

**Alma*
A Discussion with ~~Elsie~~ & Kelly Helm
16 July 2008

Conducted by Richard Carter with Laraine Haslam

Introduction

I have been invited, in my capacity as Past President of Ringwood Historical Society, to meet with ~~Elsie~~ and Kelly Helm, now 91 and 88 years of age respectively, to talk of their lives and times, and particularly of their time in Oban Road Ringwood North from before 1920 to the mid 1950s.

The discussion was initiated by Lorraine Haslam (nee Hubbard), friend and former neighbour and took place at Elsie and Kelly's home at 100 Airlie Road, Healesville.

This is how the discussion unfolded:

What Are Your Full Names?

Alma Mary HELM and Elsie May HELM

Why is Elsie called "Kelly"?

It goes back to her childhood when she was "always riding out in the bush like Ned Kelly". The name has stuck with her all her life.

What Are Your Dates of Birth?

<i>"Kelly" (Elsie)</i>	<i>23 April 1917</i>
<i>Alma</i>	<i>3 January 1920</i>

What are Your Parents' Names?

<i>Father :</i>	<i>Augustus (died early "of the drink")</i>
<i>Mother:</i>	<i>Edith Harriet nee Rawlins</i>

Where Were You Born?

<i>"Kelly"</i>	<i>in Oban Road – at home</i>
<i>Alma</i>	<i>in Carlton. Don't know why</i>

Where Was The Family Living at the Time?

At Oban Road – since 1910 (see later in these notes)

Why Did the Family Move to Oban Road?

Don't know. Father was a charcoal burner (?). Born in Bendigo.

How Many Acres Did You Have?

6½ acres. Had a small orchard – fruit trees – plums – apricots – subsistence – not for commercial sale.

Who Were Your Neighbours?

Lewis – Hollingsworth – Gordon (next door), Kopke (opposite), Hubbard, Fred Lewis, Pfeiffer, Ratten, Williams, Danky. Tony Loughnan over rear boundary.

What Was the House Like?

Built by father. Two rooms. Weatherboard (not fibro). Rear section was sapling and hessian. Father dragged the logs from the creek. Iron roof. There was an eight post ti-tree tent in the back yard which Kopke built for them and which served as a sleep-out for “Kelly” and Alma.

Where Did You Go To School?

Ringwood North Primary School, Grade 1 to Grade 8. Kelly was a first pupil in Grade 1 in 1926.

What Services Were Laid on to the House?

Oban Road was a bush track. Water was by tanks. No electricity. The horse and cow were watered at Loughnan Lake over the rear boundary.

What Was at North Ringwood?

Mrs. Reeves general store (later Milne in 1940 “relative newcomers”), old butcher in original grain store (N.W corner Oban Rd?)

What Did Your Parents Do?

Father died young “of the drink”. Mother grew strawberries. Took in washing. Worked as a domestic servant. A hard life. Orchard was for self-sufficiency only.

Where “Precisely” was the Property?

In Oban Road before Glenvale Road where Barnsdale Way and Loughies Track now exist (see later).

What Did You Do Later in Life?

“Kelly” (Elsie): started working at 14 at Prestige Stockings in Coburg. Stayed with Aunt in Coburg (Jane Smith, mum’s sister). Came back by horse and jinker for the weekend.

Alma also worked at Coburg. Both hated it. They hated the city. They were country girls. But this was the early 1930s and the money had to be found somehow.

Kelly took a new job after 12 months – dressmaking for 4 or 5 years, then worked in a knitting mill in Glenferrie for 8 years then gave it away (circa 1945?).

She then took up poultry farming in Oban Road, selling eggs to the Victorian Egg Board. She took turns with Mrs Gordon to drive to VEB in Oakleigh twice weekly.

They then moved to Healesville in 1955.

Alma also worked at Coburg then as a dressmaker in Union Road, Surrey Hills ("those rotten days"), then back to Ringwood North at Hubbard's Orchards.

What Was Your Mum Like?

A lovely lady – "the world's best" – a hard worker. She cleared the land. Used a Trawalla jack to grub out the stumps. Took in washing for Mrs Penny.

They all lived together until mum died in 1968.

Mum's parents came from Western Australia – Baker by profession. Came to Victoria about 1910. Why? To Bendigo. Why?

Why Did You Move to Healesville?

For the peace! Kelly was not a city girl: "I could not use my gun anymore" Worked with Pincott – bought land from him – worked as a gardener – cut Mrs Osborne's hedge in Healesville.

Paid off Pincott's overdraft - £750 – in return for the land.

The house was built in 1955 – Baltic pine, masonite, three ply. They are still there.

What About the Cars?

Had an HK Holden, 1968, fawn colour utility, registration KCP871. Previously a Hillman, GAX023. Now have a RAV4 – TAN433. Still drive!

The Move to Healesville

Alma did not want to leave Oban Road. Kelly pressured her to sell the poultry farm and come up to Healesville. Kelly was working for Pincott, the local vet who had a pig farm. She came up every weekend in the ute.

A Few Personal Questions

Neither sister ever married

Mum died in Healesville in 1968 – nearly 90 (born 1878)

The Early Days of Oban Road home:

Memory is vague. Originally rented from Dartnell, a chemist in Box Hill. It originally belonged to father's mother. When father died, grandmother took it over, then turned it over to Dartnell. The sisters eventually took it over from Dartnell (see later).

An Original Marriage Certificate (Parents)

23 January 1916

Augustus James Helm (born Bendigo) & Edith Harriet Helm (born Perth WA)

Occupations: Augustus : Labourer, 45 of Ringwood
Edith : Housekeeper, 31?38? of 225 Canning Street,
Carlton

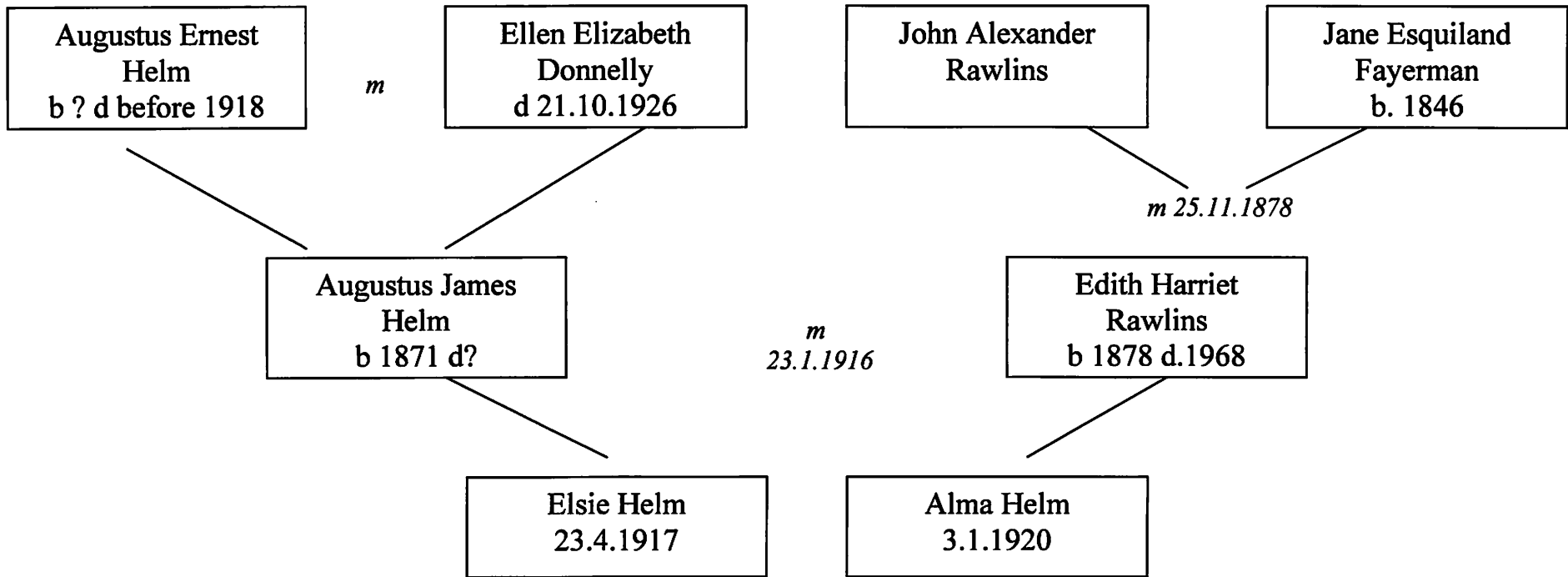
Grandparents: Augustus Ernest Helm
John Alexander Rawlins
Ellen Elizabeth Donnelly
Jane Esquiland Fayerman b 1846 m 25.11.1878

If AJ Helm was 45 in 1916, therefore born 1871

If EH Helm was 38 in 1916, therefore born 1878

Both parents "bachelor" and "spinster" – married comparatively late. St.Jude's Carlton (C of E). (Perhaps this is why Alma was born in Carlton – in her grandmother's house perhaps)

Father's family, Catholic. Girls brought up C of E.



An Examination of Titles

- 19.1.1917 *Robert Beckett of Melb, Solicitor*
336 acres
- 8.2.1917 *Sale to Ellen Elizabeth Helm of 88 Princess St, North Carlton*
(widow) 6 ½ acres
- 21.10.1926 *Ellen Elizabeth Helm dies*
Probate granted to Caroline Mary Glynn of 88 Princess
Street, North Carlton (widow)
- 29.9.1933 *Sale to James William Dartnell of 24 Richmond Terrace,*
Richmond. Property Owner.
- 19.8.1947 *Transfer to Alma Mary Helm & Elsie May Helm, Spinsters, of*
Oban Rd, Ringwood North *£ 583*
- 2.8.1955 *Sale to (?) Ernest Martyn & Inez Gwendolen Martyn of*
Oban Road, Ringwood North