

EARLY HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE AREA ADJACENT TO
MAROONDAH HIGH SCHOOL

The history of the area from the mid 1800's onwards, makes a very fascinating story of an early village, known then as the Nelson Hill district. The Nelson Hill District was the area between Eban Rd, now called Carcoola Rd (Ringwood East) and Kent Avenue, (CROYDON)

Nelson Hill itself was originally a very steep hill. It was known to be the part of Mt Dandenong Rd (originally called Oxford Rd) extending from Bayswater Rd, to the top of the hill, and veering (or sloping) off towards Maroondah Hwy. It was said to be named after a Mr Nelson, who in the early days lived in a cottage in Richard's Lane (now Murray Rd) close to the junction of Mt Dandenong Rd end of Murray Rd. When the top of the hill was reached, Nelson's cottage came into focus.
① Ref. p40 Vol. 2 McEwen's History of Croydon.

Nelson Hill has had the top removed, and it is now known as the area inclusive from the railway line (Mt. Dandenong Rd end) and Monastery area.

Nelson's Hill Swamp, the low lying area was quite a landmark. If you look at the low lying area at Burnt Bridge — from near the tile factory, across Cott's Ave, Beaufort Rd, across Maroondah Hwy, Peter Vergers Reserve to Mollum Creek, you can picture the water course swampy area. These are the lowest contour areas. This is the area of the Nelson Hill Swamp.

The name Nelson Hill appears on a survey map of 1855.
1843 — The first surveyor — William Wedge Darke carried out the survey of the Dividing Range, and the country between the Yarra River and Western Port, and completed it in May 1843. During this time he made a traverse between Mollum and Dandenong Creeks, along the higher ground. He stated that this was the better line for the road.

② Ref. p809. Place of ^{Ringwood} Mary Eagles — Hugh Anderson.)

This road became known as the Eppsland Rd, then Main Healesville Rd, Whitehorse Rd, now Maroondah Hwy.

1854 — 1855 — A second surveyor, William Bennet Hull, who was directly concerned with the area through Ringwood-Croydon,

drew up the Melbourne - Gippsland plans.

1857. The third surveyor - M^r N. M. Bickford and partners, also worked in this area. The Parish of Ringwood was named by N. M. Bickford

Ref 3 - Ringwood, Place of Many Eagles, p10 (by H. Anderson.)

How Burnt Bridge Received its Name -

Ref 4 - John Rodoughan.

When gold was found at Walthalla, supplies and equipment had to be brought in. It was very hard to get supplies into the gully & township. In 1867 - Bullock wagon trains were used to carry supplies from Melbourne to Walthalla. To

enable the bullock wagon train to carry supplies across the Nelson Hill Swamp, the train team with the help of the local aborigines, layed a corduroy bridge. This bridge consisted of logs placed side by side, across the track, approx.

8 feet wide (approx. 2 metres) by 8 chains long (approx 160 metres, the logs being layed close together to raise the track over the swamp. On the return trips the train team always gave a hand out to the aborigines for their help. In 1873 another opposition wagon train commenced from Melbourne, but they frightened the aborigines away by firing their guns, so the aborigines burnt the bridge. The original team spoke to the aborigines, who then helped to rebuild the corduroy bridge. The new team, after being spoken to, fell into line, and from then on the landmark was the Burnt Bridge Swamp.

How CUTTS AVE. Received its Name.
Ref 5. John Rodoughan - In 1880 a Mr Hennessy built a hotel near the Burnt Bridge Swamp because there was plenty of water for the thirsty horses and bullocks. He called it the Burnt Bridge Hotel, Being in the Nelson Hill district, the barman Mr Samuel Cutts, asked why. He was told "Burnt Bridge is made known by the bullock train from Melbourne to Gippsland, and sounds better for a town".

In 1874 - Cobbo & Co coaches began their service along the Maine Healesville Rd (now Maroondah Hwy.)

In 1885 - Samuel Cutts (barman) bought the hotel, and kept the licence going. He died in 19 Nov. 1906.

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Cutt's Ave - the back entrance to the school was named after him. It is also said that Samuel Cutt's hand made bricks, wire cutting them, and then firing them in a kiln in the area where the entrance is now in Cutt's Ave. His son Samuel was born at the hotel. Samuel Cutt's old homestead was burnt down in 1928.*

* Ref 6. p147. Place of Many Eagles. H. Anderson)

Cutt's wife is said to have kept the hotel until 1917 when Mr W.S Williams (Billy Williams) became the owner, of the Burnt Bridge Store. 1924 - de Pelsenair bought the store and 5 acres around it.

Wednesday February 13th 1924 showed the Notice in the Ringwood (Ref 7) Croydon Mail the opening of the Burnt Bridge Store new ownership (de Pelsenair family) ON the Main Healesville Rd. M^r E.J.H. de Pelsenair (selling fresh food, etc) The store was owned by the de Pelsenairs, until the tragic death by accident. In July 1942 the store was bought by Mr Cheever then run by Mrs Nora Cheevers, then Bill & Brian Cheevers until the Burnt Bridge Store was demolished in 1968 for the building of the Burnt Bridge Shopping Centre.

The First OWNERSHIP and DEVELOPMENT of LAND in the Area
- ON which the Community Centre is Built.
The Naming of Brentnall Road.

In 1868 Patrick Muldowney came out from Ireland. He took up an original grant of land in the Nelson Hill District. The Shire of Lillydale Council's Rate Records show the following information. (Ref. 8.-)

1878/79 - 1882/83 - Patrick Muldowney, woodcarter, 20 acres Lot 36A original selection 4th March 1879.

1883/84 - 1895/96 Patrick Muldowney, storekeeper, store and 20 acres Lot 36A.

1896/97. Patrick Muldowney, fruitgrower, store and premises & Lot 36A. *

Patrick Muldowney died in 1898 aged 85 years. (Ref 9. p62. Ringwood Place of Eagles H. Anderson)

In 1866 James Muldowney was born in Ireland and emigrated with his parents. In 1882, at 16 years of age Jim commenced carrying mail from Ringwood, to the settlers along the route. (Ref. ¹⁰ John Rodoughan.)

Ref. 11 Ringwood Historical Society

* In 1899 there is shown the earliest official record of mail circulation in the Nelson Hill area.

After the death of their father, both sons John and James acted as executors for the estate.

On the 25.11.1907 James Muldowney became the owner of the 20 acres ^{of his late father's} Crown Allotment 36A, Parish of Warrandyte, county of Mornington. Ref. 12. Land Titles Office

James was listed as an insurance agent.

* Ref. 12 From 1902-1908. a mail contract for the collection of mail from Ringwood Post Office, for the distribution to residents of Ringwood East and Nelson Hill area, was let to Mr Jim Muldowney. Jim delivered the mail on horseback
(Ringwood Historical Society)

In 1909 the first Post Office at Nelson Hill was officially opened and classified as "non official" (operating from James Muldowney's house).

On the 24th April 1913, James's brother, John, bought from Hugh Murray Strachan 16 acres of land next to Patrick Muldowney original grant (36A). John's land was Part of 37A of the original Crown Grant land of John Grandfill. (Ref. 13) This area is now included as part of the West Croydon Primary School & Ainslee Park
(Land Titles Office)

Ainslee Park estate area was said to have been a rather wet area, poor drainage and with reedy growth.
Ref. 14 John Rodoughan. Jim Muldowney was the first Postmaster, who continued from 1909-04.01.1946. He finished his career as a postman at 80 years of age in 1946. He died in 1951.

John Muldowney had passed away in the late 1930's and James operated the Nelson Hill post office, the

address being described as Whitehorse Rd Ringwood and the area in which the property is located was known as Nelson's Hill." James was still listed as being an orchardist (Ref. 15. Shire of Lillydale rates office)

On the 04.01.1946 the control of the Nelson Hill Post

Office was transferred to Mr Alfred Aldred Brentnall. This came about, as James Muldowney sold the complete Crown allotment ^(36A) to Aldred Brentnall of Loch Avenue, East St. Kilda, orchardist. The Titles office states that he is now the proprietor of the "within described estate by transfer registered on 16th Nov 1945." On August 15th 1947 Andrew Thomas McEwan bought the house and 8 acres of the land, with Aldred Brentnall retaining the remaining 12 acres (Shire of ^{Ret. 16} Lillydale Rates Office). On the 9th November 1946, the control of the Post Office passed to Mrs Nora Cheevers. From that date until 16.04.1973 the office remained under the control of the Cheevers family, when it was then transferred to the next post master. Mrs Cheevers had the Post Office transferred from what is now No. 14 Marcondah Hwy Croydon (then owned by A. Brentnall,) first to the Burnt Bridge Store and asked for the P. Office to be renamed the Burnt Bridge Post Office, but this was not to be achieved until 01.12.79. When the Burnt Bridge Store was demolished in 1968 to make way for the shopping centre, the Post Office was transferred to the new agency run by the Cheevers family.

Ref 17 Ringwood Historical Society — The naming of the Post Office as Nelson Hill took place before the severance of Croydon and Ringwood from Lillydale. In the early days the nearby prominent landmark was Nelson Hill. The residence where Jim Muldowney ran the P. Office from, the now No. 14. Marcondah Hwy Croydon (now owned by Mr Leckie who bought it from A.T. McEwan.) had a closer

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association with Nelson Hill. There was a short cut through to Croydon via Nelson Hill from Maroondah Hw along what is now Murray Rd, not far from the Post Office dwelling.

IN JUNE 1953 an easement was put through the 12 acre section of land of A.A. Brentnall. This land is ^{between} Maroondah High School, and Ainslee Park.

Croydon Council bought the land from A.A. Brentnall IN 1974 for \$100,000. on loan negotiated from the State Treasury by the then sitting member for Ringwood — Norm Lacy. With the combined efforts of Croydon Council, Ringwood Council, Maroondah H.S. Council & Education Dept, part of this area was used to build the Community Centre. — Theatre, Gym Complex. Prior to this, a section for a carpark, next to the school was fenced and gravelled.

Phone: — 870-5201

Eva Buchanan
310 Maroondah Hwy
Ringwood.

- References: ① Ringwood Historical Society (by courtesy of Mrs E. Puller)
- ② Land & Titles Office.
 - ③ Mr John Rodoughan
 - ④ Ringwood Place of ^{many} Eagles — Hugh Anderson.
 - ⑤ Vol. I History of Croydon — Muriel McGivern
 - ⑥ J. de Pelsenave family.
 - ⑦ Cheevers family.
 - ⑧ Division of Survey and Mapping
 - ⑨ Research Officer of Aborigines Advancement League.