licence to cultivate. This was granted on the payment of a fee on application. A copy of an old licence is reproduced—from the original lent by courtesy of Stanley Lacey, the grandson of Gregory.

"Land Regulation 7/2/76

Schedule XII

Part III Land Act 1869

Goldfields Residence & Cultivation License

. . . .

"Know all men that I, the Governor of Victoria, in pursuance of the provisions of the Land Act 1869 and in consideration of the sum of one pound, eighteen shillings to be paid by Gregory Lacey to the Receiver and Paymaster at Melbourne, or other officer authorized to receive the same, and subject to the terms and conditions hereunder specified, do hereby give to the said Gregory Lacey full license and authority to reside on or to cultivate all that piece or parcel of Crown land situated on a

goldfield, or adjacent thereto, more particularly described in the Schedule hereto, for One Year from the date thereof unless the same be annulled or revoked in accordance with the conditions hereunder specified.

"Dated this first day of July, A.D.1877

"Schedule.

About 19 acres.

"Part of Allotment 43. Section —. Parish of Warrandyte.
"County of Mornington."

This licence related to the land of Gregory Lacey situated in Main Street between Devon Street (then unnamed) and what is now Nisbet's shop. It is reproduced because it was typical of many such licences issued to settlers in the last century. A significant clause is the one relating to a goldfield; as there appears to be no record of gold having been found at Croydon, the reference probably means the adjacency of Warrandyte, the famous gold-producing district, particularly as Croydon was once a part of the latter.

A holder of a licence was obliged to cultivate at least one-fifth of his land, and to live on it. He had to enclose it with a substantial fence.

If a man was the holder of a Miner's Right, he could, with the written permission of the Minister, enter these properties for mining purposes. He could erect mining plant or machinery and mine land in respect of which these licences were issued. (The old spelling on the permit was "license.") The government was desirous of the finding of gold, evidently.

Harry Lacey was the son of Gregory; he was born in England and came to Australia with his parents when he was two years of age. Shortly afterwards the family settled in what is now Croydon They had lived in the district for about eleven years when the new railway line was constructed, a small portion of which ran through Lacey property.

As market gardens and orchards once flourished in the district and fertilisers were needed, Harry Lacey at one time engaged in the cartage from railway trucks of manures used for the purpose. In the early 1930's he, in conjunction with his son, took over the fuel and fodder store in Coolstore Road.

Harry Lacey was a keen churchgoer, serving the Croydon Church of Christ as Deacon and as Secretary for varying periods. A cherished ambition was to have the Church rebuilt; this he did not live to see, but a fine Church has since been erected in Jackson Street.

He died at the ripe old age of 88. He had been married twice, the first time to a daughter of an early settler, by name of Meyland, the issue being three daughters—Emma (Mrs. Knee), Lydia (Mrs. Philpott), and Susie (Mrs. Bullen)—and the second time to the youngest daughter of the pioneer Samuel Hardidge (Amelia), from which marriage was a son, Stanley.

Stanley Lacey, a big and pleasant young man, still carries on the produce store in Coolstore Road. He is married and lives in a house on land taken up in the early days by Gregory Lacey. As he talks it is evident that the love of family tradition has a place in his heart. The blood of pioneers runs strong in his veins, Gregory Lacey and Samuel Hardidge. He has three sons to carry on the tradition—Harry, Gregory and Robert. Lacey Street, Croydon, was named after his family.

. . . .

Samuel Hardidge came from Somerset, England; he lived with his wife and three children in Bulleen Road, Doncaster, and later came to Croydon where three more children were born. The six were Mary, Emily, Sarah, Samuel, Amelia and William, the last-named being killed at the age of seventeen during construction of the Croydon-Lilydale railway line.

The Hardidge land grant was taken up in 1881; it comprised the triangle bordered by the three roads—Kent Avenue, Croydon Road and Whitehorse Road—excepting the 25 acres already taken up by E. A. Looby in 1877. The Hardidge 101 acreage developed as valuable property as the apex of the triangle adjoined the railway property and the other extreme rose steeply north, embracing fine panoramic views. An orchard was planted on the holding; the home site comprised part of the elevated section now known as Barina Crescent; two oak trees still stand here.

The first Church of England was located on this early land grant, at the junction of Croydon and Whitehorse Roads. Being on the Lilydale track, it was a valuable ecclesiastical gain in pioneering days. The descendants of Samuel and Eliza Hardidge recently installed the complete furnishings apart from the organ in the chancel of the new Church, St. John the Divine, to commemorate their ancestors' part in its development. On Sunday, September 4th, 1960, Evensong was attended by an overflowing congregation to witness the dedication of the Choir Stalls. A brass plaque is appended to one of the Stalls commemorating the gift given in affectionate remembrance of these pioneers. The first vicar of St. John's, the Reverend A. J. White, participated at the Dedication Service, and the Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr. Frank Wood, sent a congratulatory message.

The two eldest daughters of Samuel married and left the district; Sarah married Thomas Knee and two of their sons—Oliver and William—reside in Croydon, and four of their daughters—Mrs. Allen, Mrs. A. Dickson, Mrs. Pearson, Mrs. McIlrait. Samuel married Amelia Bilcock and of their children Mrs. Thomson, Mrs. Grave, David, Alfred and Mrs. G. Morris still live in the district. Amelia married twice—first to Samuel Goodwin. A daughter, Mrs. E. Brice, lives in Croydon. Later Amelia married Harry Lacey; their son is Stan.

This pioneering family had a love of music; a fitting tribute can be heard and seen when choristers lift their voices in the chancel of St. John the Divine in Croydon. There is a sixth generation of the Hardidges in Croydon—Julie and Marie Bennett, daughters of Elaine, who is the grand-daughter of Mrs. Thomson through her mother, Thelma. In all there are 700 descendants.

The first Samuel died in the year 1912, leaving a will directing that his five living children receive a life interest in his estate, one lot at the apex having been sold to William Bilcock. A blacksmith's business operated there at one time before the Education Department purchased the land. The daughters of Samuel Hardidge lived until well over eighty years of age and so it was not until recent years that the valuable estate was finally subdivided into building lots except for the High School site on Croydon Road, and the Central School one. (At apex.)

In the days of this pioneer, the hard-working breadwinner frequently arrived home late from the land and sent his son to the local hotel armed with a jug and commanded to procure six-pennorth of beer. The son of a settler—his name does not matter—procured the full jug of ale and set out on the return journey. But the boy's curiosity concerning the foaming brew overcame his discretion; bending his head, he drank portion in

one quick, guilty draught. Nearing home he commenced to stagger, but one anxious thought tormented him—how to explain the short measure to his father? On passing the water pump, the obvious struck him and he replenished the beer jug quickly, one eye on the house door.

The jug was dutifully set down in front of father, who did notice the extra-happy arrangement of froth foaming at the top; but one thirsty pull and father sat up straight in incredulous astonishment—the beer was flat! The end of the story might have resulted in lifelong enmity with the licensee except for what immediately transpired. On holding his beer glass up to the light in the forlorn hope of discovering a few lively bubbles to try and prove that the brew was not as horrible as it undoubtedly tasted, the perplexed man became aware of a foreign element disporting itself in the liquor; he looked closer. Tadpoles! In a flash he had connected up the puzzling awkwardness in his son's gait with the clue of the embryo frogs.

Another boy tells of his pioneering father's method of arousing from sleep in the morning the boys of the family. They slept on the verandah, out of earshot of mother; realizing this, father brought up the boys to obey without having to nag—one call only. Should they drop off to sleep again, they woke fully to find themselves being lumped to the waterhole where they were dipped. Drastic measures, but undoubtedly effective.

High on Hardidge property was an old quarry; the soft stone was once used for maintenance metal on Croydon roads. There was no crushing plant, but men, travelling about, appeared at regular intervals to carry out the manual breaking of stone. They were called knappers; they used two implements, the large one to break the initial rock and the smaller one to pound it into road-metal size, never as fine as the mechanical crushers reduce it; later the knappers shovelled it on to drays and heaped it at needed points on roads; these dumps were beautifully squared into neat piles. "The knappers have been here—no one else makes such a spruce pile," folk would say when coming on evidence of their work.

There were also men who carted backwards and forwards to the job location by barrow; they loaded the big rocks then broke them with small hammers at the site. The work was gruelling; the knappers played a part in the development of the district, making bullock tracks negotiable for farm vehicles.

THE FIRST STORE

DAVID BILCOCK arrived in Australia from Biggleswade, England; he married Mary Long, the daughter of a sea captain. He took up land in Croydon in 1881, his grant being 38 acres; it

was bounded by Lincoln Road and Maroondah Highway.

To the first David Bilcock goes the honour of opening the first store in Croydon at a time when one was urgently needed; it became the first post office operating in the district. The mails were carried from Melbourne by Cobb & Co.'s coaches; also, bread was sold at this store. Settlers' wives procured the bread as often as possible. David Bilcock's wife and her daughter, Amelia, performed the herculean task of baking the bread and the menfolk carted portion of it up to settlers on Mt. Dandenong by horsedrawn vehicle. There was a serious landslide on Mt. Dandenong round about this time and a woman was killed; excessive rainfall caused the landslide and for many years to follow an ugly gash of red disfigured the mountain. The fall of earth blocked the road effectively.

When unable to work the land, early settlers were forced to procure lucrative work outside; David Bilcock acquired a position in Melbourne at one such time and was a waiter at Scott's Hotel; as there was no regular transport at the time, he walked the eighteen miles to the city each day and returned the same way!

When David Bilcock's daughter, Amelia, was a young girl in her 'teens, aborigines often camped not very far away from her home. Amelia was very fond of the little black babies; it is probable they belonged to tribes proceeding to Melbourne for blanket allotments and camping en route. One black baby in particular took the young girl's fancy; the gin held it in her arms and Amelia stood admiringly by. Suddenly the aborigine woman offered her baby to Amelia to keep, white teeth shining in her black face. "You have it." Amelia, it is on record, was keen to take the black baby home, but Amelia's mother had different ideas.

Not far from the store the blacks held a corroboree on one occasion; this is on the authority of Mrs. A. Thomson, Amelia's daughter, who states that her mother witnessed it. The locality was in the gully east of Lincoln Road and on the right-hand side of Maroondah Highway. Not far from here, opposite the present Dorset Hall, stood in early days the Prince of Wales Hotel. In these times, nearing the end of the nineteenth century, blacks had a fair smattering of the English language. If a black was called a blackfellow he became offended; one spoke of their race as "coloured" to their faces.

David Bilcock and his wife, Mary, had six children, two sons and four daughters; one son was scalded as an infant.

Another David Bilcock, a great-grandson of the first David, lives on Wicklow Hills at the present time. A great-granddaughter is Joan Bilcock—stage name Joan Bilceaux—who is a television personality.

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JAMES STYLES was another pioneer who came from England; on the voyage out by sailing vessel a man named Parr fell overboard and was drowned, leaving a widow and son. Later James Styles married the widow; in 1882 he took up a land grant of 59 acres in Croydon situated on the corner of Hewish and Dorset Roads. His old original home still stands to-day just north of Jackson Street, in Dorset Road.

There were six children of the marriage—Samuel, Horace, Eli, Joseph, Esther and Sarah. These all lived to a great age except Joseph, Horace only recently passing away aged 90. Samuel purchased 20 acres of land, later named Ruskin Park; he shifted a three-roomed dwelling on to it and added more rooms. This became the first house erected on Ruskin Park. Horace, his brother, purchased another 20 acres adjoining it. Their parents left Dorset Road and took up residence next door at "Maisemore" and Samuel used to drive his mother to church at Montrose in the old days in a wagonette.

Samuel subsequently purchased land on Yarra Road and planted an orchard; he was the father of eleven children, three of whom live in Croydon—Mrs. E. Hill, Mrs. Poile, and Ernest.

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JAMES KERR arrived in Australia from England; on virgin soil he took up a land grant of fifty acres in 1876. It was all of the land bounded by Main Street, Mt. Dandenong Road, Dorset Road and Hewish Road, and once adjoined Gregory Lacey's land on what is now the last-named road, but was then a fence. Old letters are on file in which the two men discussed this fence.

The Kerrs lived in a house in Dorset Road; it has been demolished and a new one built. The President of the Lillydale Shire, Councillor Frost, is the owner of this new house, for the Kerr family long ago sold the original grant of land.

James Kerr and his wife had six children—Elizabeth, Annie, Alice, Joseph, William and James.

Joseph had four children—Stanley, Jean, Linette (Nettie) and Beth—but they are not all living. Joseph married Jane Jackson, the daughter of James, an early settler in the district.

The pioneer James Kerr planted an orchard on portion of his land grant in Croydon and grew mixed fruit; he also owned land at Montrose where Green Corner now is; here he carried on a means of livelihood by burning charcoal used in Melbourne for engine fuel and for general heating purposes. The early settlers delivered the charcoal to Melbourne by horsedrawn vehicle and were frequently away from home for days at a stretch, being held up on bad roads.

The Kerr orchard was worked in two different parts; later the son, Joseph, worked the orchard; after he died the property was rented by W. Cook who ran cattle on it.

Joseph's widow re-married and shortly afterwards she died; following her death a large portion of the Kerr property extending from the rear of the shops in Main Street, Croydon, down to the main drain at Springfield Road, was sold to the Lillydale Shire to be used for a sports oval. A handsome pair of wrought-iron gates guard this park.

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There is a portion of Main Street that has developed as a "golden mile." It lies between Hewish and Mt. Dandenong Roads. The extension beyond this portion is a bottleneck and therefore hampered with very limited parking space, the bane of the present day. It is the eastern side of this golden stretch which the Kerr family once owned. The price of land here has soared; the highest price recorded for a lot is £1,000 per foot.

Back in 1885, when this land was still undeveloped except for orchard and grass, the first sale of a tiny piece was made by James Kerr; that is, it was small by old standards, with most of the district virgin country. The lot was situated on the corner of Hewish Road and Main Street, opposite the hotel, and was purchased by James Hewish for the sum of £50. Later he built a general store on the lot and afterwards procured a wine licence.

With the concurrence of a daughter of Joseph Kerr, an anecdote is related following the sale of this lot. Much interest was taken locally at the lot changing hands, especially as the first store was to be erected on the site. The two participants of the deal were criticized—James Kerr was a robber for charging £50 for such a trifling piece of ground and James Hewish was a lunatic for paying it!

Joseph Kerr's daughter, Jean, is married to Charles Reid and they have two daughters; they live in Croydon in a house overlooking the original grant of land belonging to her grandfather, James Kerr.

MAIN STREET

CHAPTER X—MAIN STREET

THE Hewish family had much to do with the development of Main Street, Croydon; the first Hewish came from Devonshire, England, and lived at Templestowe. Later his son, James, took up virgin land at Mooroolbark. One day, in 1881, before the advent of the railway in Croydon, James noticed the station property being pegged out and was deeply interested; he finally left Mooroolbark for Croydon in 1885, three years after the railway came through.

He bought, in three sections, most of the land on both sides of Main Street, the first piece being an acre on the corner of what is now Hewish Road (named after his family) and where Widdicombe's pharmacy now stands, extending to the shop owned at present by Charles Turner and occupied by "Young Fashions." James Hewish erected a store on this lot and later obtained a wine licence; he built subsequently the first butcher's, grocer's, baker's and timber merchant's, the butcher's shop standing where the butcher, Broughton, now is. Many years ago David Mitchell, father of Dame Nellie Melba, bought the original butcher's shop from James Hewish who ultimately sold considerable frontage including his baker's shop, now occupied by Mindy's, and in the subsequent alignment of boundaries it was discovered—but not until many years later—that a foot of land was unaccounted for—a very astonishing thing. The original title on which the baker's and butcher's shop lots were drawn, showed one more foot than the single titles. Over many years the mystery became the Puzzle of the Missing Foot to the Hewish family; a daughter of James Hewish inherited the property concerned and a diligent search was carried out to try to discover what had become of the lost piece—it appeared to have vanished into thin air.

It was unearthed finally in a foot-wide brick wall on the boundary of the grocer's shop occupied until recently by Charles Turner who bought the property from the Hewish family; the frontage purchased by him did not include, apparently, the foot of land incorporated in the wall, but it belongs

to his property, as since discovered. The Hewish family finally waived the right to reimbursement of the long-lost foot; land at this time was comparatively cheap, but has since sky-rocketed to £1,000 a foot. But as far as payment is concerned, the foot has, indeed, vanished.

James Hewish separated his wine saloon from the first store, building a grocer's shop opposite; the original building still stands as Nisbet's grocery. William Taylor took over the shop initially then later James' son, Oliver, ran it. The latter subsequently went into a timber business on the lot where stood the Highway Timber Co. until recently, lately purchased by G. J. Coles. This eastern side of Main Street included land bought by James Hewish from a man named Thurgood, for the Hewish family did not take up Crown land in Croydon. There was once a blacksmith's shop run by James Hewish on the site now occupied by the Croydon Hardware Store; an early blacksmith by the name of Syme was employed there. He lived at Lilydale and it is on record that one night after arriving home he murdered his mother-in-law. Subsequently he was tried, convicted, and hanged at Melbourne gaol; a figure of the killer was made at the waxworks and exhibited.

On the western side of Main Street James Hewish bought up land and planted an orchard; it extended from the present corner at Dr. Burns', along Mt. View Street to the railway line. The original home of the Hewish family in Croydon was O'Shea's, lately demolished. In James Hewish's day an aboriginal family lived in Main Street; their cottage was situated on the allotment where now stands the new E.S.A. bank, but it was no humpie, being built of palings.

In those early days blacks had not adopted the white man's footwear, but they were enamoured of his football; they kicked footballs up and down Main Street without boots on! The gins stood on the verandah looking on and grinning their wide, white-toothed smiles; they wore much red in their clothing. Later James Hewish bought the block on which their cottage stood. In those days iron quoits was a game much favoured; the quoits were bevelled on an edge and thrown with the object of falling as close as possible to the peg and digging into the ground but not encircling the peg.

James Hewish held an auction sale of his orchard in 1914 and succeeded in selling a few blocks in Main Street for £3/10/- per foot. Mt. View Street came into being as a thoroughfare at the time of this subdivision, and also Devon Street, the last-named after the birthplace of the first Hewish. James Hewish named these streets.

After the State School was built, Municipal Elections for the Riding were held there previous to the Croydon Hall being built; even now this is the case. The procedure was as follows in early days:

Two men would put up for Council and the voter crossed out the name he did not want. But it is factual that many an old-timer, should he dislike both electors, firmly crossed out the two names.

In early days the Victorian Railways often called tenders for two-foot firewood; wood-carters' prices averaged 2/6 per ton stacked green in the Station Yard. Lees' Hardware Store is the approximate location of these activities. Harry Lacey brought wood in from Wonga Park by bullock team, and William McGivern from the direction of the mountains.

When the wood dried out six months later, the Railways Dept. again called tenders to have it carted from the stacks to Railway trucks to be transported to Melbourne and other places for firewood; 6d. per ton was the average price tendered by carters who carried out the work with horse and dray. But this price at a particular time was considered too high by the Railways Dept. and they called tenders again; finally one Joe Corbett tendered at 4d. per ton; his tender was successful and he carried out the work by barrow! He wheeled from the stacks to the Railway trucks day after day and averaged 3/6 per day. His feat is an example of the gruelling work put in by pioneers to earn a living; it is a tale of the birth pangs of Main Street.

The first State School was at Brushy Creek; the second was held at The Gospel Hall on Mt. Dandenong Road at the viaduct

where Johnson's now is. This hall was used for church services and was undenominational; there was also a butcher's shop at this spot occupied by one Barelli. The site at this time was a level crossing on the road. Many pioneers' children came here for school, seven at first including Emma Hewish, Eliza Davey, and Alexander, William and Elizabeth Webster; it was opened because Brushy Creek was too distant.

Twelve months or so later, the first portion of the present State School was built, a brick erection opening in July, 1888. The Head Teacher was John Thomas Burke; he was an enthusiastic gardener and planted many deciduous trees in the grounds of the school. The gardens at the school became famous for miles around.

Mr. Burke was a remarkable man; he was an excellent head teacher and a very conscientious person. But strangely, considering his educated status, he could not make a speech properly. He lived with the Hewish family and after 9½ years was transferred to Walhalla; Croydon citizens presented him with a purse of sovereigns but he could only stammer: "Thank you, thank you." He, in middle age, married an eighteen-year-old pupil he had taught at school. Mr. F. Hebbard, a local resident, and also a well-loved head teacher at Croydon School at a later date, was a pupil of John Thomas Burke.

In early days there was no school committee, so-called; but a group of interested citizens was known as the "Board of Advice." The foundation stone of the school was laid by Emma Hewish when a child; still active, she remains vitally interested in life; she is now Mrs. Evans.

James Hewish was the father of five children—four boys and a girl; three of the boys died at an early age. The remaining two children are Mr. Oliver Hewish and Mrs. Evans.

Croydon's first bowling green was laid out by James Hewish at about the dawn of the present century. The location was an allotment where now stands the Croydon Hardware Store. There were four rinks on the green, and son, Oliver, aged fifteen, was detailed off to keep the lawns green by watering.

Water from an underground well was used, raised via the medium of a lift-pump, then carried to the green.

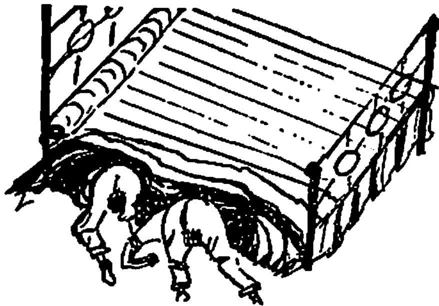
The Croydon Hall was erected in 1908, but minus the brick front at present adorning it; the finance of the Hall was guaranteed to the Shire Council by some of the townspeople.

The first licensed hotel in the district was the Prince of Wales Hotel, a weatherboard building on Whitehorse Road, west of Brushy Creek; its location was a spot opposite the

present Dorset Hall and a little more east. It was removed bodily to Croydon by horse-drawn bogie, then placed on the site of the present hotel. Shortly afterwards, in 1914, it was burnt down. In 1915 a brick hotel was built on the site, the licensee's name being Brew! The hotel has changed hands several times since then; in 1960 it was renovated and new additions built but unfortunately they do not conform to the original architecture.

In early days, before the hotel was removed from Whitehorse Road, Croydon village lads were in the habit of patronising it; Harry Wenlock was the publican. Drinkers were not fined if caught drinking on Sundays, the licensee alone being liable. No Police Station graced the environs of Croydon, the district being under the jurisdiction of Lilydale police.

On one Sunday in particular the lads of the village repaired to the Prince of Wales for a little liquid refreshment to help them over life's hurdles when suddenly Sergeant Hayden of Lilydale paid a visit. He was a friend of several of the youths' fathers; at sight of the burly officer of the law consternation reigned—not because of his office but in fear that the stern parents might be acquainted of their sons' high jinks. All dived for cover. Into the bedrooms they went, these being the nearest haven; they crawled under the beds and there were many collisions in the panic-stricken haste, for the rooms were as yet not tidied for the day!



Publicans conducting hotels on the Lilydale track were obliged to keep open bar at specified hours as to-day, or lose their licences; at the time the Prince of Wales Hotel building was trussed ready for removal to Croydon and the liquor bar out of commission, the publican was obliged to set up a make-shift bar somewhere on what remained of the premises. He was in a quandary as the stables were the only roofed shelter; finally

a rough, temporary bar was knocked-up inside the stables—still used as such. Old flooring-boards were used for the purpose. In here men drank to the champing of horses, and it is factual that patrons of the improvised bar quaffed their ale standing feet deep in manure!

In 1921 the Main Street in Croydon was declared a brick area and since that date many business houses have been erected, thus improving vastly the appearance of the shopping thoroughfare, particularly of recent years.

A few very old erections still stand of timber construction, and recently the Commonwealth Bank opened in a prominent part of Main Street in a timber building shifted to the site for the purpose; it is of quaint design but only for temporary occupation, it is understood.

Mr. Oliver Hewish married Miss Janet Turner, also a descendant of early pioneers. (She is now deceased.) There are two daughters—Dorothy, and Marjory (Mrs. V. Cardenzana, Devonport, Tasmania), and a grandchild. Mr. Hewish lives in Mount View Street, Croydon, in a house with neatly-kept garden, on land taken up by his father in 1885; he stood for council in 1928 when South Riding was divided into South-West Riding, then again in 1932 for the three-year term (Lillydale Shire).

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A good genie of Main Street is Mr. Frank Turner; he was custodian of the Croydon Hall for many years and became almost an institution in locals' minds, giving his services freely: Should you be engaged for piano playing, for instance, and the instrument wanted tuning, you mentioned the fact to Frank Turner and it was seldom that the matter wasn't attended to in time.

Mr. Turner lately celebrated his 90th birthday with many messages of congratulation and goodwill; he can often be seen taking off along Main Street on his lawful business looking more like 60 than 90 years old. He lives with his wife in Gallipoli Parade—a remarkable couple.

The Superb Weaver of Tales

CHAPTER XI—THE SUPERB WEAVER OF TALES

JOHN ALLEN'S parents arrived in Australia from Devonshire, England, early in the nineteenth century and their son was the first white child to be born south of the Yarra River; his birthplace was Jossman's Bridge, Deep Creek, Warrandyte, in 1841.

John Thomas Allen was the son of John Allen; he reached the grand age of 87, having lived with his daughter and son-in-law in latter years (Mr. and Mr. E. Hill, of Lilydale). Cr. Hill was president of Lillydale Shire for term ending 1960.

John Thomas was the first white child born at Kilsyth (1873), thus bearing an honour commensurate with that of his pioneer father. In early days Kilsyth was called South Moorool-bark, being a wild section of the much better known Moorool-bark and Lilydale districts. John Thomas went to school at the primitive settlement at Brushy Creek; his father had married the daughter of early settler Dodd. Dodd had taken up portion of the original grant of William Turner on the corner of Mt. Dandenong and Dorset Roads, now owned by the Gwillam family.

Caroline Dodd was married from the house that stood on the property. Caroline, before her marriage, was her father's right hand; she drove the bullocks used on the farm in primitive Croydon while her father guided the plough. Maize was grown on the plain falling away from the homestead; this terrain was later known as Gwillam's flat. The plants grew to an enormous size—twelve feet high with stems as thick as a man's arm.

When the Dodd family sold their holding they took up land in Hull Road; Caroline's son, John Thomas Allen, married

Elizabeth Moore; before her marriage she ran the Burnt Bridge Hotel in conjunction with Lucy Dawson. But one fact stands out clear—John Thomas derived no advantage from this, for he was always a teetotaller! "I hated the stuff," he remarked not long before his death recently, a twinkle in his eye which had nothing to do with memories of imbibing, adding: "The Burnt Bridge Hotel was called The Blazing Stump by all the local lads in my young days." His last remark appears to put the seal on the legend that the hotel was named following the burning of a bridge close by. One compiler of early history relating to the district of Ringwood gave as his opinion that part of the hotel's name had probably been corrupted from "burn," the Scottish word for a stream; but in chance remarks of old-timers like Mr. Allen, the real meaning and reason for naming of early landmarks become apparent. "**Burnt** Bridge Hotel it was," he averred. "They used to express happenings in that way in early days—often still do out in the woop-woops."

Many hotels in the beginning started as shanties selling coffee—stopping-off places for coaches; later these obtained licences to sell liquor. "At the coffee place down by the burnt bridge," a local might say, and it is possible that the hotel took its name from this kind of reference. The old Burnt Bridge Hotel finished up as a store; its location was near the corner of Maroondah Highway and Old Lilydale Road, not far west of the boundary of the new Croydon Shire and Ringwood.

The old home of John Thomas Allen still stands in Hull Road; it is fifty-four years old. The land extended from the vicinity of Worrall Street to Five Ways and originally belonged to Caroline Dodd's family. John Allen purchased it from his wife's family and it was handed down to his son, John Thomas Allen, and his two brothers.

Mr. Allen was characterized by a love of story-telling; many are the gems of history not to be found in government archives that he would recount on request, many handed down from his father. In early days, when kangaroos abounded in Croydon, John Allen, Senior, in company with other early settlers, took much pleasure in hunting Australia's national emblem on White Flats. The kangaroo-hunting was done on horseback; stirrup irons were pulled off and when the rider was close enough to the animal, the kangaroo was hit on the head with the iron.

Mr. Allen's father could also recall incidents concerning aborigines. Every six months they came from deeper in the mountains, probably Warburton, en route to Melbourne to obtain their allotment of blankets for the period. They camped at Brushy Creek on the Lilydale track, now the Maroondah Highway. Occasionally a family camped about Bilcock's old

saw-pit. The black women were extremely fond of the colour red; they tied red pieces of ribbon on their persons at every conceivable part.

When they left Brushy Creek on their return journey east, the gins carried the huge piles of blankets, and their menfolk, the blackfellas, strutted ahead, carrying spears.

John Thomas and his wife, Elizabeth, had ten children—Reg. (deceased), Len, Pearl (Mrs. Partridge), Ruby (Mrs. E. Hill), Rose (Mrs. Newman), Henry (died at the age of ten months), Leslie, Sylvia (Mrs. Port), Melba (Mrs. Neuman), and Lorna (Mrs. Hughes)—and twenty-two grand-children. A soft mistiness came into Mr. Allen's eyes when his wife (now deceased) was mentioned. "She had the loveliest hair in the world, had Lizzie," he said. "It was a shining mass of auburn waves." Some of his daughters inherit it in more or less degree.

In John Thomas Allen's earlier days he lived in a house on Dorset Road and carried on a boot repairer's business; he called at the homes of residents and collected footwear to be repaired. Later he opened a shop in the Main Street of Croydon. A familiar command by mothers in those days was: "Take your boots down to Jack Allen and ask him to mend them."

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THOMAS GWILLAM arrived in Australia in 1882 from Worcester, England, but he did not take up an original grant of land in Croydon. From a man named Read he purchased in 1905 part of the original grant of William Turner situated on the south-west corner of Dorset and Mt. Dandenong Roads. Thomas Gwillam left his mark on early Croydon as he was a public-minded citizen. He had four children; his daughters, Florence and May (Mrs. Cameron) still live in the old home on the corner. The other two Gwillam children were Archibald and Gladys, now deceased.

Thomas Gwillam was an architect and builder, in partnership with one Chomley; their headquarters were in Melbourne. Both had emigrated to Australia, but the Chomley family were still in England. The record of the journey out was one of hardship and misery — mountainous seas pounded the tiny vessel incessantly, causing universal seasickness. The passengers yearned to return to England often, but asserted that never again, under any circumstances, would they be persuaded to undertake such a journey; few ever did. To-day, with sea travel luxurious, a percentage return, but many migrate a second time to this country.

The first building designed and built by Gwillam and Chomley was the Rialto; when the project was half-way finished, Chomley died. Gwillam, a man of integrity, finished the building and forwarded a full half-share of the proceeds to the widow of Chomley in England. She was overjoyed, not having depended on receiving anything from such a far-away place. In deep gratitude Mrs. Chomley sent out to the Gwillams in Australia a ring handsomely set with a large and magnificent diamond.

Thomas Gwillam also designed and built the King's Theatre, Melbourne, in conjunction with another man, one William Pitt; this building was owned by the Gwillams until 1958. The site for the first tennis courts in Croydon was donated by Thomas Gwillam on land where the Croydon Hall now stands; the Council desired the site for a hall, but needed more land for a recreation reserve, owned also by T. Gwillam. He assented conditionally — the Council must agree to build the courts close by.

Land at this time was selling for about £50 an acre; this public-spirited citizen offered the desired acreage for £15 an acre, a condition being that the acreage must always be held and maintained as a recreation park for the people; also, in order to retain the open spaces atmosphere in case the village grew into a city, there must be a road all around the area so that back yards of houses did not abut on to the reserve, thus giving a sordid perspective from the environs of the hall, intended to be beautiful in the aspirations of a man of integrity.

The Council agreed with alacrity to the conditions and so the allotment changed hands. The Gwillam family, fully aware of their deceased father's hopes that had assumed a concrete form for the betterment of Croydon, at the present has deep regrets at the continual nibbling of the precious open spaces by the erection of buildings by various public organisations, the danger approximating that of Melbourne where an unceasing watch cannot be lifted in case portions of the city's great heritage is filched and a medley of diverse architectural structures is substituted.

Another donation from T. Gwillam was a lot to the Church of England. The boundary of an orchid hothouse and the Croydon Tyre Service is the approximate spot. Following the gift, the trustees of the Church failed to reach a decision concerning the suitability of the site, although a new location was needed in the town. Finally, T. Gwillam decided it might be better for all if he recalled the land; this he did, paying the Church of England for it. Later he sold it to the Methodist Church for a low figure.

In early days meat was hawked from Lilydale to Croydon householders who had the convenience of having their desired weight measures cut at their own gate. Gwillam built two shops—a grocer's and a butcher's—where Tate's now is on Haig Avenue corner. Later these shops became a furniture business.

Mrs. Cameron recalls many incidents of early Croydon: The 11 p.m. closing of hotels with the consequent nervousness of women obliged to be abroad after dark, and their relief when 6 o'clock closing became law. Molestations were infrequent, but fear, nevertheless, was always present in case men, over-indulged, accosted women. Then Hewish's Wine Saloon, the hub for meetings and social intercourse, held in the dining-room. It boasted a piano. Before the opening of Croydon Hall in 1908 concerts and entertainments were held at Croydon School in Oxford Road which building lacked a piano. Zealous citizens, all hands to the plough, carted the Wine Saloon one by lorry, returning it after the merrymaking.

Another memory was old Granny Waites; with her husband she lived in a shanty at the railway crossing on Mt. Dandenong Road on the north-west corner. He was a potato digger, earning 5/- a day in the season. No one knew who really owned the humpie, least of all Granny Waites; they had squatted there and finally the humpie became theirs by right of possession. At this spot where the steepest ascent of Nelson's Hill commences, local market gardeners spelled their horses before the gruelling climb; the world would not have been quite right unless Granny, known far and wide, hailed the driver and farewelled him on his journey. A new house was recently erected on the spot.

With the object of making Croydon an attractive town, Arbor Days were held regularly years ago; the Committee met at Thomas Gwillam's house. These citizens were instrumental in the planting of many fine trees around Croydon; Main Street, now stark and bare, was once beautified by an avenue of trees. However, a motor firm petitioned Lillydale Council to have them removed and this was subsequently done. One remains on the corner of Dr. Burns' surgery and a few others in the vicinity of Brown's Garage.

The Committee, encouraged by railway officials, decided to beautify railway environs in from Main Street, at the present Nisbet's; on enquiry it was found that local bodies, before erecting improvements on railway property, must first rent the particular area through their Council, the rent being named in this instance at 7/- a year, payable by the Council. However,

Lillydale was disinterested in the project and accordingly the scheme of beautification lapsed.

Adjoining the large early grant of William Turner, finally purchased by Thomas Gwillam, was another grant in Dorset Road taken up by J. Morris in 1877; this piece contained sixty acres but J. Morris took up another grant in 1882 adjoining the first to the west and extending right to Bayswater Road, 106 acres in this second grant. This pioneer came from England and his wife was of German extraction; when their sons became of working age the father planted an orchard for them; several acres were later purchased by the sons of William McGivern from the Morris family, but it has since changed hands again.

The old Morris house was recently demolished in Bayswater Road and a daugher of J. Morris lives in Dorset Road; his son, F. Morris, and grandson, W. Morris, spend their time between Narbethong and Croydon. The family retains abiding interest in the Methodist Church, the history of which they have in their keeping.

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There were some very large grants in Croydon, particularly in Dorset Road—that of George Sellick, taken up in 1887, contained 263 acres with a frontage of 1⅛ miles extending to Canterbury Road; the northern boundary adjoined that of Francis McGivern.

The first George Sellick came from Somersetshire, England; he arrived in Croydon in 1876, taking up the grant 11 years later. He married and became the father of fourteen children, the eldest of whom is still living, aged 82; there are seven others still living. The family comprised Annie (Mrs. Collier), Margaret (Mrs. Collier), Florence (Mrs. Simpson), Bessie (Mrs. Murphy), Edith (Mrs. Dowling, deceased), Robert, deceased, May (Mrs. Elliott), Rose (deceased), Nellie (Mrs. Pay), Ethel (deceased), George, Arthur, Vera (deceased), Dorothy (deceased). Some of these remain in the district. George inherited part of the original holding and with his son works an orchard. Most of the 263 acres have passed from Sellick hands, but George recently bought back an acreage. Arthur also lives in Croydon but not on the original holding; his son is at Croydon Hardware. There is a fifth generation of the family.

A. Kleinert also took up a land grant in Dorset Road (1886); it consisted of 116 acres. But there apparently are no members of this family now in the district.

. . . .

Then there were the Parkers; the first, George, came from Petticoat Lane at the age of 16, but settled initially at Ringwood in a cottage where now stands the Methodist Church. At the age of twenty-five he took up a land grant of over 50 acres in Bayswater Road, Croydon, on the corner of Eastfield Road. A Government stipulation at this time was that one acre in every twenty must be cleared; this new settler accordingly cultivated 2½ acres, sowing the land in peas. These crops and the quality of his peas were outstanding and he became known colloquially as Croydon's "King of the Peas"; locals took the walk across to Parker's garden in order to inspect, then came away admiring the succulent crops.

Another man interested in pea-growing was Gregory Lacey, of Main Street; he invited George Parker to his home in order to further discussion of the favoured vegetable. Here George Parker became acquainted with Matilda, a daughter of the house; he commenced courting her. Later they were married and subsequently had eight children—Matilda, Georgina, Myrtle, Ivy, George, Harry, Frederick, and Gregory.

More land was progressively cleared on the grant and a fine orchard was planted, growing cherries, peaches, plums, apples and pears, and the orchard became one of many excellent fruit gardens in the district. The Parker children had much fun banging kerosene tins in their spare time to keep the birds from the fruit; neighbours became resigned to the din they set up.

The pioneer George Parker died in 1939 at the age of 82; his sons carried on the orchard after him. One reason that the pioneer chose the Bayswater-Eastfield Roads land was because of the magnificent gum trees growing on it; but the reason was a practical one—the trees were felled and the wood carted to Hawthorn brick yards to be used for the burning of bricks.

The original Parker home was only recently demolished; it was set back on a rise, some distance from the road, the direction leaning towards Ringwood where the railway had already arrived but was only in course of construction on the Croydon line. The early Parkers embarked at Ringwood when travelling to Melbourne, walking some miles across the fields.

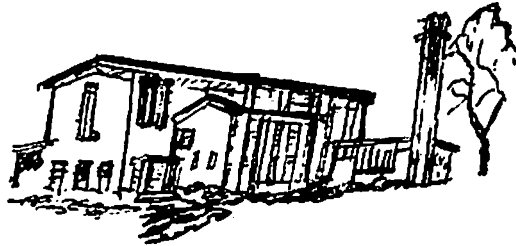
Of the eight children, four reside in Croydon—Matilda (Mrs. Grenness), Georgina (Mrs. McBain), George and Harry. All have children and some grandchildren, so that there is a fourth generation of Parkers. George and Harry divided the orchard between them; Harry sold his portion and took over some of the land at Montrose left by his grandfather, Gregory Lacey; George still holds part of the original land grant, but recently

sold the major part to a housing estate company which has erected dwellings on it. Homes were needed in this part, for Nylon Spinners had commenced production at their new factory in the vicinity, built on the original Hosie land grant (of the Hosie's Hotel family, Melbourne) in Canterbury Road.

George Parker, the second, lives in a house on his inherited property with his wife; their daughter (Mrs. Rattle) also lives on the property with her husband, in a new house they recently had built.

Mrs. Grenness is a well-known Croydon identity; still in her possession is an organ bought with money earned from picking cherries in her father's orchard at 1d. a bucket!

The Churches In Croydon



CHAPTER XII—THE CHURCHES IN CROYDON

ANGLICAN CHURCH.—The Church of England is the mother-church of a large Anglican communion existing throughout the Commonwealth as well as many other parts of the world; the Queen regularly attends service at the Church of England.

The first recorded Anglican Church in Croydon appears to be the one purchased from the Wesleyans in 1880, situated on the corner of Croydon Road and Whitehorse Road at the foot of Birt's Hill. But there is evidence of regular services being held in 1878 when a reverend came from Lilydale. In those early days singing was unaccompanied and tuning forks used—in many cases at least; it is a far cry from then until 1960 when a Folk Mass was held at St. John the Divine's and swing rhythm and waltz music was played by a three-piece band as a yearly treat.

In 1906 a new church was built on a site a little south of where the new Croydon High School now stands; this church was dedicated by the Archbishop of Melbourne.

Until 1919 the parish was still part of the Ringwood parochial district, but the idea was raised in that year to divide the parish. Subsequently a new Parochial District of Croydon was set up including Croydon, Kilsyth and Wonga Park.

In 1922 a site opposite the railway station was chosen as being more central and the church was moved from Croydon Road and placed there.

In 1947 a Building Fund Appeal was launched for a new church building; for each successive year afterwards upwards of £1,000 a year was raised for the purpose until in 1956 the new building was commenced.

A fine new church now stands on this valuable site. The Parish to-day consists of Croydon and Wonga Park. Montrose, Kilsyth and Mooroolbark have recently separated from this Parish.

THE METHODIST CHURCH

A Wesleyan Church once stood at the foot of Birt's Hill as mentioned in the Anglican section; incidentally, Birt's Hill was named from one Thomas Birt who operated a hand-saw at a pit in the vicinity, on the northern side of Whitehorse Road.

When the Wesleyans disposed of their Birt's Hill building in 1880, they held services at the Gospel Hall on Bayswater-Mt. Dandenong Roads corner; this building was erected by Dr. J. J. Kitchen from whom Cheok Cheong purchased his holding.

Following services here, the scene of worship was the Morris house, "Lynn Oaks," in Dorset Road, until it was transferred to Ringwood East township. But that church was finally closed and so the Wesleyans held their services at the newly-built Croydon State School.

Later a site was purchased from Thomas Gwillam for the sum of £15; it was situated on Oxford Road where now stands the Croydon Tyre Service and the timber church building was transported from East Ringwood. Services were held at this church for some time, then a new site was purchased on the opposite side of Oxford Road where Mt. View Street runs down to form a sharp angle. The old church was shifted once again —to the new site. This task was undertaken by James Jackson, a pioneer of Croydon.

Finally, in 1956, a new brick building was erected on this last site and stands a fine edifice. The Methodist parsonage is in Croydon Road and the present minister is the Rev. R. W. Ward.

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

In 1930, a depression year, the Congregational Church was built on a site in Croydon Road very close to the heart of the town. Since Croydon skyrocketed to something approximating a boom town, this site has become a very valuable one in monetary terms; it is also valuable to its worshippers, for it is a very central position.

It was eight years ago that a manse was added, for it was found that the need had arisen for a resident minister.

The Rev. A. J. Somerville is the present minister of the Congregational Church at Croydon.

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In the 1870's services were held at Brushy Creek, in the school building; later, services were held at the Gospel Hall in Mt. Dandenong Road, at the viaduct, then a level crossing. This hall, being undenominational, took services for all Protestants, for there was no regular minister; Brushy Creek was too far distant for the settlement beginning to grow at Croydon.

The Presbyterian Church at the present is opposite the Croydon Hall; it was built in 1907. Fifty feet of the original erection is still in use; the wing being added later, it accommodated the slowly-growing population.

A move to raise funds for a new church was put into operation some years ago; the land has been purchased and part of the building is about to be commenced. The site is on the corner of Croydon Road and Tallent Street, the boundary adjoining that of the Central School. A new manse was built in Tallent Street in 1954 and Rev. C. W. McLeod is the present minister.

The new church, in embryo, is an achievement and it will stand on a site far better suited to its office than the old site. The latter, practically at the junction of Main Street and Mt. Dandenong Road, is too dangerously busy, especially for children attending Sunday School.

The parish awaits with happy expectation the completion of the new building, the nucleus of a new church for a new Shire.

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Until recent years the Church of Christ was situated in Main Street, Croydon, on that piece of land where the temporary Commonwealth Bank was shifted to recently. The Church was erected in 1888—a timber building. As Croydon developed it was realized that the Church was in far too congested an area and after much discussion and subsequent doubt as to suitability of site, an allotment was finally procured in Jackson Street.

A new church now stands on this site, a much quieter spot, some distance from the town.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

In 1913 a site was purchased from the Lacey family; the situation is Hewish Road. Subsequently the Sacred Heart Church was built on the allotment. In later years when the Monastery was built on Nelson's Hill, it was also named the

Sacred Heart. This edifice is in an eminent position overlooking the town, in a setting likely to remain rural and unspoiled by the very nature of the building and its purpose. Croydon is therefore fortunate that subdividers have not been the purchasers, for the rule at such sales is to immediately axe all the native growth, thereby making the areas windswept.

The name of the Sacred Heart Church in Hewish Road was changed to St. Edmund's in 1950 when the Parish was formed and in 1959 a fine new church replaced the old one. Its tall, square tower is a landmark from miles away.

The present priest is Father O'Driscoll; he has been at Croydon for ten years and is assisted by a curate, Father Madigan.

CLIMATE

If the geographical fact of the fortieth parallel of south latitude passing through Bass Strait implies a climate which may be hot but is never very cold compared with other parts of the world, then residents of Croydon may not agree—on a cold and frosty morning! Ordinary house thermometers placed on porches register a temperature of 38 degrees on an average on frosty or foggy mornings; the mercury on other winter mornings hovers around the 45 degrees mark, both minimum temperatures, the maximum in winter reaching 50 degrees.

In summer the average maximum is around the 70-degrees mark; occasionally but not frequently heat waves send the mercury soaring to 100 degrees. In 1939, when nearly all of Victoria was ablaze with a devastating series of bushfires, the temperature recorded at the Melbourne Weather Bureau was 114 degrees; but, like the high recording in 1851, the cause was the blazing countryside resulting in a fictitious reading. In the holocaust of 1939 burning pieces of trees were swept before a fierce northerly gale; homes in South Warrandyte were burnt out. The flames came to within a few miles of Croydon, but did not leap the Maroondah Highway, keeping well on the north side; a change of wind to the south checked the fires.

In line with most localities south of the Great Dividing Range, Croydon is a moist district; there is rain at periodic intervals throughout the year. These places lie in the belt where the northern region of summer rains and the southern region of winter rains overlap, giving rain at all seasons; but far-eastern Victoria has a far heavier summer rainfall.

There is a period much drier than the rest of the year in the district—January to April; often there is only the rain yielded by thunderstorms or an occasional monsoonal dip from the northern regions.

Compared with Melbourne and the inner suburbs, Croydon, in that part east of the guarding hills, is a still climate; when strong winds blow it is a safe bet that there is a howling gale elsewhere. On one occasion a Melbourne visitor to Croydon, staying for a few days, remarked on arriving: "A nice quiet day." On the second day he said: "The weather remains calm," and on the third day came with wonder: "A remarkable spell of stillness!" Then the host "woke up" and explained.

The Dandenongs, as with many mountains, set up a little climate of their own at the base. When an easterly is blowing it strikes the ranges from the back, roars over the top and down the western face and plays havoc with telephone lines and trees all along the base. Strangely, at such times, the gale does not strike Croydon two miles away with anything like the same force.

But the calm atmosphere has its drawbacks; cloud overhangs for longer periods in the winter than with a windy locality; the soil takes longer to dry out, and—bane of the housewife—laundry is hard to dry! The modern spin-dryer has helped to solve the last problem.

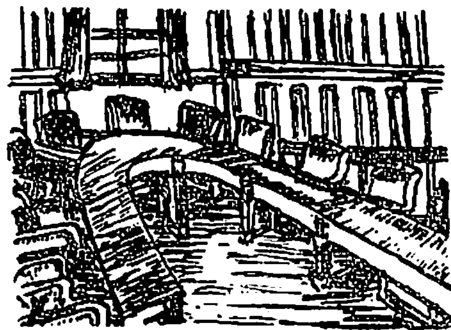
The average rainfall for Croydon is 33.89 inches taken over thirty years of recording; the gauge was set on a hill near the town. The figure is from the Bureau of Meteorology. Comparative figures are: Melbourne, 25.57 inches; Lilydale, 35.04 inches; and Olinda, on top of Mt. Dandenong, 51.37 inches.

The first six months of the year yield, on the whole, better weather than the remainder of the year; it is more stable. After the end of February the worst of the summer heat has fled and the lovely months of autumn commence. Days are sunny and mild and often the still weather extends into June, a winter month; then the fogs and frosts begin, the temperature drops progressively, nights become cold. In September the rainy season commences interspersed with warm, often hot sunshine. October yields much the same type of weather—storms and sunshine with a pattern of drenched trees and shrubs steaming in the sun, then gradually giving way in November and December to longer hours of sunshine and less rain.

SCHOOLS

The Education Department erected the first school building in Oxford Road in 1888, number 2900. A Consolidated School to take the overflowing child population was erected sixty-four years later (1952) and a High School in 1957. On Lincoln Road a School for Retarded and Spastic Children opened in 1961 on land donated to the Education Department by the first David Bilcock. There is a Catholic School in Lacey Street. Close to Croydon Hall is the Kindergarten School.

MUNICIPAL



CHAPTER XIII—MUNICIPAL

CROYDON has never been laid out and proclaimed a town by the Department of Crown Lands and Survey. Lilydale was proclaimed a town in 1860 by the Lands Department following a survey. Later, in 1952, Lilydale was re-proclaimed a township under the Lands Act. But Croydon was the result of a private subdivision of some Crown allotments in the Parishes of Warrandyte, Mooroolbark and Ringwood which were surveyed in 1868.

In 1856, pioneers of Lilydale, though few in number, petitioned the Government for a council to be formed, and this year was important for Croydon also because its municipal history has been interwoven with that of Lillydale Shire.

On the 19th September, 1856, Lilydale was constituted a district; after several efforts spread over six years, the Upper Yarra Roads Board was formed. Previously food and supplies were being transported by bullock team along rutty tracks and through creeks from Hawthorn, the nearest supply centre. Two days were needed to complete the return journey and so roads were urgently required. At a public meeting six men were chosen as councillors and in 1862 the Upper Yarra Roads Board held its first meeting.

This historic assembling took place at the Black Springs Hotel on the 22nd March, but it was not until ten years later that the Government proclaimed the Upper Yarra Roads Board as a Shire (1872). The early fathers derived the name of their Shire from Lilly, daughter of Paul de Castella, an early settler; she became the wife of the surveyor of much of the Lilydale

area. Later, citizens decided to spell the name of the town as the flower, lily, and in one fell blow shattered an important historic link and made for future endless confusion in the two spellings, for the Shire hangs fast to the original, it being considered impossible to alter. "Lilly" is an English contraction of the Greek "Lilian" and as such is equally as authentic as "Lily."

In the earliest records of the Lillydale Shire the settlements of Croydon, Mt. Dandenong and hamlets in between did not even merit mention of existence, but following the opening of the antimony mines at East Ringwood with the attraction of labour, Croydon, Mooroolbark and Ringwood were brought into the orbit of the Shire, forming the South-West Riding. In the 1870's there were but 700 persons in the whole of the Shire and more than half lived in Lilydale town with the rest considerably scattered.

Since its inception the Shire has been controlled by a council elected by ratepayers in the Shire area; before severance of Croydon it was constituted into four Ridings—North (Lilydale, Coldstream and Yering); East (Wandin, Seville, Monbulk and part of Mt. Evelyn); South (Olinda, Mt. Dandenong, Montrose, Kilsyth, Mooroolbark, part of Croydon and part of Mt. Evelyn); West (part of Croydon, Bayswater North, Wonga Park and Croydon North).

Each Riding elected three councillors, twelve in all; each stood for a term of three years and one went out of office every August when the annual elections were held, the councillor retiring being free to submit himself for re-election. After the elections the Council met to choose one of its number to be Shire President for the next year. The President took the chair at all council meetings, and the councillors, citizens of high civic conscience, gave their services in an honorary capacity. The councillors were required to appoint such officers as were necessary to administer the work of the Shire, also to strike a rate each year which was calculated to bring in sufficient money to enable the Shire functions to be carried on for the year—the making of roads, street lighting, fire protection and various statutory undertakings; also social services — Public Health, Infant Welfare, Pre-school Kindergarten, immunisation against diseases and T.B. X-ray surveys. The first election in the Shire of Lillydale was held in 1872; Thomas Hand was the first Shire Engineer; John Hutchinson was the first Shire President, a great-uncle of Miss Janet Tait, of Lillydale Shire Office.

With the construction of the railway from Hawthorn laying the foundation of Croydon from a business angle, the growth

following was sure, if slow, interspersed with periods of stagnation. But with the dawn of the new century an era of prosperity was ushered in; houses were built, the first timber yard being opened. The council commenced discussing the erection of a hall for the Riding; the popularity of Brushy Creek had waned after the first shrill sirens of the steam engines echoed around the hills. The Prince of Wales Hotel was deposited in Croydon on its new site (1907).

The First World War began; Croydon had its quota of heroes. After the war ended many subdivisions of land were made. The Riding, with this shot in the arm, commenced to fill out. From this time onwards it could be termed the creeping Riding. Apple and cherry orchards were coming up like myriad little new worlds discovered by a space explorer, fresh ones wherever one turned.

The cultivated ground then crept north and north-west over Whitehorse Road towards Warrandyte; south to the Dandenong Creek; and east until it touched experimentally the fringe of the dipping skirt of the Dandenongs.

Then came the Second World War; Croydon again had its quota of heroes. The war ended; then the creeping Riding began to gallop! Old residents looked on with whirling heads knowing nought would rein it in. So phenomenal was the growth that in the period before severance land was bringing a fantastic price, a small lot in Main Street being sold for £50,000 in 1960. At this stage before the breakaway from Lillydale, the population of the Croydon area was stated at 12,000, compared with Lilydale's 3,500 (Shire Office figures). White Flats had badly outstripped those contemporaries who, lying in orbit around her 100 years ago, had certainly not been satellites of a cardinal point, but resembled more the camps of explorers pitched around a seeming salt-pan at that raw stage — Lilydale, Warrandyte, Brushy Creek, Bayswater and Mooroolbark.

The advent of the Croydon Market played a part in sending Croydon ahead and thus towards severance; it has been stated in print that the Market came into being following on a subdivision of Lacey land, but this statement has no foundation in fact. The Lacey family did not own the Market property at any time. It was originally the land grant, 43E, taken up by A. Geisler as shown on map; Lacey land adjoined it to the north and west.

The Geisler selection was later owned by Mrs. Rogers; she sold it, including a large brick house, to Mr. Allan Brown, lately home from the First World War. He was the man responsible

for the conception of the Market; he set the wheels moving in 1920.

The Market is bounded by Toorak and Kent Avenues, with Railway Parade to the east; in recent years shops have been built on the Railway Parade boundary with a carriageway to the Market stalls bisecting the line of shops.

Monday is the weekly Market day. From an early hour heavy traffic travels Croydonwards. In the Market's young days all sorts of horsedrawn vehicles—many comical—converged on the little town from every direction. Cattle were auctioned in conjunction with the usual household stuff; the beasts arrived in railways trucks (the rail proximity was one reason the site was chosen) and were unloaded at a spot near to the present Emslie's depot. The unloading was a weekly nightmare to shopkeepers; down to Main Street and over the crossing animals were driven—cows, pigs, sheep—and as at a signal local womenfolk dived agitatedly for shelter and shopkeepers closed their doors, for often a beast, maddened with fright, broke loose and charged about with no respect for persons.

Finally a deputation headed by a local woman sought the Railways; a V.I.P. called in due course to inspect the place of tumult and near-goring, the result being a change of locality for unloading. The cattle have gone forever from Croydon streets, but agitated ladies still dive for shelter on Mondays, for high-powered American cars flash along Main Street with the same lack of respect for citizens once exhibited by cows.

In present times countless stalls sell all manner of merchandise, the stallholders a cosmopolitan blend since the Migration Policy. Once a week the town, always busy, develops a feverish activity. Local shopkeepers are glad to see the end of Mondays and the strange vendors; they raise their produce to its proper price again.

Allan Brown still keeps an eye on the huge enterprise he brought into being; it is his pleasure to supervise stallholders and patrons alike. He can often be seen amongst the milling crowd on busy, bustling Mondays. A few stalls operate on another day or two, but lacking the auction with its buying and selling excitement there is none of the noise and clamour of Mondays.

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The late Sir George Knox, former Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and member for Upper Yarra and Scoresby from 1927, whose death had occurred in mid-1960, was reported as having aired the question of severance some 12-15 years before. It emanated from a meeting held for raising funds for a public

hall; the Hon. G. L. Chandler was present, also, and the suggestion was made that it was time the people of Croydon started thinking of their own municipality. It was reported that the first real stirring for the creation of a new Croydon Shire began at Croydon North and before long snowballed until it reached the heart of the town most concerned.

The movement began in 1957 and by March, 1958, a petition had been signed by the requisite number of persons. The local Government Act, 1958 states that: "A request . . . to the Governor in Council for the exercise of any power contained in paragraphs . . .

"For the constitution of a shire—by one-tenth of the persons whose names are inscribed on the municipal roll in respect of property in any portion of any municipal district proposed to be included in such shire."

Mr. R. Jansen compiled the report, a document of twenty-two pages on the Croydon Shire Severance; he spent many weeks in painstaking research and verified the details. It is considered that, without his endeavours and deep interest, the matter of severance might have dragged on for years. He made the initial applications and there were also many legal formalities to be complied with in relation to the Local Government Act before the matter reached the stage of the referendum.

Since those initial days the death has occurred of Mr. Jansen. Perhaps many townsfolk do not realize how much is owed to this public-spirited citizen in connection with their new Shire. At one time he was secretary of the Country Roads Board and later a member of the Board; he lived on Wicklow Hills.

The report completed, copies of a plan of the area to be severed were freely distributed; also, arrangements were made for a personal explanation of the severance proposals to any interested persons. On the committee at first petition for severance were G. Allen, a Croydon business man, President; and G. Pile, a Croydon accountant, Secretary. A public meeting was held on the 7th November, 1957, prior to the forwarding of the request to the Governor in Council. The area requested for severance from Lillydale Shire was twenty-nine square miles; the entire parent Shire was one hundred and sixty-three. The population of the latter in 1958 was stated as 30,000; in the proposed Shire there would be 14,000. It would incorporate the West Riding and portions of the South, of Kilsyth and of Mooroolbark.

Croydon comprised over 40% of the total Shire income, but at the time was served by only 25% of councillors; thus the inadequate council representation for Croydon was an added

incentive for a separate municipality. Also, there was delay in Shire revaluations; the West Riding, including Croydon, had been revalued for some years with a much greater burden for these ratepayers to carry; the South Riding, comprising the area east of Dorset Road, had not the extra burden until much later. Go-ahead citizens held the view that development was retarded in the failure to readjust Riding boundaries, that development in the West Riding far outstripped that of others. Also there was delay at completion of road works, a factor inconveniencing all sections of the community.

Should a person have business with Shire officers, these had no option but to infer that they would be pleased to help further if only they weren't so busy. It is a case in point—the far-flung municipality of Lillydale Shire, the rapidly growing towns and expansion in all directions were stupendous to cope with. Also the Shire Office was several miles distant from the town of Croydon, the Riding that was no longer rural but was the one with the heaviest concentration of population. The structure and needs of the community were out of character with those of Lillydale Shire, the other three Ridings of which were mainly rural. Lilydale township itself is a worthy representation of the majority of its Shire; of country character, it remains a sleepy hollow with little of the animation of its wealthiest, most progressive Riding except, perhaps, for the thunder of Maroondah Highway which bisects the town, a sustained roar, now echoing, now faint, like an express train clattering over peaceful countryside. The writing on the wall for rurality?

Be that so, the Severance Committee had made out a strong case on Lilydale's present rural character; municipal administration would be preferable executed right at the heart of the bustling West Riding, conditions before the request for a breakaway approximating asking the most influential nation in a brotherhood of races to agree to be administered in its vital affairs from the office of a pastoral country. It is possible that a booming, eager town like Croydon—so full of excited, feverish activity, of initiative—no longer wanted to kowtow municipally to a smaller town in addition to the other reasons for severance.

It was obvious to most that should a breakaway succeed, new administrative organisation must be set up, but the "Yes" exponents were firmly of opinion that increased efficiency, service and convenience to ratepayers must result, not to be measured in money. Another important angle was that severance and its offshoots would evolve as an enormous increase in civic pride, a quality repeatedly throttled in this Riding so

distant from its civic heart. At this stage (1958) the staff of Lillydale Shire Office comprised the Shire secretary, deputy secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer, rate collector, valuer, three senior female clerks (rates office), three junior typistes (secretary's office), ranger, two Infant Welfare sisters, Shire engineer, deputy engineer, building surveyor, two engineering assistants, building inspector, two engineering draughtsmen, engineer's cost clerk, town planning officer, senior typiste (engineer's office), health inspector, assistant health inspector.

In theory, an office administering a municipality with half the population as in the proposed Shire should take less staff than this, although persons holding certain office there must be; Lillydale itself had fewer assistants when its population approximated the new Croydon Shire. Also individual officers receive less salary in smaller municipalities and the excising of nearly half the inhabitants should result in considerable saving for both new and residual shires; however, as borne out recently in nearby shires, much the same assistance is needed.

Should this be proved by time to be so, then in ordinary arithmetic the increased capital cost must mean less money for a rapidly expanding works programme even though this last be financed by loan, for revenue is used in repayment of capital and interest.

When a breakaway is mooted, councillors of a municipality are obliged to consider well the interests of the rest of the Ridings. As example: A man keeps his family orderly; the removal of one is mooted and the head immediately agrees or disagrees according to the effect on himself and the rest of the family. Therefore, strong feeling that severance could work for Croydon but might well result in setback for the rest of the Shire caused deep concern on the part of councillors resident in other Ridings as they compared probable advantages to Croydon and disadvantages to other areas.

Another fact was that there is a political trend towards amalgamation of municipalities rather than the creation of new ones, for this brings reduced costs of administration. The opponents of severance claimed that the time was not ripe for a breakaway because the flood of development taking place could be slowed by the changeover particularly where long-term planning is involved.

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EVEN within the West Riding itself there was a percentage of ratepayers who were against severance; why break off a piece of the Shire in the extreme west? The arguments were that rates could increase; they are high enough already, many grumbled, but if a new shire changed to site rating it would sting painfully for a great number of people—has nobody heard of jumping from the frying-pan into the fire?

Then there were the diehards who always twitched uncomfortably at any sort of progress; leave well alone, they warned. If one office block serves well the present four Ridings, why smash up the happy arrangement? It was all good enough for our fathers and grandfathers before us—and isn't most of the Australian continent over-governed, anyway? If some Croydon ratepayers aren't satisfied with their present Ridings, why not try for re-alignment of boundaries? This last was hotly contested by those in favour of severance; they maintained stoutly that the creation of an additional Riding would not meet any of the reasons advanced for the desire to constitute a new municipality; it would actually tend to accentuate the difficulties associated with the distribution of Riding finance in their opinion. As August, 1958, approached, campaigns were held by the Severance Committee; ratepayers attended meetings at various halls. In line with like movements a percentage showed warm interest, others opposition as they considered the petition unwarranted with all the risk of countless, unforeseen expenses cropping up. But by the end of the month the movement was at least on everyone's tongue. And so, on the 30th August the referendum went to the polls.

When the results came through they showed that the majority had voted in favour of severance, 34% of ratepayers casting votes. An official statement appeared in the press on September 4, 1958, as follows:

"Severance Poll. On the proposal to sever an area from the Shire of Lillydale as set out in a request to the Honourable The Minister for Public Works dated the 21st February, 1958, and advertised in the 'Croydon Mail' and 'Post' newspapers on the 1st May, 1958, and the 'Lilydale Express' on the 2nd May, 1958, and to constitute such portion a separate municipality under the name of the Shire of Croydon, I hereby declare that the result of the Poll is as follows:—

In favour of the proposal (YES)	4,826
Against the proposal (NO)	635
Informal	36

I therefore declare a majority in favour of the proposal of 4,191.

T. H. COWLEY,
Returning Officer."

What happens next? was the question uppermost in ratepayers' minds. Does it mean that with a poll majority of 88.5% of the 34% of persons voting, we get severance?

The answer was: No; this is but the first step. The overwhelming public vote by no means settles the issue. It goes far, it is essential, but a new municipality is created by an order of the Governor in Council. The Local Government Act says:

"Every Order constituting any new municipality shall constitute the same as either a borough or a shire and shall—

(a) assign a name to such borough or shire,
(b) describe the boundaries thereof,
(c) determine of how many members the council shall consist,
(d) determine whether the municipal district constituted is to be subdivided or not and in case it is to be subdivided name and describe the subdivisions.

Every such Order shall take effect according to the tenor of the same."

It is therefore apparent that the Governor in Council must approve the proposal. Ratepayers cannot impose their will even if 100% were in favour. But all this, the ratepayers felt, was mere formality; at this stage there seemed no real barrier to severance without fuss or bitterness. Satisfactory answers to various questions had come up including the one: Will Croydon be able to afford a shire of its own? Yes, because the Shire of Lillydale has a six-figure income and the Act states:

"The Governor in Council may make Orders from time to time exercising the powers following:

"To constitute any portion of Victoria containing rateable property capable of yielding upon a rate not exceeding One shilling in the pound on the annual value thereof, estimated under the provisions of this Act, a sum of three thousand pounds, a shire."

The ratepayers must now await the decision of the arbiter of their fate. The Governor in Council, as a preliminary, appoints an Advisory Board of three persons with a knowledge of local government; this Board elects one of the three to be chairman and may act by two of its members. The Croydon hearing finally took place at the Croydon Hall on December 22, 1958, in a day-long session. The Board consisted of:

Mr. Stringer, Inspector of Municipal Accounts; Mr. Cook, Chairman of the Town and Country Planning Board; Cr. Lines, former Chairman of the Municipal Association and a Heidelberg councillor.

During the campaign by the Severance Committee, councillors of the Lillydale Shire had remained more or less silent; no member of this body had been appointed to watch the interests of the Shire at meetings and it was thought, therefore, that they now stood by awaiting results with warm interest. As it transpired, however, they stood by heatedly, for when the Advisory Board conducted the hearing, Lillydale Council alone opposed the proposal for severance. Their discussions had been held in committee at council meetings, therefore the attack was sudden, taking the breath away of keenly attentive onlookers, the enthusiastic gallery of local ratepayers. As the opposing voices sounded it became disconcertingly apparent that plans had been made to deal with the carefully-compiled attempt at breakaway, to strike a death-blow to hopes for severance with a last-minute, annihilating shot from secret armoury. It was more than twelve months since the proposals had been presented to the public, but until the hearing the council as a body had not stated its attitude. Mr. K. H. Gifford, legal representative of Lillydale Shire, announced a resolution passed by the Council in committee; it read:

"That this Council—

1. is not in favour of severance;
2. is of the opinion that if there is to be severance, then
   (a) boundary revision should not be confined to this Shire, but should be examined on a regional basis;
   (b) the municipality should be a borough;
3. directs its legal adviser that if a severance is to be considered, the boundary should be ascertained as to which would be the best, both for the existing and the new municipality."

At the hearing the Severance Committee was represented by Mr. R. Jansen and Mr. Fred Geale, a former Lillydale Shire councillor. Present were also Mr. G. Pile (secretary), Mr. D. Fraser, Mr. L. Kerr, Mr. H. Malcolm and Mrs. G. Frost. Most of the Councillors attended; Cr. G. Frost, of the West Riding, is believed to have been the one councillor before the hearing to vote against the council resolution opposing severance. If this is so, his name will stand out in future generations.

Following the hearing, with the submission of Lillydale Council of its objections, Mr. Jansen was reported to have stated: ". . . it seems to me an extraordinary position that at no time has the matter of severance been discussed in open

Council. . . . I would have thought that a matter of such momentous importance in the life of the council would have formed the basis of a separate resolution in order that the ratepayers may have been made aware of it. . . . It is disturbing that the council thought fit to withhold information regarding its attitude until the date of the hearing. . . . I consider that it has not acted with respect towards ratepayers subsequently in view of the overwhelming majority."

The President of Lillydale Shire, when relinquishing office, was reported as saying: "The Croydon breakaway is a major issue; when the move first cropped up Council adopted the attitude of 'letting the Croydon ratepayers speak for themselves at the poll' and they have done so in a most convincing manner."

Newspapers printed that "the absence of a campaign against severance is significant; the council deliberately refrained from taking any part in the poll campaign."

Councillors are human, but nevertheless they are a dedicated body; with municipal affairs at their fingertips their vision is clearer on such things as mooted breakaway movements, more so than that of a non-legislative body. The "no" councillors saw severance with a species of alarm; a wrong step, they considered, for the ratepayers. History resounds with instances of the multitude being swayed by exponents of reform, sometimes rightly, at others wrongly. A certain amount of fog must always be allowed for and this only subsequent events can disperse.

The Lillydale Council saw the majority poll not as the writing on the wall but as a point to be contested, ignoring the democratic angle. Plain facts were that the Severance Committee consisted largely of members of the Croydon Chamber of Commerce and the breakaway was not a movement originating within the council as many such procedures are; with all but one of the twelve councillors against the proposal, including, it must be remembered, those of the West Riding, this seemed to suggest that their firm stand was of vintage quality, that they regarded severance as unwise. They can be admired for sticking to their guns, along with Cr. Frost.

Ridings being the peculiar domain of councillors and the Severance Committee being an outside body, the viewpoint of many ratepayers leaned towards the thought that the Council resented the attempt at municipal meddling despite two facts—the statutory right to make the attempt, and the convincing result of the poll.

All waited breathlessly from December onwards for the decision of the Governor in Council; towards the end of January,

1959, Mr. Murray Porter stated that he had received a report from the Local Government Advisory Board the week before and had hoped to make a decision almost immediately, but the case was much longer and more complicated than expected. "It is not nice and simple—it will take a week to consider all facets," he stated.

The Act relating to Severance states that "The Minister shall take into consideration the report . . . of the Board before any Order in Council is made and the Governor in Council may grant the request in whole or in part.

"(iii) or refuse to grant the request."

He refused!

A shocked, stunned Croydon heard the news at a meeting on February 10, 1959; the disappointment of the Severance supporters was acute after incredulity wore off.

There is no appeal from the decision of the Governor in Council; any further action must start all over again with a petition followed by a referendum of ratepayers, then the hearing by an Advisory Board.

It seemed a reliable summing-up that Croydon's breakaway movement failed because of the determined opposition of the Lillydale Shire Council, the majority vote of eleven against one. The Minister, in trying to arrive at a decision, had the unenviable task of considering whether to grant the petition when 89% of the people voting in the particular area were in favour, or whether to refuse it because the councillors representing Croydon (these at least)—pledged to serve the ratepayers without personal gain—voted so strongly against it.

Officially the request had been refused on three main counts —it was thought to be premature; too much rural land was included in the area to be severed considering that plans were offered for a closely-populated part; Croydon would be better served by amalgamation with Ringwood. The Minister was believed to favour severance for a Croydon borough (9 square miles).

At a meeting in February, 1959, the Croydon Chamber of Commerce decided to make a recommendation to the Severance Committee that it was in favour of another try for severance— this time for a borough, there being good reason to believe that such an application would be successful. But the former Chamber secretary, Mr. G. Pile, asked members of the Chamber to aim at a shire again with revised boundaries. A borough would omit such areas as Kilsyth, Montrose and Wonga Park, which have supported the move for a breakaway all through. The Committee, also, considered that a borough would be a

stop-gap move and that prospective development would soon put such an area out of date.

Experts consider that it is particularly desirable in creating a new municipality to ensure that there is an effective community of interest amongst its ratepayers. In the Jansen report this objective was considered to be indicated by its compiler in the following: "Community of interest . . . should not be subordinated to finance." Mr. Jansen was incensed at one of the extracts from the Shire submission at the hearing, viz.:—

"6. The majority of the council is concerned that the boundaries proposed for a severance appear to be designed to attract the maximum rate revenue to the new shire."

This reference was to industrial enterprises at Croydon North and Bayswater North. Mr. Jansen took strong exception to the extract, as he considered that the areas on which stood these industries rightly belonged to the proposed shire, disregarding rate revenue (Black & Decker and Nylon Spinners).

Other incidents came up as are inevitable in such major issues; they are logical *post mortem.* They did not affect the ruling because one thing, appalling to the "Yes" exponents, stood out clear—despite a majority poll the decision yet went badly against Croydon. And it remains an astonishing fact that ratepayers polled a majority of 89%, considering the staunch attitude of West Riding Councillors, for a suspicion of their "no" views must surely have seeped into the minds of people, with the chance of influence being a deciding factor.

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CHAPTER XV—MUNICIPAL

CROYDON was down but not out. She licked her wounds in this early part of 1959, girded her loins and took careful stock of the catastrophe. It says much for the resilience and tenacity of purpose of the Severance Committee that the disappointment resulted in renewed activity and fresh efforts to gain the desired objective.

By the end of February it had not been decided whether to apply for a borough; councillors had stated publicly that they would not oppose an application for a borough. Mr. Geale, President of the Severance Committee, stated that his committee had received a letter from the Advisory Board to the effect that application for a much smaller area would have a far greater chance of success. (Mr. Allen had not stood for re-election.)

Three conferences were held with the Shire Council but unfortunately no agreement was arrived at on boundaries; Lillydale had no intention of the new municipality "taking all the cream and leaving only skim milk." But Wonga Park, Kilsyth and Mooroolbark look to the town of Croydon as their centre for many facilities—banking, market, railhead, shops in general, many cultural and philanthropic organisations; they were, in effect, suburbs of Croydon. A borough would not include these areas in their entirety.

The year wore away and towards its end an attempt was made to arrange a round-table conference by Mr. Murray Porter with the parties concerned, but owing to pressure of various matters, it could not be arranged.

It was decided to lodge another petition for severance in March, 1960; this time an area of fourteen square miles was to be requested in a second attempt for a shire; most of Wonga Park must be left out in this smaller area and both Kilsyth and Mooroolbark would each be divided. It was reported that the committee, during the last months, had made a thorough investigation of the best ways and means to continue the fight for a separate municipality. Had the 1958 poll been unsuccessful, the Act requires that no further move for several years is allowed; but in the circumstances it was possible to apply again as soon as suitable.

The Shire of Lillydale had agreed to negotiate on an area of thirteen square miles to enquire into economic severance, but it was disappointing that the round-table conference had not taken place and final agreement entered into. As a case for severance is judged on its merits, the Advisory Board is bound to support it, even in face of opposition, should the case be strong enough.

In July, 1960, a carefully planned and intensive campaign was launched by the Croydon Severance Committee; there was a public meeting at Bayswater North on the 29th, followed by others at Kilsyth Hall on August 5th, at Dorset Hall, Croydon North, on 12th, and at Croydon Theatre, Mt. Dandenong Road, on 19th.

One of the heartening aspects of the new campaign was the number of ratepayers not on the committee at the first petition who had come forward to offer their services over the months past; their faith has been justified by the Minister's statement that the vote of the people must be considered and that another majority vote "will be favourably considered."

When no agreement had been reached after the three conferences with the council in 1959, the Advisory Board requested the council to prepare figures for a fourteen square mile area. These figures were duly made available to the Minister and he then directed that a referendum be held in August, 1960. After the shattering blow of the earlier refusal, Croydon and district ratepayers tossed their caps in the air with jubilation and looked eagerly forward to demonstrating their enthusiasm at the polls. Relief was felt that at long last the three bodies concerned had finally met, with action the outcome.

In the revised area it was estimated that the population would be about 12,000.

Previous to the first request for severance, much debating had taken place in the Council Chambers concerning a new Shire Hall to replace the old one at Lilydale, built in 1889. Two councillors had moved in favour of a new administrative block at Eyrefield Park; now there was a Notice of Motion that the previous Motion be rescinded and that a referendum for and against the new building be taken in the residual Shire if the Croydon breakaway was successful (the first request for severance).

The Shire staff was working in outmoded offices and the secretary, when finding it necessary to interview a person privately, had no accommodation in a separate room; facilities and retiring rooms were deplorably out of date. Also space in general was very cramped; this last situation would be considerably eased if Croydon moved out, however. Councillors doubted if there was money to build a new hall. Cost was estimated at between £40,000 and £80,000, therefore people were asking for the right to vote on the question; from a democratic viewpoint they should be given the chance to say "yes" or "no." If a breakaway succeeded and Council was obliged to run the Shire on half the present revenue, that would be a big enough

obstacle to get over; with the added burden of a new Shire Hall to fall on half the people, Council might lack ability to pay and so should stay its hand until the breakaway was decided and then review the position. One councillor pointed out that even if the present Shire Hall facilities were not good, conditions were not good either for the majority of ratepayers in the Shire—there was difficulty in raising money for roads, drainage and other major works which "screamed" to be done.

Others were in favour of going ahead, declaring the building to be a "shocking set-up." Council was prepared to spend £30,000 on the new hall, although this would be bare office space without any frills. The Shire Secretary submitted that the Loan Council had made a grant for the new Shire Hall, increasing loan moneys to £60,000, with £30,000 allocated to the new building.

On a show of hands the Motion to rescind the previous Motion in favour of the hall was lost. Plans were then put into operation for a new hall to be built at Eyrefield Park, a situation much farther away from railway transport than that of the old hall. Once the die was cast an air of relaxation became apparent, for there is nothing more wearing than indecision; there was a comical aspect respecting the appending of the new hall to the bosom of Lillydale, resembling that of the lady threatened with a cut in household money who is still determined to buy that new hat and let the consequences go hang. But most humans know the experience of having a lovely dream of years threatened with extinction right on the verge of fulfilment; as time progressed, councillors were confident that they had acted wisely.

In the spring of 1960 it was announced that the new Shire Hall at Eyrefield Park was to be opened in December. Fortunately for the staff and councillors, the "bare" office space without frills" had been improved upon, the council having called tenders for wall-to-wall carpets; other amenities eventually came up.

. . . .

At the final meeting on the Severance Movement in public, held at Croydon Hall on Friday night, August 19, 1960, many questions were fired at the President, Mr. Geale. Ratepayers were becoming anxious as facts of the cost of the new hall at Lilydale became apparent; disregarding possible severance, they wanted to know why it had been built farther away from Croydon than ever. "What about the new Shire Hall 'somewhere in the bush'?"

They were informed: "If any serious endeavour had been made to co-operate, it would have been built on some of the vast open spaces on this side of the town of Lilydale and Croydon people saved at least one mile of travel. If severance is granted we can claim any money we have put into it."

The second poll on severance took place shortly afterwards on August 27; immediately prior to the poll a pamphlet was circulated by Lillydale Shire and consternation became widespread at part of the contents which were compiled as questions and answers. One read:

"Who would pay the administrative costs of a new shire?" and answer: "You, the ratepayers of the new shire—there could be no assistance from the ratepayers of other areas."

As office buildings are part of administrative costs, Croydon ratepayers paying 47% annually began to think with trepidation of their proportion of finance used to build the fine new hall, to wonder if it was to be recovered if the breakaway succeeded, especially on perusing the next question and answer on the pamphlet:

"Would a new shire have much expense?" and answer: "Yes. There would be a great deal of expense. New heavy road-making equipment would have to be bought; a new Shire Hall would have to be built. New office equipment would have to be bought. Additional administrative expense would have to be met. To meet this, there would only be the new Shire's interest in existing Shire capital, and moneys it would raise by rates and loans."

The Local Government Act states, however:

"Adjusting rights of severed portion and remaining Shire.

"When in consequence of the exercise of any of the powers contained . . . of this Act so as to sever from any municipal district any part thereof any property income assets rights liabilities expenses or matters required to be apportioned settled adjusted or determined—

1. the councils of the municipalities affected may from time to time make such agreements as may be necessary for such purposes or any of them. And any such agreement may provide—
   (a) for the apportionment transfer or retention of any property income assets rights or liabilities; or
   (b) for the joint use of any property; or
   (d) for the doing of any other matter or thing that may be necessary to do justice as between the municipalities concerned."

In the light of the fact that the West Riding had been revalued for some years longer than some others with rates nearly doubling, justice would seem to indicate that allowance should be made for this. The pamphlet stated that: "The whole of your rates paid in the area were allocated for spending in your area (you met your administrative costs out of them)." On the surface this appears fair, but in practice there was the anomaly of ratepayers resident on the east side of Dorset Road in the South Riding still paying the old low rates while those on the west side had been paying practically double for four years past. The one road went along the front fences of both West and South Riding ratepayers' properties and council services were identical. (Rates for West Riding houses since revaluation rose to £30 - £40 water and general rates for a small house while South Riding ratepayers still luxuriated in lower rates of £20 - £30.) These facts breed discontent even while allowances are made for delay in re-valuing owing to pressure of work on officers' part, and the knowledge that such occurrences are part of the structure.

The councillors, men of integrity, had compiled the pamphlet partly as answer to the accusation that they had not put all their cards on the table before the first hearing; this time a printed form would endeavour to get all the facts across to Croydon ratepayers concerning the breakaway. It was an honest warning of the dangers of severance relating to administrative costs. A special message was attached: Your Council (Lillydale) has deliberately avoided making a fight of the proposed severance of the Croydon area from your Shire. It believes that it is for you, the Ratepayers, to decide whether you want a new Shire or whether you want to continue with your existing Shire."

Croydon read the message with surprise as the aforesaid Ratepayers had shown convincing proof at the 1958 referendum what they wanted. People frowned in perplexity. Some viewed the excising with trepidation; with nearly all commodity prices inexorably rising, they sensed a strong need for caution in voting.

In August, 1960, Croydon again went to the poll on the question in company with the rest concerned, to vote on the amended fourteen square miles proposed.

The announcement of the results was made at the Croydon Hall on the night of the poll, the 27th. Outside the building in the rain waited an eager crowd. Punctually at eight-thirty the doors were opened—the dramatic moment had arrived! In the supper room the Shire Secretary and Returning Officer,

Mr. Thomas Cowley, declared the result of the poll. From every booth there came a "Yes" majority—Croydon, Croydon North, Bayswater North, Warranwood, Kilsyth, Mooroolbark, postal votes. The results were greeted by excited applause from local residents, including the exhausted but triumphant Severance Committee.

The poll was a record one. Ratepayers of the proposed new area of the new Shire said "Yes" by a majority of 4,490 votes to 973. The total represented an even greater poll than the 1958 one—5,943 as compared with 5,300 cast; also, the 1958 referendum was taken over an area of 29½ square miles and the increase of 643 votes was heart-warming to severance supporters.

"We're staggered by the results," declared the President of the Committee, Mr. Geale. "When Mr. Porter ordered this referendum he asked for a big poll . . . this is an indication of the determination of Croydon ratepayers to get their own Shire. All Croydon will now await anxiously Mr. Porter's decision." Mr. Geale referred to the pamphlet issued by Lillydale Shire and said it had been a stimulus for people to vote either for or against the referendum, therefore it did good. Mr. Geale added that in their moment of triumph they must not forget the two outstanding men—the late Mr. Rolf Jansen and the late Sir George Knox—without whose help this great occasion would not have occurred.

On December 7 Lillydale Shire's new £65,000 Municipal Offices and Council Chambers building was officially opened by the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. G. L. Chandler, C.M.G., M.L.C. The opening took place on a day of brilliant sunshine. The Shire President (Cr. Glen Frost) spoke of the bright future of the Shire, despite possible severance of Croydon. A gold key was presented to the Minister and then the official party and visitors were taken on an inspection of the new building. Staff offices have wide windows; conducive to study, they are furnished with Venetian blinds. Lovely views of the country-side are seen from various parts; the beautifully proportioned Council Chamber is one of Victoria's best. Decor of the building is functional, artistic and dignified. There are super quality carpets and muted gold velvet curtains; silver striped brocade, green hide upholstery and tan walls and waxed black-wood; a magnificent building and an asset to Lilydale.

Following this event, Croydon waited anxiously for a decision on a breakaway; previously, at the declaration of the poll in August, Cr. Rechsteiner, when speaking for the Lillydale Shire, had congratulated Croydon on its splendid victory and

thanked the Severance Committee for a clean fight. "I am quite sure you will get the new Shire this time," was his opinion.

Croydon did!

Right in the middle of the Christmas rush, with folk thankfully beginning to wind up business for the year, frantic shoppers trying to locate inexpensive yet handsome gifts, housekeepers wondering if the duck would turn out a genuine roaster, and all knocking off for a split second to stare dreamily about at thought of that beach holiday, there came the meeting of Executive Council (December 20). The Governor (Sir Dallas Brooks) made an order constituting the new municipality. Later the Minister for Local Government (Mr. Porter) stated that "the new Shire would be created by excising thirteen square miles from the Shire of Lillydale consisting of Croydon and the surrounding district. The new municipality had become necessary because of rapid development." The inauguration of the new Shire would be on May 24; Lillydale Shire had offered its spanking new administrative block for the ceremony. There would be nine councillors and the Shire would not be divided into Ridings.

Included in such grave ceremonies as weaning an infant shire is the administering of the oath of allegiance by the Minister to the new councillors when they are sworn in. The matter of severance did not split the Lillydale Shire Councillors, for they continued to function with a single purpose, a fact to their credit. Cr. Glen Frost was congratulated for the lone fight he had put up for severance.

Lilydale celebrates her centenary this year (1961). Surely it was elusive fate that refused Croydon's first request for a breakaway in 1958, and with a goblin glint in her mischievous eye handed severance over in 1961! So that the parent can easily be imagined remarking: "So you're going, eh? Well, it's a very nice birthday gift for me! It's time you took yourself off, young 'un, and learned what worry really was! I'm getting too old to bother with you any more."

Many people have lingering regrets at breakaway, feeling the ground cut away beneath their feet. But hope springs to many hearts that despite the bustle of the shopping thoroughfare and the roar of the highways, Croydon in the future is to be guarded jealously from losing a garden atmosphere, particularly in the streets and lanes of the people's homes. There are still many pockets of wildflowers to be found tucked away in bush areas

on the outskirts—lovely drifts of white shrub, creamy candles, the dainty blue pincushion, flat little sundews, heath with its red, white and pink bells found on a dry hillside, purple sarsaparilla trailing its beauty, orchids with faces of mixed colouration, and pittosporum with its heady perfume in early spring. More wildflower sanctuaries are needed before a dreary suburban outlook of rows of regimented houses gets a grip on this lovely district; the flats of Croydon fill periodically with floodwaters—then should we take nature's broad hint and dam this flood at the lowest level so that instead of the Dandenong Creek receiving this precious water, Croydon retains it in a lake as at Ringwood? There is a fine potential view for Croydon with a background of blue mountains reflected in the waters of a lake; trees could further beautify it, handled by a landscape architect.

The spirit of the new Croydon links itself with that of the vanished aborigine and the wild life that once roamed the locality; they stand poised and anxious on the threshold of the second 100 years.

THE END