



A HISTORY OF CROYDON

A SECOND VOLUME

MURIEL McGIVERN

went through in 1882 and his father opened the store, young Jim was sixteen and commenced carrying the mail from Ringwood, delivering to settlers along the route east according to Mrs Trowbridge, his sister, who is still alert at the age of 93 (1964). Postal archives do not state the year he commenced but give November 1946 as the time he finished his long career. He was more than a postman, he was an institution and is well remembered, even with affection. He picked up the mail at Miss Marianne Thomson's Post Office at Ringwood, and in one era rode a black pony, the foal of Secret and Liberty, local lore having it that when Liberty was 32 he ran his last race on the course opposite Madden's pub, running third. You could always hear Jim coming along with the mail for he kept up a continuous gidup! to the sound of clip-clopping hooves. In one era he rode a bicycle but whatever the mode of transport his black and tan dog ran beside him for many a long year. Settlers along the Healesville Road towards Brushy Creek and at present Warranwood came in for mail to Muldowney's. John, his brother, was listed as gardener. Jim was a great one at arranging concerts for the Catholic Church, taking part in them with his speciality *Charley's Aunt*. Jack's speciality was a big corporation and when he drove along in jinker and pony with his large form seated square in the middle, the outfit was nearly all Muldowney. He had a horse which was sagacious, knowing enough to pull up of its own accord at the pub (going) or at home (returning). The boys had another sister, Alice, who was always at the father's store - conducted in a front room of the house.

Jim Muldowney was a part-time mailman at first, later full-time. He was 80 years old when he retired in 1946 and thought to be the oldest ever to carry mail in Australia; he died in 1951. On 4 November 1946 Nelson's Hill Post Office passed to Aldred Alfred Brentnall who held it for five days only - why, is not stated. Then Mrs Cheevers of Burnt Bridge Store two-fifths of a mile west applied for the office to be shifted to her premises with the suggestion that it be renamed Burnt Bridge Post Office.

The application for removal was granted but not the change of name - the historic one of Nelson's Hill was retained at the new site, and so it remains (1965), but it is now over the municipal border and in Ringwood. Although the new hamlet which surrounds one-time Muldowney's is named West Croydon, this Nelson's Hill Post Office remains the nearest one but is in a hollow since removal. But one bearing the name "West Croydon Post Office" was opened on 1 September 1961 a mile to the south - on

the top of Nelson's Hill! There, on Mt. Dandenong Road, is the site of the first one to carry that name with Mr E.P. Barclay the first postmaster. To make it clear, Nelson's Hill has the West Croydon Post Office, and West Croydon's nearest is the Nelson's Hill one, and this at least provides a topic for conversation, and tangles up newcomers. But those who know the district realize that funny little chicks sometimes turn out of historic eggs. A few shops make up the tiny centre branching from West Croydon Post Office which stands on Grandfill Crown land of old.

Jumping Creek and the Orchardists

Jumping or Narr-meian Creek rises in a bushland part of Birt's Hill and is fed by stormwater and soakages from deep in the gravelly eminence. It is a creek of the plateau above Croydon and does not dip down into the sunk valley but writhes a chosen course in the opposite direction. Keeping its wet body free of the town, it flows north-west into the Yarra at Jumping Creek Reserve. Spelt *Narr-maen* on original maps, the *Narr* has been interpreted as "flowing", and *maen* appears on a list by N. Thornley of Western District aboriginal words (which are akin to the Wa-woo-rong), meaning a kind of tea-tree - therefore "a stream flowing through tea-tree". In *Aborigines of Victoria* is mention of *Narneian* or Brushy (not Jumping) Creek, and certainly Brushy Creek is the one that flows through "a kind of tea-tree" (*melaleuca*) almost continuously. So we may never know if a mix-up occurred in the mapping, with the native names of *Barngeong* and *Narr-maen* applied to the wrong streams.

Nutt gave *Narr-maen* the alternative of "Double Creek", but colloquially it has been known as Jumping Creek - since the 1860's at least, for police records of Anderson's Creek mention it then, the track from there towards Brushy Creek settlement crossing the creek near its mouth, the waters leaping about from rock to rock over the rugged gorge bed, and possibly giving rise to the name of Jumping Creek. But the origin remains obscure. Near the source, heavy rainstorms in the past over Birt's Hill caused washouts along various arms but these are now controlled by the draining of the hill.

The main arm passes through the Spencer orchard and is dammed into an entrancing little lake twenty feet deep, a miniature but dim and mysterious sheet of water, and an oasis set amongst the dusty aisles of fruit trees. On hot days it is a delightful spot where water-hens with chicks glide smoothly

about cooling their lately airborne bodies; in the gums and wattles native birds call. Another arm comes from Beavis's and is dammed at Whitten's orchard-grazing property where a mineral from the hills makes the water part-brackish, but the cattle drink it. A third feeder arm soaks from the old Larkin land (Yarra Valley School) and joins up, then the three combine in enterprise and make off to the mouth through deep little valleys in pretty country of mauve and purple vistas of the ranges.

Orchardists whose gardens have dotted the plateau around the headwaters of Jumping Creek during the last 90-odd years are as follows, the Smith family first, pioneers of the fruit industry. A square mile of high, timbered country bounded by Yarra and Plymouth Roads and Grandview Grove was well-watered Crown land secured by Henry Wilmot Smith for his family in the names of two sons, William and James (title 1881). The parents hailed from East Ham, arriving in Australia in 1848 and William was born in 1849; the next one, James, was the first white boy born in Nunawading at a time when aborigines roamed freely about, as claimed by the Smiths. The family lived alternately at Box Hill and Doncaster but the elder boys made spasmodic trips in 1869 to the Croydon land before clearing it, and lived in a humpie called later the "Bachelors' Hut" when permanent. The Smiths claim that these boys were the first to discover antimony at Ringwood; they pushed through the bush one day to south-west and when a couple of miles from the hut, climbed a hill rising from the Healesville Road at a place where Sawmill Road forked. They were searching for gold - a feverish occupation anywhere near Warrandyte at the time with many shafts being sunk in the vicinity of the hill - but instead picked up pieces of strange metal. Close by, Pierce Boardman, a man from Box Hill possibly known to them was picking eucalypt leaves for distillation into oil and to him they took their find. As the mineral was unknown to him also, a sample was subsequently sent to the Mines Department for classification and the finding being antimony a licence was taken out to mine the land. A company was formed including the Smiths, a man named Brown, and Boardman (manager).

Machinery was set up on top of the hill and shafts sunk in 1869 and so was established the well-known Antimony Mine at Ringwood, an industry where many Croydon men ultimately found employment. No fortune came the Smith way from it and a short time afterwards the mine changed hands; however, the money gained from the sale was used to help the parents secure title

for the square mile of land. Fourteen children were born to the Smiths and eleven survived; of these seven were resident at Croydon, all boys. William married Jane Hardidge from Bath, England, and they reared nine children - one girl in the middle; a house followed the bark hut. Bill, always interested in the wealth that hides underground, on one occasion dug up bits of rock impregnated with various colours from his land; his wife remarked: "What wonderful stone!" It was shown to friends visiting from Doncaster then broken up with pieces presented to each as a gift. At this stage the gathering was interrupted by a stranger inquiring for work who examined the fragments with interest. "You've just broken up about £100 worth of opals!" he announced, having had experience of opal-gouging in Queensland.



Mr & Mrs William Smith

This was good enough for Bill and he subsequently set about searching with diligence for the precious stones. He tried many parts of his land and sank a shaft near Lawford's fence after a patch resembling opal showed following rain. But the beautiful and changeable stone proved as elusive to him as gold; in fact the coppery colour found in reefs associated with opal was scarce. As opal is a quartz-like form of hydrous-silica, a constituent of sandstone, and the latter comprises much of the soil of Birt's land, running to east of Smith land, it is feasible that the stone found was opal if only by way of deposits left by raging torrents pouring down Jumping Creek in prehistoric times, and spreading out across the untouched land. James, with hobby spasms, fossicked industriously for gold also, hands dipping hopefully in Jumping Creek which traversed his portion of land. But the yellow stuff proved elusive to him and to Bill who panned-off possible gold-bearing gravel from the creek and took washings in a dish which were shaken and the shining specks picked up on the fingers - valuable but so very, very small. The Smiths found their jewels in the little red rubies on their cherry trees.

Bill shared his half of the square mile with his brothers: Samuel, John, Edward and David. James sold his and left for Mildura but prior to that these men had set up the nucleus of the fruit industry in Croydon. Smiths still live on the original land: Cyril in Grandview Grove, son of James; and Ron and Arthur, sons of William's son, Harry. They work sixty acres in orchard (1963). Mrs Harry Smith's husband, now deceased, told of days when he caught seventy speckled trout in the creek - called by them the "Jumpa" - confirming that the streamlet was once more substantial than now. In his youthful days koalas abounded in the bush, for Manna Gum dug feet in along soakages. Sportsmen from Melbourne, and others coming to the bush named them little grizzly bears and popped off the mammals by the score until such sacrilege was made unlawful. It is possible that the amendment followed the horrifying Queensland slaughter of 1927 when 600,000 koalas were sacrificed for their skins according to the A.M. Encyclopedia. In very early days koalas were not properly identified, being confused with possums - the nocturnal animals plundering precious vegetable gardens when, if these failed, families went without; but the aboriginal knew better. (*Kur-bo-roo* was a privileged animal and only used for food if the tribe was pushed, and then roasted in its skin by tribal law; but possums were a constant food). With Croydon creeks now drained away underground, Manna Gums have died

out and so the habitat of koala the little tree-dweller has been pushed farther and farther into the wilds so that he is seldom seen in a native state. Colonists have handed down records of koalas of much larger size seen in Croydon district than those now at sanctuaries. Kangaroos were "all over the place - eat you out if you don't shut 'em out".

In 1909 when Mrs Harry Smith came to Croydon, Plymouth Road was unmade and very sludgy after rain when the Smiths had the frequent task of pulling people out of bogs; horses drawing loads of fruit slipped and slithered along the greasy track. Mrs Smith was born Rose Groux and people were often helpless trying to pronounce the Swiss name. She said there was nothing like the same complications when she became Mrs Smith! The square mile, being on the plateau, grew many native flowers: Running Postman, Cranberry Heath, Wild Pansies, Black-eyed Susan, orchids, Chocolate-lilies, Maiden-hair and Coral Ferns, and Christmas Bush, flourishing in the debris from gums.

Many of Henry W. Smith's descendants live in Croydon apart from those on the old estate - three of Edward's, one of whom was named Warrandyte and called "Wanny" for short; Raymond, and Joe. Samuel and Alfred were both childless but David had three children. Ernest, son of William and living at Montrose recalls with mirth that he earned 16/- a week picking cherries on the Smith selection at Uncle Sam's orchard and arrived home for tea each night at 9 p.m.; Jack, another son, lives at the old Schuhkraft house, Oliver in Kitchener Road, and David who has seven children, in Haig Avenue (1963). All have children so that there are a great number of great-grandchildren of the original Smiths three of whose children still live (1962) in their '90s (Albert, Alfred, and Rose (Mrs Petty, Doncaster). The Croydon descendants were not all orchardists but many were well versed in the idiosyncrasies of fruit trees, having grown up to the sound of pilfering voices of orchard-robbing birds and the rattle of egg-bounty pennies.

Henry's son, Samuel, had a large acreage in strawberries on the corner of Yarra and Plymouth Roads but he finally left for Mooroopna leaving Samuel Beavis as manager; in 1909 Samuel Styles managed it (was there something in the air to entice Samuels?), the wages then being £1 to 30/- but soon the Styleses purchased it and held it for fourteen years. P. Brucker was a later owner of the house - demolished in 1964 when the land

was taken over by Luther College. Samuel Beavis purchased a part of Smith orchard next door which had been taken over by Alfred Smith; Beavis rebuilt the skillion cottage into a villa - his widow died in recent years aged 90; her sister was Mrs Harry Smith. A Beavis daughter is Mrs N. Byers whose husband is also an orchardist on the estate; a Beavis son is Herbert on the father's orchard and his two sons carry on the orchard tradition, living close by. Herb Beavis has 28 acres in apples, pears, peaches, plums, and cherries with a coolstore of his own capable of holding 2,800 cases. Reg Gill's orchard is also on Yarra Road, then comes Hugh Morrison's property and both these are part of the Edward Smith share of 120 acres which William made available to him. After Edward died at the age of 42, William Gill came to manage for his widow then two years later bought the property and built a house - he was the father of Reg, Dot and Roy. A picturesque sight in early days was the line of drays laden with timber from the river paddocks at Wonga Park labouring the steep hill rising from Jumping Creek culvert, called colloquially Gill's Hill. The horses were spelled often then proceeded on their way to the brick kilns at Camberwell with loads of cut wood.



*Picking apples in the
Spencer orchard,
1967.*

In 1914 Lewis Spencer purchased part of Gill land - his son is ex-Cr. L. Milner Spencer who carries on the family orchard with the other son, Norman, living next door south. The L. M. Spencer's son does not till the soil as his forbears before him but is a teacher at Swinburne College. Aumann's orchard ad-

joining Spencer's is worked on William Smith land, later David's; a few acres are in rhubarb but a large part is grazing property. At the west end of original Smith land, Thomas Lawford purchased 160 acres; the Lawfords lived at Blackburn and worked the orchard with the aid of labour housed in quarters erected on the place. The sons were Rupert and Carey, the latter subsequently selling to a cousin, Edwin. Rupert's son, Charles, still lives on a 40-acre part in Plymouth Road with his family, and has a coolstore there. Edwin's 120 acres passed to his daughter, Mrs Florence Whitten.

On the east side of Yarra Road are several orchards taking in the Crown land of Stewart and of Pierce. In the dense bush on Stewart's, south of Exeter Road corner, was a wattle and daub hut, the property changing hands in 1880 to Thomas Knee who, although not a selector of Crown land, was an early comer. He hailed from Doncaster in line with many Croydon settlers so that it is a vast wonder that this district was not named New Wild Doncaster, or a similar term. Thomas added two rooms to the hut to make it livable, cleared the bush and planted an orchard. The house was enlarged again later and the historic little cottage still stands in good repair with the original shingles under the iron of the roof, for shingles stained drinking water and so were replaced with iron as soon as it arrived from Scotland in pioneering days. Its site is at the rear of Oliver Knee's (a son).

Thomas married Sarah, daughter of Samuel Hardidge, and they reared thirteen children; they bought another 42 acres of land from Alexander (originally Pierce's) and the combined acreage made a fine garden. Four of their children are still in Croydon (1962): William and Oliver, Mrs Pearson and Mrs McIlrath. William works an orchard on the old holding where he built a house 42 years ago, having married a Cook daughter. They had seven children and one is Miriam, a member of the Australian Women's Cricket Team which toured England in 1963, returning in October with minor successes to its credit. Its home ground is Fawkner Park. Oliver Knee, orchardist, also married a Cook daughter (Ruby) and they have four children - one, Richard, was the first Shire of Croydon Proper Officer and Ranger (1961). The Knees later purchased part of Ross land (originally Whitaker's) on the north side of Exeter Road and the Yeo family have a small place close by; the Yeo daughters ride at the Royal Show and have competed for the Garryowen Cup. The Preston Water Main was laid along Exeter

Road in 1961, crossing Yarra Road in the vicinity of Charles Smith's orchard which is over the Shire boundary. He is not a kinsman of the foregoing Smiths but is a resident of long standing. On Pierce land, later Alexander's, Frank McGivern had 20 acres, then his nephew Frank bought it but didn't work it - glorious pink heath once flourished there in profusion. W. White's orchard was farther south, and also Thomson's (Tucker Village site).

From the years 1915 to 1930 Yarra Road orchards supplied Sydney and Melbourne with cherries but when the fruit became affected with brown rot, the Sydney market became closed as the fruit would not stand the journey. When horsedrawn wagons journeyed to Melbourne Market, six hours was allowed for the trip commencing between 6 and 8 p. m. the night before with selling from 4 a. m. to 8 a. m. Drivers lunched at Box Hill on the way home and arrived back between 4 and 6 p. m. The cherries sent to Sydney were picked in the morning and put on the 12.10 p. m. train at Croydon with a second lot on the 9.15 p. m. - the first caught the Sydney express, part of a 400 bushel truckload. The Spencers sent between 4 and 5 cwt. twice a day. Sam Styles's orchard on the site of Luther College was a cherry orchard. To the first settlers the birds sang their strange Australian songs of haunting loneliness, then dived in and made havoc of their fruit.

Horsedrawn vehicles no longer labour Gill's Hill from the river paddocks, but motor traffic tears around the slopes of Graham's Hill and dips down to cross the culvert over the unnoticed and ancient Narr-meian, a streamlet's aboriginal name as soft and pretty as the liquid brown eyes that first gazed on its waters. Blacks drank from it at non-brackish levels, wrung the necks of duck lower down the plateau where little lakes formed after flooding - and no doubt knew more about the origin of the name than white man ever will. Native names were written phonetically by English colonisers as a means of trying to register the strange, unknown vocal sounds in the absence of a written language. The nearest articulatory expression was mimicked, then written, and tried out so that we are lucky to have the native names at all. Rising on high above the streamlet is the equally ancient head that gives the creek birth; it stares north to Christmas Hills, a range purple, blue and straw-coloured in 1962 like the flame-scorched Dandenongs.

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People on Subdivisions

The supply of electricity to Croydon in 1915 with a great deal for estate agents to point out to intending householders, altered the scroll of fate which, patterned of yore with orchards and farms, commenced to unwind to the design of subdivision. The town took the first faltering steps towards suburban development. But it was after World War I that subdivisions came up thick and fast like native flowers after a bushfire, and large holdings really gave way. The map showing original grants in the first volume of this book should be studied to show where subdivisions took place. G. Smith was the first subdivider (in 1887, of Township Estate on John Cooper Crown land); he put Smith Street through (Surrey Road), naming Norman and William Roads after his sons. Later, he shifted residence to Wonga Park.

In William Road at present lives Mr Albert George Ammon who is in his 94th year and still active. He was born in Vere Street, Collingwood in 1872 of English parents, his father a Cockney, and was named after Prince Albert and King George. He claims that Lord Ammon, a member of the House of Lords, was his uncle. When Albert was a boy of fifteen he left his Collingwood home as a swaggie to pick raspberries at Wandin Yallock, being of adventurous bent. En route he reached a place called Croydon and there he paused - either enslaved with the rural aspect or gratified at getting a job of picking cherries at E. (Ted) Smith's orchard on Yarra Road. In time Mr Smith died and Mr Ammon married his widow - he has also survived a