The Alan Family

Robert Allan was born in Scotland and grew up on a mixed farm. At the age of eighteen he paid his own fare to Melbourne in 1871. He found his way to Keysborough and to the large dairy farm in Hutton Road owned by the Keys family. The Story is told that while walking down Chapel Road he stopped a young girl to ask for direction the Keys's farm. This girl turned out to be Sarah Foster his future wife. After marring in 1885 Robert and Sarah made their home on forty acres in Stanley Rd Keysborough and produced seven children with six surviving. The children were educated at the Keysborough State School. On their way to School the Allan children would take a shortcut through their Foster Grandparents farm, where the boys regularly took advantage of the apples and pears in season. In about 1905 Robert Allan bought about 380 acres named "*Lowlands"* from the Chandler family. the land had frontages to both Chandler and Perry Rds. Robert was a contractor, digging drains and road making, either privately or for the Dandenong Roads Board. This took him away from the family for extended amounts of time. Sarah managed the farm herself with the help of the children. Walter, Roly and Violet helped to milk the cows before and after school. Luckily the cows brought themselves up to the milking shed morning and evening ready to milk. They even knew which order they were milked. As the children grew the boys worked in the paddocks and the girls did the cooking and picked the peas , tomatoes and other vegetables for the market. To provide the feed for the milking cows during winter, the children would cut cape week with a knife . Because the ground was too wet for the horse and cart the family carted maize by hand. On Saturday nights the children would put the maize through the chaff cutter turning it by hand. Oaten hay and millet were also grown for cow and horse feed. In Summer, in an effort to clear the land. Robert had the bad habit of lighting fires in the tussocks and then going to bed. His family and neighbours would be left to fight the fires when they got out of control. Robert would do lots of dealing in land, and then spend a couple of weeks in bed figuring out how to pay for it. Robert spent a lot of time in bed. Robert had a good relationship with the Corrigan family who lived about three miles away. Some Sunday mornings he would walk there while the family were at church. He would stay for lunch and a few whiskies in the late afternoon Lattima Corrigan would drive him home in the jinker. Crops that were grown for the Melbourne market were potatoes, cabbage, peas, pumpkin, watermelons, marrows, white turnips and tomatoes. As well as the farm work and milking each day as the Children got older one of them would drive the cart along Cheltenham road, through the railway gates and deliver milk to the Dandenong Railway Station for delivery . Sarah died in 1933 and after her death Robert needed assistnace to cope. He was confined to bed or a couch in the dining room. He suffered from a ruptured stomach caused by getting up too soon after an operation for appendix to dig a drain. He died in 1942.