And So Today . . .

by

Jean F. Field

A Picturesque Cavalcade of the Years Between

AND SO TO-DAY . . . .

Sincere Regards

Jean. S. Field

Mr Bugley sends you Xmas greetings, and hopes that you have fully recovered from your illness.

J. F.

BLACKBURN LAKE

by Don Perrin

APPLES AT VERMONT, VIC.

THE OLD STORE AT VERMONT, VIC.

From
J. K. MOIR
COLLECTION

AND SO TO-DAY...

BY

JEAN F. FIELD

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To the Women Pioneers
of the District

I am indebted to the following people for their help and understanding when gathering material for this book.

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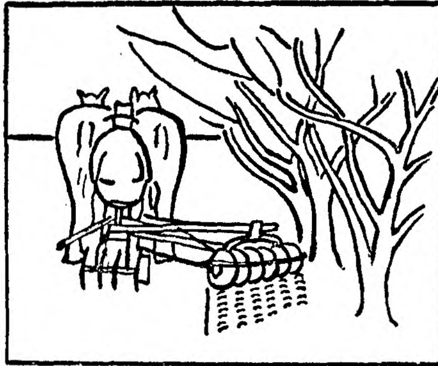
IN THIS BOOK I have purposely given a more detailed account of early Box Hill and its counterpart in England than I intend to give to the other towns, as I have gathered from the old inhabitants of the surrounding districts of Doncaster, Blackburn, Vermont and Mitcham that Box Hill was their main centre.

I will not stress the problem of Town Planning, as I wish to point rather to the efforts of the individual whose hopes and fears and high endeavour has contributed so much to the culture, beauty and progress of his new surroundings. I shall try to tell the story by word and picture, so that all may enjoy it, and not only the few whose inclinations turn to the historical rather than to the everyday doings of those around them.



"The Orchard Plough," designed and built by hand by Daniel Harvey at Doncaster in 1897. Thought to be the only plough of its kind in the world. This plough revolutionized the cultivation of orchards and the C.S.I.R.O. in Griffith in New South Wales altered their method of orchard cultivation after the introduction of this machine.

"I will lift up mine eyes to the Hills from whence cometh my Help."—Psalm 121.

INTRODUCTION

THERE comes a time in everybody's life when we stand still, as it were, and take stock of ourselves and our surroundings. A time when, if we are married, perhaps our children launch themselves onto the tide and leave us, a little perplexed, a little lonely, with an emptiness in our hearts and with time on our hands. This is a time for reflections and a time to breathe the perfumes of the beauty around about us, to gaze into the soft distances; a time to feast our eyes on things which, during our busier, younger life were something to be seen only in glimpses as we went about the hundred and one duties which go to make up the life of the average mother or the busy breadwinner. Life is transitory, each phase of it the turning of a wheel, always forward, never backwards, and so it comes about, quite naturally, that the wheel of *our* lives turns slowly down, quietly, gently, bearing us along with it until its run is done and the sunset is upon us.

But don't let us say to ourselves, my useful life is done, I am no longer the hub, what is there now for me to do? I believe that this pause has been given to us by a wise and farseeing Deity, for us to enjoy when we are neither too young to miss the deep significance of life, nor too old to walk to the top of the nearest hill and watch the clouds on the mountains, the wind in the trees and the birds on the wing.

You will be saying to yourselves, what is all this leading up to? This pausing, this resting on the half-way mark.

I shall endeavour to show you in the pages of this book; the past and the future spread out before us like a huge canvas painted by some master hand. Things close at hand, some old, some new, hobbies and pastimes, news and views beautiful and interesting, amusing or sad, the nice comfortable, familiar things which go to make up this earthly paradise.

Come with me over hill and dale, let us wander into our neighbours' gardens, along the footpath, the shady lane and the busy street; by lake and mountain stream, by church and steeple, and if you say when you have closed its pages that you have been bored, then I have failed when I should like to have succeeded and writing this book will have lost its savour and I shall be sad indeed.

"Every man has in his own hands the Keys to Heaven; the same Keys fit the gates of Hell." — Rabindranath Tagore.

CHAPTER I

BOX HILL

OUR GREAT CITY of Melbourne is like a large star with a solid centre and many points spreading out North, South, East and West, but the longest point of all thrusts out towards the blue Dandenong Ranges, an easy afternoon's run in the car from Town. The lovely, undulating country of the lower foothills, with its many orchards and small farms, is rich and fertile, and the air crisp and tangy with a wonderful temperate climate and splendid rainfall as high as 40 inches per annum in some places. Apples and pears, lemons and peaches all grow in abundance. It is to this country that the City-weary, and the dreamer, the Artist and worker alike have turned their eyes and have bought for themselves blocks of land and built on them their dream home.

The uncanny way in which the human being turns his eyes to the hills, and the latent instinct which sleeps in all of us, to come, if we can, closer to nature, is being proved day by day, as more and more men and women prefer to strap-hang in trains and buses from the hills for as long as an hour, rather than live close to the City in flats and apartment houses. Lucky indeed is he who can say to his fellow worker, "I come from the Hills."

It is sad, though, to see the orchards going one by one, subdivided into blocks of land, some of them only 50 feet wide; to see men having to leave one congested area only inevitably to live in another. The money-hungry and the grasping are always with us. "Closer Settlement!" the cry rather than "Let us Breathe!"

A beautifully timbered block is sold to a man who is uncivilised enough to carry the instinct with him to destroy

before he can build, who clears his block of trees overnight, and then gloats to his friends that he is now living in the beautiful suburb of, say, Blackburn or Croydon. The man who sees in his gums only six months' free firewood and not the blessing of a lifetime. Rather than cut these trees down, he should go down on his bended knees and thank God that he doesn't have to live on the top floor of a 23-storied apartment house.

Thank God, though, hundreds of happy home builders are able to buy perhaps two blocks beautifully timbered, and there set up a new home, gracefully and in good taste, blending with unerring instinct the old and the new, the indigenous with the imported to the benefit of all.

Let us turn now to the City of Box Hill, the Gateway, as it were, to this countryside of ours. Here the road, "Whitehorse Road," known to all Melburnians, rises and the first near glimpse of the Dandenongs is seen. Deep purple and navy blue in the Spring and the Autumn, misty and soft in Summer, and in the Winter often clothed with snow for days at a time, or lost in the clouds which hang about its peaks, famous in paintings and verse.

In the year 1840, Arundel Wright blazed the first trail to this location, the 320 acres granted to him for services rendered, by the Government of New South Wales. This land was situated between what is now known as Elgar Road and Doncaster Road on the north side of Whitehorse Road. At that time, the country was very heavily timbered and inhabited by many Aboriginals—blacks as they were then called. Life was very hard, especially for the wives and families of these pioneers, and labour very hard to get, the only labour available in a number of cases being deserters from ships. From this property came the timber to build the first bridge over the Yarra River, being near the site of Princes Bridge of today.

The name Box Hill was chosen for this district when other pioneers came to settle here. What thoughts they must have had of the lush country of Surrey in England, whence, no doubt, some of them migrated from.

Box Hill is within the urban district of Dorking, 23 miles from London, on the old Roman Road which runs through Surrey from Chichester, through Sussex to London. Practically the whole of the hill and the valleys on the north-west side of the town, some 786 acres of beautiful country are now National Trust Property, controlled on behalf of the Trust by the Box Hill Management Committee, and another 250 acres are under the protection of the Trust to ensure that they will not be developed in a way which might spoil the beauties of Box Hill. Box trees, indigenous to the area, cloak the surrounding hills and are, of course, greatly favoured for carving. Box Hill is steeped in history. Its little Inn, the "Fox and Hounds," now called the Burford Bridge Hotel, was made famous by Charles Dickens in his Pickwick Papers, and Queen Victoria stayed there on several occasions; other famous people who passed under its portals were Nelson, Keats and Robert Louis Stevenson, who all found its breezy commons and wooded hills an inspiration for their work and solace from a busy world.

In 1856, the new Box Hill in Victoria received its first permanent Spiritual inspiration when it built its Wesleyan Church in Woodhouse Grove. Ministers in those days used to have huge districts to care for and one used to walk from Kew to Box Hill twice a week to hold services for the people of that district. Wesley Church, Box Hill, has been in continuous service ever since its erection.

In this year, too, the Natural Improvement Trust was formed to help make improvements for the families of this district. This movement provided for the welfare of their families and was the first practical expression of a feeling of citizenship. In the following year they created the

Nunawading District Roads Board; the valuation of the land in the district was £4,200 and the first rate made by the Board brought £210.

This Road Board, therefore, was the beginning of local Government in Box Hill. The first meeting was held in the old "White Horse Inn," which stood in those days on the corner of Whitehorse Road and Elgar Road and was one of the main stopping places for the David Mitchell coaches which used to run to Lilydale. At this Inn was the Toll Gate, set up to help pay for the maintenance of the road—a most unpopular method of raising revenue in those days. Box Hill received its name in 1860. Names were placed in a hat and Box Hill was the name withdrawn.

In 1872, Local Government was further advanced by proclaiming the district as the Shire of Nunawading. The first railway train ran to Box Hill in 1882 and the first Electric Tram in the Southern Hemisphere was run between Box Hill and Doncaster along Station Street in 1889.

It is interesting here to note that the first Electric Tram in the world ran at Sechperfelde, Germany, in 1881.

The official seal of the City is expressed in the use of Roses and Wattle, thus uniting the old with the new, and they have for their motto, "Labour Conquers Everything," a motto expressing the vigour and strength of this new community. Box Hill was declared a City in 1927 and its new Town Hall was opened on April 15, 1935.

This, then, is the history of the Gateway to the Dandenongs. The White Horse which once guarded the portals of the famous Inn of those times now proudly arches its neck over the same portal transplanted to the City's most conspicuous spot, to be seen by all who pass along White Horse Road to the country beyond.

The past official history of Box Hill has been written by more accomplished writers than I—the present finished article is a modern Garden City. Councils of the past made sure that there would be plenty of parks and gardens for the succeeding generations to enjoy, and the result is a very pleasant suburb indeed. Thousands of trees line the streets, and the soil, being rich and clayish, grows wonderful roses and flowers of all kinds. Box Hill is famous for its Flower Shows and horticultural activities.

It seems rather amazing that, amongst so much culture and pride, historic sentimentality is so singularly lacking. "The past is past, let's look only to the future" must be their motto, we thought, when, during our ramblings we visited the old Methodist Church in Woodhouse Grove. Made of hand-hewn stone from a nearby creek, and hand-made bricks from the clay which abounds in the district, this relic of the devotion of their ancestors stands almost forlorn and uncared for, although in constant use since its erection in 1856. The land on which it stands was granted to the Church by one of the very first families who pioneered the district. These sturdy, hardworking men and women who wrested from the inhospitable soil their daily bread with so much sweat, had yet time to turn their hands to the building of this little Church. A staunch reminder to us in these days of materialism that, only by faith and hard work can we ever hope to attain the peace and prosperity which we so often think should be our right, rather than a blessing from Above.

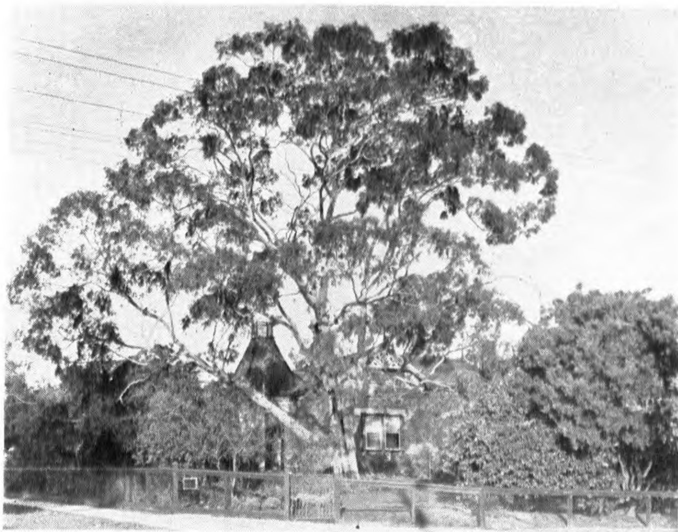
It was hard to imagine the heavy timber, the blacks, and the loneliness as we stood on the roadside. The warm winter sunshine fell on hill and roof top and the neat orchards fell away at our feet in even squares. The apple trees, bare and evenly pruned, the rows between ploughed, the earth—moist and shiny—yet, this little edifice stood on its plot of ground without hedge or garden, cultivation or care—why? A magpie called to his mate from a nearby gum, a long wailing cry, rather sad, and not the usual

cheerful carol we hear in the early morning. We turned to go, and as we drove away I said to Jean, "I wonder why none of the descendants of these people, many of whom still live in this district, have not thought it worth while to cultivate a garden and grow a lovely grove of trees around this little place?" And Jean replied: "It certainly seems strange—we in Australia have little time for tradition. I wonder why, when most of us are British and have absorbed tradition with our mother's milk!" Yes, indeed.

Let us hope that the people concerned with this little church preserve it and care for it in the future; we need a reminder now and then that what we take for granted so much now, was won for us with sweat and tears by those who went before us. The following poem was found under the church door more than 30 years ago, written, no doubt, by a stranger who passed that way and who was moved as we were to stop and think awhile of what had gone before.

Memories of the Pioneers

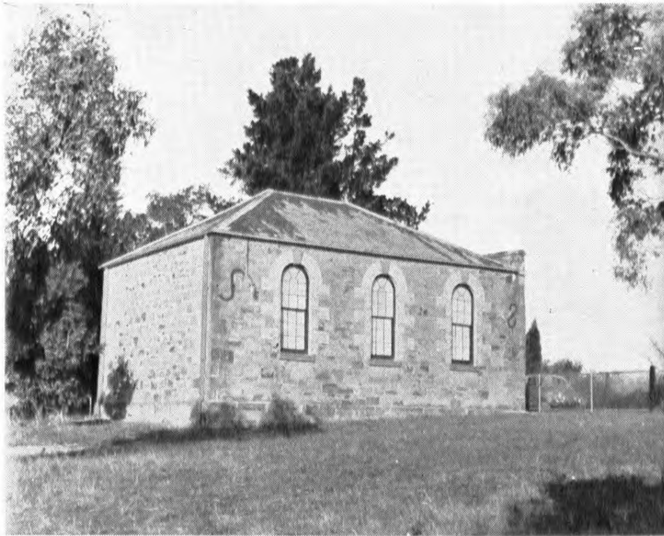
The pioneers who built this house
Have gone to their reward.
Their bodies rest beneath the sod,
Their souls are safe with God.



THE LARGEST TREE IN THE DISTRICT.
LEMON SCENTED "GUM", BLACKBURN.

GUM TREES PRESERVED IN THE STREET, BLACKBURN.

EVENING SCENE, DONCASTER.



WESLEY CHURCH, BOX HILL, 1856.

CHAPTER II

DONCASTER

WHILE Box Hill is a bustling type of place, with its busy streets and shopping centre, Doncaster, which lies a bare three miles to the north and is only nine miles from Melbourne, still basks in rural tranquility.

This is something of a phenomenon; it is partly due to its locality and having been by-passed by the railway and not being on a direct route to the Hills, Doncaster has remained substantially the same for nearly 50 years.

From Box Hill to Doncaster ran the old Electric Tram which we mentioned earlier, but although the people of Doncaster had a nice easy way to the City, they were not at all pleased with it, and I believe many amusing incidents occurred during its construction. Some say that minor pitched battles took place along the route, and although a great dinner was held to celebrate the opening, and the Tram ran for many years, the people of Doncaster were mighty pleased when it eventually gave up the ghost for lack of funds. It was blamed for the influx of many rough and rowdy pleasure trippers, and they would have none of it. In the early '40's, the country around Doncaster was dense bushland; practically the whole of the country was heavily timbered with stringybark, messmate, applewood, yellow and grey box, peppermint, wattle and white gums. Little of this original timber remains today, a few sturdy box and a huge white gum or two, and the rest rows upon rows of orchard trees—apples, pears, plums and peaches.

This heavily timbered country became the ideal hiding place for stolen cattle placed there by cattle duffers. In the early '50's the area was divided into a few large estates held mainly by absentee ownership, some of the owners

living in England, and others working their places with hired labour, but later, the land was subdivided and sold for farming.

Once, Doncaster was named Vermont, but one of the very early pioneers asked that it be renamed Doncaster after his old home town in England, and this was agreed upon. Settled in the first place, after the land had been subdivided, by a number of Germans who came to seek religious freedom, and some to escape the harsh military training of their day, they were a hardy, independent, industrious and God-fearing people. They made wonderful settlers, but they would have none of the frivolities of their neighbours and kept themselves to themselves.

The first homes were made of wattle and daub, close to the creeks from which they had to draw all their water. From the very first, the lack of water has been one of Australia's main problems. In this district, the short, wet winter and long, dry, hot summer made the cultivation of fruit trees very hazardous, and in the early days berries were grown almost exclusively. The subsoil is very heavy and clayish and the settlers soon realised that this was an ideal substance for holding water and so they built for themselves large reservoirs and catchment dams, the water from which they irrigated their orchards and gardens.

The settlement grew and flourished, lumber teams cleared more and more of the country, and heavy logs were carted to the City for firewood. Small farms and orchards spread ever outwards like a large fan, right up to the foothills of the Dandenongs, and today enormous amounts of fruits are picked each year.

From Doncaster, Ringwood and Wantirna alone last year came one million cases of apples, half a million cases of pears, a quarter of a million cases of peaches, and 100,000 cases of plums and goodness knows how many cases of large juicy lemons as well. Here in Doncaster in 1907 was erected the first Cool Store in the Commonwealth.

With more settlers came the usual things that accompany our normal civilisation. The little churches, the Lutheran first of all, and later the Church of England, the Baptist and the Roman Catholic. The butcher, baker and the candlestick maker, the blacksmith and the little Inns and the School House. Such fanciful names as The Morning Star (now gone), and the Empress of India were given to the Inns—the latter was said to have been burned down by irate citizens because it was the rendezvous of undesirables—no doubt the same cattle duffers, who knows? The old Town Hall Hotel was made famous by its proprietor, who conceived the brilliant idea of building a tall lookout so that all could come and view the surrounding countryside from this wonderful structure, and no doubt refresh themselves at Mine Host's tea tables after so strenuous an adventure. I am told that the first Tower blew down, but I can say that from pictures of the second one, nothing short of an earthquake would have even so much as made it tremble. Threepence a time was charged for the ascent of the Tower, some 200 steps. I should need £5 compensation for stiff muscles if I attempted a climb of that sort! Our parents and grandparents must have been made of sterner stuff for I believe the old Tower stood for 60 years before it was pulled down, being considered at that time unsafe.

When the Tower fell, the Inn went into a decline, and was finally demolished—a pity. The Doncaster Hotel still stands today and at the turn of the Century this Inn was made famous by the wonderful and new invention—the Motor Car! Young engineers from all walks of life spent much time trying to invent bigger and better cars; some succeeded, of course, but many failed and much hard-earned cash went up in a puff of smoke and a big bang. My father, who was one of the first of the few, a successful first I may add, and his contemporaries spent much time at the old Doncaster Hotel. It was a lovely day's run in the car from the City. The country was fresh and sparkling and the hotelkeeper knew when he was on to a good thing. Most luscious afternoon teas were served in digni-

fied surroundings for the young men and their lady friends who used to drive up on Sundays—the lasses enveloped in gossamer veils and dustcoats and the young men in leather jackets (fur-lined if they could afford it), huge gauntlet gloves, cloth caps and goggles. Those wonderful days when the world was at their feet! Many famous people spent their happy motoring hours up there.

In the early days of motoring there was a great cameraderie amongst the fraternity. If one should have had the bad luck to be stuck up on the road and a fellow motorist came along, there was a great to-do. The other car would pull up and out would jump the driver, ready to lend a hand. Should any spare parts change hands, these would always be returned to their rightful owners accompanied by a letter of thanks and expressions of interest and good luck from the hapless one. All sorts of new vogues and eccentric ideas got an airing in those wonderful 1900's, and the old Doncaster Hotel was their paradise. Many now famous racing drivers were constant visitors to the place, and motoring generally seemed to have as many hazards for that generation as breaking sound barriers and trips to the moon in a rocket has for this.

One of the Village Blacksmiths at this time seems to have been a man of parts. He ran an efficient blacksmith's shop and in his spare time he built a car in his back yard, and I believe it was one of the first cars ever to have been made in Australia. His hammer was steam driven and he was of an inventive turn of mind generally. He is said to have invented the first power spray pump in Australia. His little smithy still stands in the main street of Doncaster, silent and forlorn now, its doors padlocked against the outer world.

From Bullock Waggon to Coach-and-Four, from Hansom Cab to Luxury Limousine—what a colourful cavalcade, what a picture of high endeavour and forcefulness—"all the world's a stage" and certainly there have been

many players in this colourful history of the suburbs in which we now live.

Today, the Highway wide and smooth, runs between hawthorn hedges and pine plantations, rolling foothills round about us and the blue hills in front of us, a fitting backdrop to such a peaceful rural scene. The daub hut has gone, to be replaced by substantial stone and brick homesteads, nestling amongst their English trees; the oaks and the elms, the pine and the beech, huge and spreading, and far out in the paddocks the Golden Gorse and the early native Cootamundra wattles make the July winter scene gay and cheerful. No snow lies here to cover up the lush greenness, the sky is piled high with winter cloud banks, showers and sunshine and gusty gales—all in one day's weather. Pines, pines, pines, they dominate the scene, dark and tall against the winter sunset; red skies reflected in the still water, mare's tails in sky and silence. This is evening in Doncaster in July—bare branches and moist, clean furrows in the orchards, white heath by the roadside, soft footsteps on the pine needles underfoot, and the magpie's call!

As in California, pines are grown everywhere in Doncaster as wind breaks for the fruit trees; along the roadsides and in clumps upon the hills. Huge spreading Radiata 60 to 70 years old, they make a splendid pattern of dark green against the winter sky. As we climbed a steep knoll and gazed out over the countryside, my thoughts turned to the courage of the womenfolk of this early settlement. Women who were mothers of large families, working side by side with their men, fetching and carrying, bearing their children far from the comforts of doctors and hospitals, shouldering the burdens of the day with chin up and a stout heart.

The little Lutheran cemetery bears silent witness to the tragedy and grief which struck the little settlement; rows upon rows of tiny unnamed graves on the lonely hill. Opened in 1862, this Lutheran cemetery was only in use for 26 years, yet buried there are 44 adults and 72 children,

the average age of the infants being one year and eight months. Nothing remains now of the once beautiful little churchyard; shrubs and trees given by Baron von Muller, the founder of our Botanic Gardens, which once grew in such profusion are now overgrown with young pines, wattles and heath. Vandals have smashed the headstones and strewn ornate iron work, which once surrounded the graves, over a wide area, and the scene is one of utter desolation. No attempt has been made by the descendants of these people to preserve the graves, and yet I venture to suggest that scarcely one family has not at least one member buried there. A few tall cypresses tower above the smaller undergrowth, a piece of white marble, the inscription almost erased by time and weather, lie near a briar rose. There was no hearse in those days—a coffin was taken to the cemetery on a bullock dray.

Diphtheria raged through the district at one time, and it is hard for us who can have our children immunised these days, to imagine what terror must have been struck in the hearts of the mothers of that time, because then the disease was almost always fatal for the very young. The long, lonely night, the choking breath, the despair, and on the morrow another little mound on the hillside.

It is to the Lutheran Church that Doncaster owes so much for its culture and spiritual inspiration. The Lutheran Pastors were learned and meticulous men. They built their first church of wattle and daub, 40 feet x 20 feet x 12 feet, and this was dedicated in 1858, but it was later burned down in a bushfire. They held their services there every Sunday morning and when they were not using it themselves, they lent it to the Anglicans and thus together the little settlement grew in unity and strength. The Lutherans started the first school where some 50 children of nearly all denominations attended, and it continued for many years until it was taken over by the Government in 1876.

Of course, life in those days had its brighter side, too, and some funny incidents occurred such as this one, which made me smile. You can have it for what it is worth; it

is said that during one of the many severe droughts the early settlers became desperate for the want of water and so decided to ask a certain Bishop to pray for rain. Probably this gentleman was a bit fed up himself because he said "Damn the water!" The grumblings of a peevish old gentleman very soon turned out to be divine inspiration, for the settlers went home and did just that, and have never been without water for their orchards since!

The settlers also enjoyed horse racing and cricket and spent the winter evenings with music and singing. But strangely enough, horse racing had a short life and the little racecourse at Doncaster soon fell into disuse and reverted to farming. Settlers used to rise in the small hours of the morning and take their produce to market in Melbourne and often fell asleep while on the journey. The old horses used to plod along up the steep incline which leads out of Doncaster on the way to town, then known as "Long Hill," and would often continue on their way unaided until they came to the next Inn, which was the famous old Harp of Erin at Kew. This Inn still stands today, although very much modernised. It must have been a very thirsty business this going to market in the wee hours, because although Inns were situated only two or three miles apart, settlers seemed to proceed only from Inn to Inn both coming and going! At last, it is said, a policeman was posted at the top of "Long Hill" to awaken any slumbering teamster so as to avoid an accident over the little bridge at the bottom of the hill. Try to imagine the long dusty road, the wagons, the teams of horses and the robust singing of the teamsters echoing as they moved slowly along.

Today, it is a different story and quite recently I heard of a case which would make one's blood boil. A certain orchardist who was no longer young, and was the proud possessor of an orchard which contained, amongst other things, some magnificent pear trees, the fruit from which won many prizes in the Royal Agricultural Show, was begged by a certain man to sell him a few acres on which to build his dream home. This land was to include some of the famous pear trees. After much persuasion, the old

gentleman reluctantly let his land go. The ink was hardly dry on the bill of sale before this despicable creature's bulldozers got to work, and in less time than it takes to tell, not one of those glorious trees was left standing. The land was subdivided and sold at considerable profit and several small suburban villas were built, the owners of which might have been only too pleased to have had a tree in their gardens which was in full bearing.

Lately, many families, rather than see their land sold and cut up, combine and buy each other out, and so a lot of land is now held by a few of the descendants of the original settlers, and it looks as though it will remain that way for some time.

Doncaster today is divided into three entirely different types of living. On the one hand there are the orchards, then come the new homes of the higher income groups. These are set well back from the roads and are surrounded in some cases by groves of young pines interspersed with English ornamental trees and beautiful lawns and shady gardens; the two-car income group, where the man of the house goes to business in his car and his wife has another car in which to go shopping and to see her friends, because you must remember that although there is a very good bus service to both Box Hill and to North Balwyn, and thence by rail and tram to the City, these people are not on any railway line. Lastly, there is the small home set in its little block of 50 feet or so; the homes which one sees in any suburb all over the world; but at the moment, at any rate, these are definitely in the minority and will probably remain so for some time. However, Doncaster is a beautiful place, very English in appearance and lucky are they who can afford to live there, for, in my opinion, this place has definite charm for the person who wishes to get away from the hurly-burly of City life and who can see from his door the beauty of the undulating countryside; who can follow with his eyes the changing seasons by the colour of the fruit trees on the hills, and whose tiredness is so magically smoothed away by the hum of the bees and the wind in the pines.

CHAPTER III

BLACKBURN

IF WE RETURN to Whitehorse Road and continue on our way through Box Hill towards the Hills, we will come to the town of Blackburn. Only 306 feet above sea level, Blackburn lies in the fold of the hills, the immediate township rests at the bottom of a shallow basin so that nearly all the roads leading out of it rise a little. Blessed with abundant natural timber, this suburb of Blackburn, only 11 miles from Melbourne, is, I think, unique.

Three things impress the visitor when he first comes here—firstly, the perfume of the gums, secondly, the sense of peacefulness, and lastly, but by no means least, is the wonderful amount of birdlife. It is a quiet oasis set amongst gums and wattles, and although it is built directly astride both railway line and White Horse Road, the hustle and bustle of its many industries and the busy streets are left behind almost immediately we turn out of the main shopping area. The hum of dynamos and the rattle of the passing trains make no more impression on the general calm than a fly buzzing on the window pane of an empty room.

This is the gardener's paradise, not the type of gardener who likes his flower beds set out in symmetrical rows with clipped lawns and concrete edges, but the person who likes to build his garden around the existing natural vegetation; rambling, interesting gardens these!

This, too, is the home of the business man who, although he must be in his office at 9 o'clock each day, comes home with a sense of freedom, a sense of a burden having been cast off, as he steps through the station gates. The home of the man who, with pipe in mouth and dressed in faded army jacket, will potter all the week-end amongst shrub and hot-house and let the rest of the world go by.

And So Today . . .

How the area came to be preserved in all its natural beauty is somewhat of a miracle, but a great deal of the land in the very early days was held by men of some substance, who built large homes on their properties and who sold their land carefully with an eye to the future. Certainly Blackburn seems to have been singularly lucky to have been blessed with the right type of resident.

Vacant land, especially in that area where it has been left undisturbed, is a carpet of wild flowers in the Spring and Summer time. Native plants of every description flourish everywhere. Pink and white heath and the white Erica, flower nearly all the winter; the delicate green hooded orchid, the wild fuchsia, blue batchelor buttons, yellow everlastings, the gold and brown "eggs and bacon" of our childhood days and the purple climbing pea cover every corner which has been left as nature decreed it and of course the wattles, several varieties of which flourish in the district, grow in profusion.

It is natural enough, therefore, that birds have chosen this place for their own. Their songs fill the air all day. Even the timid bushland birds which usually retire far into the hills and valleys seem to have remained. Bellbirds, whipbirds, mountain thrush and the pallid cuckoo are quite common. I, personally, have seen a pair of shy pardalodes nesting in a heap of builder's sand at the front gate. These little birds, with their bright colours and spotted wings, are usually very shy, building their nests far from the hurly-burly of people, in the banks of creeks and under over-hanging tree roots. Also, in my friend's garden in Blackburn, live a pair of Tawny Frogmouths. They nested with all confidence in a gum in her front garden and hatched out two fledglings, and it looks as though they intend to remain another season, as they can be seen often perched side by side on a bare limb for all the world like two grey knobs on the bough. Quaint chaps these, with their clever camouflage and their funny little bristling moustaches.

Like the rest of the surrounding country of Box Hill

and Doncaster, the soil here is suitable for orchards and the cultivation of flowers of all kinds. The soil is hard to cultivate at first, but once broken up and supplied with plenty of humus, one's gardening efforts are amply rewarded. For those who are doubtful about growing a garden under gum trees, let me tell you here and now it is done most successfully both here and in the hills. All acid-loving plants will flourish under gum trees if the beds are raised 6 inches above ground level; such plants as love the dappled sunlight grow to perfection—Azaleas, Rhododendrons, Fuchsias, Primroses, Heleborus, Cinnerarias, Primulas, Hydrangeas and many Australian flowering shrubs, while the deciduous imported trees seem to be perfectly happy sharing the garden with what is already there.

Settled, it is thought, as early as 1838, Blackburn's first crops seem to have been gooseberries and strawberries, but later orchards were grown much in the same way as in Doncaster. Life for the early settler in Blackburn was not easy, the country was heavily timbered and the earth unyielding and much hard work had to be done before they could grow their crops. The settlers had to go away and work on other jobs to gain enough money to live on while their crops were growing. As time went on, a cow was purchased, then perhaps hens and later a pig. The wife would often carry the dairy produce in a basket on her arm several miles over dusty roads to the nearest market. Many men earned a few pounds a week cutting timber. A timber cutter could only earn 3/- per ton in those days, and the wood was sold as cheaply as 10/- per ton. Early cherries were grown, too, and the settlers always hoped for a good season so that their fruit would ripen in time for Melbourne Cup week, as they always received good prices for their produce then, sometimes as much as £1 a case.

A number of the early settlers had to travel long distances in horse and dray to collect their stores, and the dusty, narrow tracks wound in and out amidst the thick

scrub. It is remarkable how well these sturdy pioneers progressed against so many odds, and although quite a number of them could neither read nor write, their descendants have made good and are well to do men and women today.

Even in the very early days the clay in Blackburn district was considered very good for pottery, and this industry flourished, all the work being done by hand with the aid of the faithful old horse, which patiently turned the "pug mill"—"pugging" clay means to work it up to the right consistency for the making of pottery. Very good bricks were made here at one time and several fine old brick homes are still standing which were made from them. During the depression years after the first boom, the kilns became idle and remained so until the first World War; when opened again, one kiln started to make roofing tiles and the other to make glazed pipes of all kinds. Today, one huge clay pit can be seen from the windows of the passing train on its way to the Hills.

There seems to have been none of the tragedy at Blackburn like that which overtook so many of the other early settlements. Its history seems rather to have been one of tranquility and peacefulness, its life flowing along like a placid stream.

When the railway was put through in 1882, Blackburn became popular as a quiet health resort, and many families moved here so that their children could be within an hour's run of the City and at the same time be able to enjoy the cool, crisp climate. The trains were few and far between, but they were the event of the day, bringing the mail and many stores to the residents. The station master was the friend of all and he knew the details of each passenger's life and habits. If someone should be running late for his morning train, the station master would run out to the road and anxiously scan the surrounding bush and he would in all probability see the late arrival hurrying through the trees to the station, in which case the

train was held up until all were safely aboard! It was nothing for the train to be half-an-hour late.

Not to be outdone in courtesy, the engine driver often used to pull up along the way to give a chap a ride to the station. Alas, such days are gone forever, and we seem to be always rushing for something or other these days.

Those, too, were the days of the old post and rail fences, when the Hunt Clubs used to take the hounds to hunt in the surrounding districts. Much gaiety and fun was had by all and it must have been a pleasant sight to see the pink coats of the huntsmen and the dashing horses and to hear the hunting horn ringing out amidst the gums on a clear winter's day. The kennels of the old Tally Ho and Burwood Hunt Clubs were located in this district. The post and rail fences were soon to be replaced by barbed-wire ones, and, of course, no longer could the fox be hunted here, but the drag hunt over a set course was still enjoyed for many years. Slowly but surely, Blackburn lost a lot of its rural aspect and took on the look of quiet respectability of a well to do outer suburb, while still retaining its typically Australian appearance.

The Lake at Blackburn has always been considered one of its chief beauty spots. It is partly artificial and partly natural. The water is of great depth and is said to be fed by a subterranean spring. It is dark and cold, but in spite of this, it was used at one time for swimming carnivals and by boating parties. Large picnics were arranged on Melbourne Cup Day, a holiday then as now, and hundreds of people used to come up for the day in horse and drag. It was the centre of much of the social life of the times. In 1907, 140 acres of land with the Lake was offered to the council of the day to be used as a reserve and pleasure ground, but they refused it, goodness knows why, no reason can be found for such a decision, so in 1909 it became the property of the Deaf and Dumb Society who have had it ever since. In spite of its being private property, many people still stroll along its shores today. Wild mountain

duck nest in the rushes around its edges and the Lake is just as beautiful and peaceful and as dark as it ever was.

Young hopefuls used to sit patiently all day with worm and line, and many a nice red fin graced the frying pan in the days gone by, but now the waters are much polluted from bad drainage, nobody ever swims there any more, the diving board has been demolished and the fish have nearly all died out. The land surrounding the shores of the Lake are a blaze of colour in the Spring. The wattles, the heath and the gums cover every corner of it, but (I am ashamed to say) some people who feel that they have a divine right to destroy everything that comes in their path, have debased themselves so far as to have cut the wire fence surrounding the property at different times, and have driven their cars in and then proceeded to pull up by the roots as many wild flowers as they can lay their hands on, fondly hoping, I suppose, that they will last to take home. They don't, you know. Not only do they destroy priceless wildflowers each Spring, but they destroy property as well. They are wholly irresponsible and are a great source of annoyance to the Society who have chosen this delightful spot for a sanctuary and retreat for those who have been deprived of both speech and hearing.

It does well to pause and think awhile. These beauty spots are there for a purpose and it is for posterity that such places are preserved everywhere. The Sahara Deserts once blossomed and were abounding in game—are we to make a desert of this country of ours by our utter lack of thought and our selfish urge to pander to the impulse of the moment? To ruthlessly destroy trees, flowers, and birds wherever we go? It has become a disease with us, which we must stop at any price or we will be despised and hated by our descendants, who will rightly blame us for our lack of thought and perception and for our lack of a sense of duty to those who will come after us.

This was the place chosen by the University of Melbourne Film Society to shoot that thought provoking film

which they called "The Wheel," a story of a subnormal boy who throws himself on society without any ability to support himself. The film sets a problem: it is the study of a youth with the mind of a child, a mind capable of beauty and fantasy, and the film is presented with delicacy and understanding. The best use was made of the scenery around the Lake and I think the words of the producer explain everything when he says: "As I see the film for the thousandth time, I cannot help feeling what a country Australia is and how many hundreds of films we could make here." Those who were fortunate enough to see the film will have realised no better spot could have been chosen for a film of this type, and realised, too, what unspoiled, natural beauty lies so close to the heart of a big city.

Today, the town of Blackburn is slowly spreading out north and southwards, and hundreds of houses cover what once were flourishing orchards. All the fruit trees have been grubbed out, the natural timber was cut out years ago, and so we have rows upon rows of small homes devoid of any vestage of shade, sweltering under the hot sun, or being frozen by the cold south-westerlies in winter; they look about as interesting as a string of sausages, and it will be years before the council gets around to building good roads, good drains and to planting suitable street trees.

Whitehorse Road, which was once a ribbon of narrow, loose metal with rutted tracks on either side, is now the fourth busiest highway in the State. Much industry has moved out this way and there are large manufacturing works, engineering works and food processing factories, as well as tile and pottery works and a large cool store. South of the railway line has been reserved for a residential area so no factories can be built there, and no one passing along Whitehorse Road could ever imagine that the rest of Blackburn could be so utterly different.

It is hard to imagine as we stand on the sidewalk and

watch the busy flow of traffic along this huge highway that at one time it was a quiet country road, shaded by gums against the hot summer sun, that the mail coach went spanking along the centre strip of metal, and as many as forty teams together plodded slowly citywards with their huge loads of timber, using the narrow, dusty tracks on either side of the road for their own.

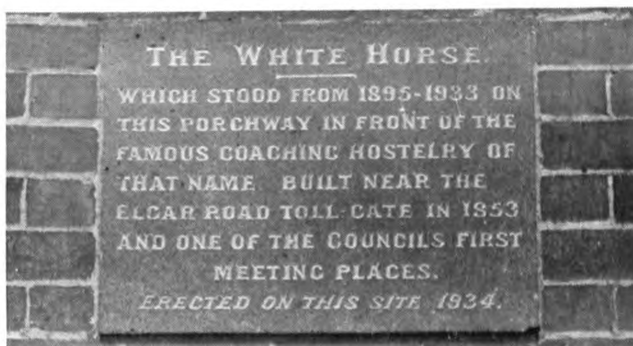
Blackburn has turned, I think, to Box Hill for a great deal of its cultural inspiration. It has only one hall and two schools, and as far as is known the Methodist Church was the first established here. Ministers in the very early days used to travel great distances and cared for large districts, often holding divine service in a private house as there was no other place available. We do not find the intense religious fervour as we found at Doncaster. The people were different; they had not left their native land because of any persecution and therefore there was none of the reaction. These people of Blackburn came out to take advantage of what a new and prosperous land had to offer, to give their children a better chance in life than they had had themselves.

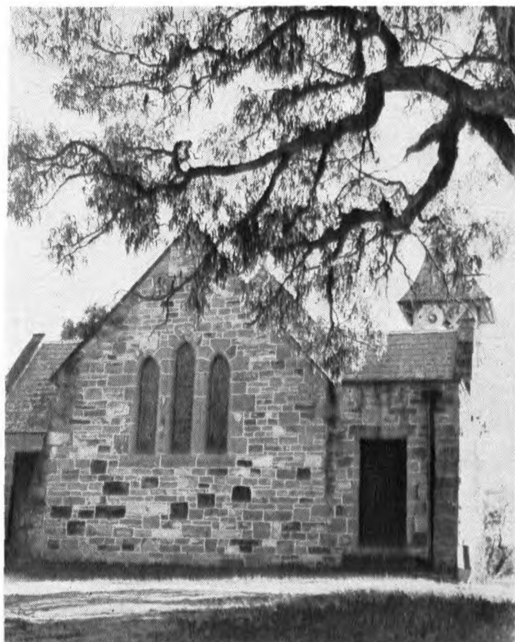
Sport and pleasure after the hard day's toil was the order of the day, and now we find Blackburn with a good Sports Reserve with two playing fields, and tennis courts, the whole surrounded by gums and pines, a place to rest awhile and enjoy the fine Spring sunshine and to contemplate on the wonders of the earth's reincarnation.

Together, the estate agent and the spec. builder are responsible for a great deal of the way in which our suburbs have developed. Land which was bought by the acre is now being sold at so much per foot, and some small fortunes have been made by this means. Whole subdivisions have been bought by building companies, who proceed to put up as many houses as it is humanly possible to cram in, and Council permits will allow, on a given area.

People are craving for homes, but the building com-

WHITE HORSE, BOX HILL.





ST. AGNES' CHURCH OF ENGLAND, DONCASTER.

OLD CEMETERY, DONCASTER.
The Work of Vandals.

panies do not go in much for attractive designs, merely supplying the demand as quickly as possible. If the new house owner is artistic and has a flair for gardening, then he can make something of his place, but there is a dreadful sameness about these houses, square, hip-roofed and monotonous to my way of thinking; but we have much to be thankful for—individual architects and builders are definitely thinking of design and some beautiful and artistic homes have been the result. It is to these advanced minds that we must turn for creative thought and advancement in the ever-growing problem of the small home sections of the community.

Blackburn generally has succeeded in acquiring over the years a definite personality, and where Doncaster is typically English in appearance, Blackburn is the embodiment of everything Australian. The native bushland is the predominating feature, and clever gardening, a love of all things of natural beauty and a true sense of the serene and the cultural make Blackburn one of the most sought after suburbs in which to live outside Melbourne.

CHAPTER IV

NUNAWADING

AFTER WE LEAVE the little town of Blackburn nestling amidst its clumps of gums and wattles, we follow the highway, or we can turn if we like to the South, cross the railway line and continue our journey parallel with Whitehorse Road, and we shall come to Nunawading, or as it used to be called, Tunstall.

Still lying in the fold of the hills, Nunawading is Blackburn over again but with a difference. Patches of thick timber are here interspersed with large blocks of orchard country, or small flower farms; little creeks meander here and there, sometimes shaded by huge weeping willows or perhaps clumps of silver poplar or a stretch of blazing yellow gorse. The country around is undulating; tall trees silhouette themselves against the sky and patches of colour meet the eye in the most unexpected places, purple, pink or yellow as the stocks, violets or gladioli, the chrysanthemums or the daffodils bloom in their seasons, and in the spring the air is fragrant with the perfume of the Australian boronia as we drive by. Glass houses are also seen close to the homestead where orchids of all kinds are grown; some of these are exported by air to America, where they find a ready market. Artistic homes shaded by many English trees or perhaps cunningly built into a truly Australian setting rub shoulders with a prim suburban villa whose concrete paths and neat flower beds look almost out of place amongst such abundance.

The bell birds, the mountain thrush and the bush warblers are still with us and their songs on a still morning are a delight. Some of the little creeks are the same today as they were when the natives used to have this wonderful piece of country for their happy ceremonial ground. Maidenhair ferns droop gracefully down the banks and

the sprag moss covers the cool and leafy dells. It is not surprising then that so many people have chosen this delightful spot in which to settle down. Many have built here with the idea of retirement. The fast electric train service takes them comfortably and quickly to the city, but the week-ends and holidays are spent mainly in the garden. The soil is rich here and heavy, as it is in all the surrounding districts. Apples, pears and cherries, as well as lemons, are grown in abundance, and although high taxation and the ever increasing price of land have contributed to the sale of much orchard land around us, there are still flourishing orchards close at hand and as the fruit trees flower just after the wattles, the countryside seems always to be a blaze of colour. Autumn is a delight here as the English trees colour to perfection in the cool, crisp climate and, being sheltered by the nearby hills, we have few devastating gales and the Autumns are long and mild, the Winters cold and short, and the Summer heat is nicely tempered by the shady gums which grow along the sides of most of our roads.

The name Nunawading is a native one given to the district by the early pioneers long before it was subdivided into councils and towns, and it is generally thought to mean "Ceremonial Ground." I like to think that this is so, as it is known that many native tribes used to trek each year from the back country to the sea, there to spend the Summer months in feasting on shell fish and generally enjoying themselves in much the same way as we ourselves flock to the beaches today.

Perhaps it was here the different friendly tribes gathered to sing and dance and hold their initiation ceremonies before setting out on the final stage of their journey. If so, we can only imagine that this place was chosen because it held a charm for them as it does for us, but how much more beautiful it must have been then than now, for civilisation destroys and man in his wild hurry to amass fortunes and expand, leaves scars on nature which take a long time to heal.

And So Today . . .

The City of Nunawading was created the Shire of Blackburn and Mitcham by severance from the Nunawading Shire, now the City of Box Hill, on 26th May, 1925, and proclaimed the City of Nunawading on 30th May, 1945. The area of the City is 9,920 acres and is 12¼ miles from Melbourne. At Nunawading proper, the altitude above sea level would only be about 400 feet. When the land was first divided in the early 1800's, the namc Tunstall was given to this place because of the similarity of its clay to that in the country around Tunstall in England.

There are two large clay pits in Nunawading today—one established in 1853, and except for a short time during the fall of the land boom, has been working ever since. These works make fine roofing tiles.

There is another large pottery works here at Nunawading, established in 1900, which makes flower pots and agricultural pipes the colour of which are a rich apricot. This is quite unique as this patch of clay is the only one for miles around which turns that delightful colour.

When Nunawading was proclaimed a City, the Council of the day chose a coat of arms for the new City which held much of the tradition of England and so perpetuated our bond with the Old Country in spite of our truly Australian name. The Blazon is as follows:

Arms Quarterly

1st Quarter: A bugle horn stringed *or* between two lozengers Argent, one in chief and one in base.

2nd Quarter: Gules, a cornucopia *or* flucted proper.

3rd Quarter: Azure, an open book surmounted with a quill to dexter, both proper.

4th Quarter: Vert, a tower embattled *or* Crest on a boomerang proper, a mural crown (Gules).

Motto: Arte et Labore—meaning "By skill and hard work."

The charges in the first quarter are taken from the Arms of the City of Blackburn, England, and the tower in the fourth quarter forms portion of the Arms of the Borough of Mitcham, England, and will perpetuate the names of the two local towns that constitute the City of Nunawading. The cornucopia depicted in the second quarter is the emblem of prosperity, plenty and abundance, whilst the book and pen in the third quarter is the traditional symbol of learning and culture, both indicative of the distinguishing features of the City and its surroundings. The mural crown is extensively used in civic heraldry both as a crest and as a charge on a shield. In ancient times it was given to him who first scaled the walls of a captured city. The boomerang perpetuates the native aspect of the dialects from which the City takes its name. The motto is that used by the City of Blackburn, England.

The Council and people of Nunawading have a lot to live up to, but although it is here that the Council has its being, Nunawading in many ways is the Cinderella of the three townships.

The story of Nunawading goes back to the early 1800's, when timber cutting was the main industry. The country was most heavily timbered, cut by steep gullies and streams and in places covered by thick ti-tree. The men who were timber cutters were tough and rough, hard drinkers and hard livers. Their lives were spent mostly in the open away from towns and people, and when they had cut their loads of wood they would take them to the City, often via the Johnson Street Bridge over the Yarra, and there at the old Bridge Hotel these men stayed the night, and many were the fights and rowdy hulaballoos in which they were involved. Round about the 1850's settlers came and set up orchards and berry gardens.

The soil here being the same as in Blackburn and Box Hill, is clayish and rich, with carpets of wildflowers in the Spring. Here, too, we see the unique bank of clay running in a straight line from Box Hill to Mitcham, with

its accompanying pottery mills and tile works, but the clay varies in texture and colour, giving a wonderful variety of the finished article.

Whitehorse Road carried the main traffic then, as now. It was very wide here, with banks of huge gums on either side and wandering groups of blacks, deprived of their hunting grounds, used to beg for food or sell boomerangs and clubs to the settlers for a few pence. A sorry state of affairs when these proud and wonderful people had to go begging in the very country which a few years before held so much for them. Here, too, was the large piece of ground on Whitehorse Road called the Reserve by the settlers of the day, where the carriers and bullock wagons used to spend the night. The half-way house between the rich vineyards of Lilydale and the City. Here, wagons laden with huge casks of precious liquid were grouped and guarded against pilfering, but many a billycan of wine found its way to settlers' kitchens!

Coaches used to run twice daily to Lilydale and, although the township of Mitcham was but a couple of miles from the changing post at Blackburn, there were three hotels grouped in less than half a mile. The Reserve Hotel, Emeries Hotel and the old Harvest Home, all gone now except for a small portion of the Reserve Hotel which, at the moment, is being demolished to make way for a modern beer garden.

There was neither church nor school at Nunawading in those days, and the children used to walk to Vermont to school and to Blackburn or Box Hill to church and the Post Office. Later, the Methodist Church was erected on Canterbury Road and has been in use ever since, although the church itself has been rebuilt quite recently.

Horse breaking and dealing seemed to have been a change from orcharding for some people, and quite a little money changed hands in this flourishing business. Hacks and carriage horses brought high prices, from £30 to £60 for a thoroughbred saddle horse, and as much as £80 to

£120 for a good Clydesdale. No wonder that bullocks were in great demand. They were much more easily fed and could go up and down the hilly and boggy country where a horse could not.

It is interesting here to stop and reflect on the type of people who came to this district to settle, and rear their large families. People who, in many cases, were gently born and bred in England, Scotland and Ireland, and whose lives had been lived at home in comfort, even luxury, roughed it with the rest of them, carving out of the thick bushland, homes and gardens and bringing to their new country a breath of the cultural surroundings in which they had had their being.

The shortage of houses was almost as much a problem then as now, shiploads of emigrants brought out under the scheme of the day were met by people who had sponsored them from the old country, and these were cared for as well as they could be, but many had to be satisfied to live in sheds roughly built, often with only slat sides and a bark roof until a home could be procured for them, or until some kind of employment would take them away from their friends.

Numbers came out, of course, with the idea of taking up land further out, and many a young bride who landed at Sandridge (now Port Melbourne) with her trousseau and cases of wedding presents, had later hung her beautiful linen sheets on the walls of her pioneer home to cover up the ugly bare boards, and many a tear was shed over priceless pieces from home wrapped in layers of finery which were never to be worn. Yet, squaring their slim shoulders, these pioneering women, some only in their middle teens, stood side by side with their menfolk and eventually built for themselves substantial homes which are scattered about the countryside today. Huge elms, poplars and pines are a living testimony to the industry and care they expended on their gardens, Camelia trees 70 years old and still a blaze of colour meet overhead, forming a cool, dense arch-

way to the front door of some homesteads. The underground tanks, the huge old kitchens and the lofty rooms tell us just how well these pioneers had built their homes in this new country.

Although the railway line went through in 1882, it seemed to have made little or no immediate impression on Nunawading and the surrounding districts. Certainly freights were easily carried and it gave the settlers a certain mobility, but I think whilst they used the train to travel to the City, they did so with the feeling of "Well, it's here so we may as well use it!" On still and frosty nights the goods train, with its old steam engine, could be heard puffing and groaning up the steep incline to Mitcham, then could be heard the pause as it crested the rise, then the cheerful hoot as it made its way over the hill and down the other side to the country beyond. Now the electric trains clatter by almost unnoticed, they have become so much a part of our daily lives.

Nunawading has expanded over two distinct periods—after World War I and now after the second World War. People had a craving for the wide open spaces after World War I and now again we find the desire to enjoy freedom and peace away from the congestion and noise of a big city with all its frustrations and competition. A man can be himself in his own garden, and I think Lord Bacon was right when he said "God Almighty first planted a garden, and indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures." In this place, too, we find industry has expanded along Whitehorse Road. Large engineering works, timber mills, wrought iron works, electrical factories and such like give that part of Nunawading a busy industrial appearance, but again, south of the railway line we find only the homes and the gardens, the trees and the birds, the shady walks and the semi-countrified appearance which has such charm for so many people.

Nunawading to my mind has what I call "a lopsided development." Saddled from the beginning with Councils

which, to say the least of it, have thrown away too many opportunities, it has been made to walk before it had learned to crawl properly. Industry has been encouraged, but opportunities to acquire land for parks and gardens have been wretchedly neglected.

It is now universally recognised that facilities for relaxation and exercise outdoors are an essential part of urban living and that the provision of these facilities is a responsibility of civic administration. The love of the outdoors is an inherent characteristic of the Australian people. Whether it is by active participation in some sporting activity, or as spectators, or in motoring, walking, riding, cycling, swimming or working in their gardens, the people of Melbourne spend many leisure hours in the open air.

Ornamental public parks and gardens which are intended for rest and relaxation are expensive to upkeep for the trees and flowers and grass which distinguish them require constant attention. Municipal authorities throughout the metropolitan area have taken particular pride in their parks of this type, which are a delight and a splendid service to the people, and a continual source of pleasure to the visitor. In this respect, Melbourne compares favourably with other cities in the world. If open spaces are left substantially in their natural state, upkeep is relatively light. These provide facilities for most of the outdoor sports, and I believe are the answer to the new suburb, where natural vegetation is unspoilt and therefore at its best.

Nunawading proper will have to have a stronger representation in council affairs if the beautification and advancement of this rapidly developing suburb are to be put into effect. It is a no-man's land, situated between two Wards and therefore it is felt that it is not fully represented in the Council and moneys that might have been spent on it are being directed into other channels not affecting it. There appears only one cure for this unhappy state of affairs and that is, the reshuffling of the Wards and their

division on a more equal basis. Movement to this effect has been urged by many residents of the district, but whether it will come about is hard to say.

A fine new High School situated on 15 acres of land is being built here, and will be a great boon to the children of the surrounding districts who wish to pass on to higher educational standards. Box Hill High School is already unable to cope with any more pupils and this new school at Nunawading will relieve a great deal of congestion in the educational field.

Nunawading still has to turn to Box Hill for all its cultural and civic pursuits and uses, by the courtesy of the Box Hill Council, its beautiful Town Hall for mayoral and charitable functions. It will probably be some years before Nunawading will be able to build a suitable Town Hall of its own.

Nunawading is a charming and beautiful suburb with wonderful opportunities for creating children's playgrounds, civic halls and parks and gardens, but these opportunities seem already to have been missed and we have fallen by the wayside—so much for the inspiration of the Coat of Arms and the motto "By Skill and Hard Work" and the symbol in the third quarter, "Learning and Culture"! But ask anyone living in Nunawading if they would move to another suburb and I guarantee they would reply "Whatever for?"

Man does not live by bread alone, though, and all the schools and churches in the world will not fulfil the wants of the average man and woman; our craving for beauty is one of the main things which have inspired the human race to express itself in works of art, and to my mind no city is worthy of the name unless it can fulfil all the wants of the people within its domain.

CHAPTER V

MITCHAM

WE HAVE BARELY finished looking at the beauty of Nunawading before we come upon Mitcham, as only a mile and a bit separates the two townships. Situated on Whitehorse Road, Mitcham lies on the very crest of the foothills, 500 feet above sea level, and is the highest point before we make the final ascent to the hills themselves. Here the mountains seem to burst upon us in all their beauty, blue and serene, dotted here and there with the red roofs of the houses which have been built right up to their very tops.

There is so much in this wonderful panorama that it takes a moment or two to regain one's breath and begin to appreciate the light and shade of the surrounding countryside. Dark green is interspersed with shades of soft grey-green where the natural bush lies before us, and pale, soft green where clumps of oaks and elms surround some ancient farm house. Little cultivated patches show red and brown where the rich mountain soil has been turned over for potatoes and such like and in the sky, huge banks of cumulus clouds cast passing shadows which are dark and mysterious. Nearer at hand, the land falls away in even rows of rich orchard country. The trees now in leaf, the soil cultivated in narrow strips, patches of clover, yellow cape-weed or blue lupins make the pattern of a fairy carpet at our feet, and over all, the wide blue sky as only it is seen in this part of the country.

The township of Mitcham takes its name from the town of that name in Surrey in England, and Mickelan, as it used to be called, is noted in Domesday Book, so history is once again repeated in a new country.

Still part of the City of Nunawading, Mitcham is a little Box Hill, busy and almost aggressively progressive.

Its wide street lined with lawns and flower gardens is a-hum with traffic and busy shoppers. Yet all this is in miniature, playing at being the busy housewife, for the moment we leave the wide main street, the placid countryside spreads out around us and enfolds us once more in the dreamy tranquility of a summer's day. Gums and wattles are interspersed here with red oaks and all sorts of imported trees which lend colour and variety to the streets and gardens. The many terraced gardens are ablaze with all kinds of iris and rock plants. Trailing wisteria and the beautiful native clematis cover fence and pergola and often climbs into the gums around it. Banks of mauve felicia make a splash of colour along a driveway and the common marguerite daisy rambles and tumbles in wild profusion over rockery and garden wall. Roses bloom in every garden cherished and perfect, as this, too, is a horticulturally minded district and is famous for its floral displays, while in the Spring I have seen 20 acres of daffodils in flower—a truly inspiring sight.

At Mitcham, we will find flourishing poultry farms, lemon groves, flower farms and strawberry patches and many people who travel to the City to business during the week, spend their leisure hours tending poultry or citrus trees, orchids or, in some cases, small herds of valuable Saanen goats, the milk from which is highly valued for its splendid qualities as a food for babies and invalids. What could be more pleasant than a week-end in the quiet bushland away from the hustle and bustle of city life, tending these friendly herds, or a ramble with one's camera and one's lunch in one's pocket? Bird watching, orchid hunting or a hundred and one other peaceful pursuits which seem to make up the life of the people who come to live in these parts.

It is pleasant to sit in the sun and listen to the tales of days gone by and to step back into the past with some of Mitcham's oldest inhabitants. Ninety-four is a nice age, according to one old gentleman whose blue Irish eyes have a naughty twinkle and whose voice, soft with the faintest

Irish brogue, will tell you that "Those were the days and no mistake!"

As we sat on the steps of what used to be the old Harvest Home Hotel, but which is now a neat dwelling, I heard of the days when people came to Mitcham with grants of 30 acres of land from the Government of New South Wales to set up businesses or farms, horse breeding or wood-cutting, according to their means, and listened to tales of bushrangers and hold-ups, and imagined the cheerful bustle of the stage coach as it stopped to pick up mail or put down passengers.

Those were the days when skilled wood-cutters came to split shingles and palings, material for the homes which were springing up all round this thriving new community. It was at the Harvest Home Hotel that the first brick chimney in the district was built, and here, too, the mail bag would be dropped. If a letter was marked "Urgent," my ancient friend, then only a little boy, would mount his pony and gallop off to deliver it.

David Mitchell from Lilydale ran the first mail coach. His fare from Melbourne to Lilydale for passengers was 5/-, but a few years later another tender was made and this time the fare dropped from 5/- to 2/6 per head for the same distance, some 25 miles, with a meal included.

The old "Travellers' Rest," on Whitehorse Road, Blackburn, used to be the changing place for the horses and where travellers could have a meal. A four-horse coach would carry as many as 30 people. The men used to have to get out and push if the road was very bad or the hill particularly steep, but the ladies rode in state because, you must remember, past Blackburn the metal ceased and the road was but a winding track, up hill and down dale, over creek and gully with never a proper grade between Lilydale and Box Hill.

One incident rather amused me, and whilst I listened I thought to myself, "Heroes are found not only on the

screen!" It appears that one of the many carriers, on his way to Healesville, far out in the forest country, was held up at pistol point, but, swifter than thought, he fell upon the astounded highwayman, and with the help of his companion managed to overpower him and bound him hand and foot and bore him in triumph to the old Harvest Home Hotel, there to await his just deserts, but during the night, while his captors were enjoying themselves at the Bar, this would-be highwayman slipped his bonds and, bounding through the window, made good his escape, only to be killed three years later while cattle duffing over at Templestowe, some miles away.

In spite of drought and bushfire and the ever backbreaking toil of the early settlers to these parts, life was full of movement and colour. The Inns, not mere drinking houses here, were the centre of much of the social life of the day. The proprietress of the old Reserve Hotel was noted for her cooking for miles around, and she was in much demand as an organiser for dances and parties.

Many a gay night was spent tripping the light fantastic to the strains of the concertina, played, I am assured, by the best concertina player for miles and miles. "It was magic to the feet to hear him," I was told.

These were the times when a man was judged by the horses he kept, and there was a great deal of rivalry amongst the so-called gentry of the districts concerning them.

Mitcham possessed no doctor nearer than Kew, and many a time, in dire emergency, someone had to gallop on horseback the ten miles or more to Kew to bring back the doctor post haste to an impatient little new Australian. Diphtheria here, too, took its toll of the very young, and my old Irish friend proudly states that he was the doctor's "first cure," and he went on to describe how, in the period when the disease had him in its grip as a very small boy, the doctor used to come to him in the middle of the night, wringing his hands in grief and impotency until, as the

last resort, he took handfuls of blue gum leaves and, steeping them in boiling water, gave him one inhalation after another, until at last the tight bar of mucus across his throat gave way and the crisis was over. It is interesting here to note that today scientists are experimenting with oil from a certain gum tree as a possible cure for radiation burns, so the ancient gum may yet serve us in this modern atomic age. How ironic it seems when thousands of these trees are being slaughtered every day—we may well be destroying our very life's blood in so doing.

There was no cemetery nearer than Kew in the first place, and later, at Lilydale, so the people of Mitcham applied to the Government of the day to be allowed to bury their dead in the little churchyard of the Roman Catholic Church there. Two acres of land had been given to the Roman Catholic Church by one of the early settlers and here the first church of the district was built; a tiny wooden structure only recently demolished to make way for a splendid, ultra-modern building. The little groups of graves, with their mossy headstones, could be seen from the train as it neared the Mitcham station on the Melbourne side. The headstones have quite lately been removed and now some of Mitcham's pioneers sleep, not quietly under the gums as is their due, but under tennis courts or playing grounds. I think this is a sad thing. A greater regard for tradition and a greater respect for those who pioneered the way should be taught our children of today. When the cemetery at Box Hill was opened, quite a number of coffins were removed there, and of course after 1901, no further burials in churchyards were allowed.

It was at Mitcham that the stone was quarried that made part of the road from Mitcham to Lilydale; the quarry is still working, providing splendid stone for the surrounding countryside today.

Here, too, we see the last of the big clay pits; this seam of clay laid down by some by-gone ice age, stretches almost from the mountains to the sea, and ends as abruptly

as it begins, for the country beyond Mitcham at Lilydale is famous for its limestone quarries.

Established in 1886, the Tesselated Tile Company, as it is now called, started business making large 9 in. x 9 in. paving tiles, drain and agricultural pipes and things of that sort, but soon launched out into the more artistic work of making ornamental glazed tiles and patterned paving tiles of all kinds. These red and buff coloured paving tiles became very fashionable in the late 1800's and early 1900's and the elite used them a great deal for the paving of porticos, vestibules and indoor galleries, and a blessed nuisance they were to keep clean and polished! Nevertheless, they looked cool and artistic and were in great demand.

Patterned and glazed tiles at this factory are designed and coloured by their own artists, and a fine job they make of them, too, comparable, I should think, with anything of their kind in the world. This firm managed to remain working during the fall of the land boom, when so many other firms of the same kind were forced to close down, and although it has been in continual production for 70 years, it is believed that they can work almost indefinitely as they have 18-20 acres of clay-bearing land at their disposal and they have, up to date, worked barely one acre of it.

Starting out in the early days with the primitive methods taking days to complete a process which now is finished in a matter of hours, every post had to be made a winner. Water was scarce, so huge dams had to be built and contour furrows directing every available drop of catchment water were carefully dug at all strategical points. Wood was the sole fuel until well on into the 1900's and had to be cut and carted from the surrounding districts. It has been estimated that literally thousands of tons of wood were burnt at these and surrounding kilns before coal became the accepted thing. Steam drove everything where today electricity sets the wheels in motion with

WHITE FRIARS MONASTERY, MITCHAM.

STACKING POTS READY FOR FIRING, NUNAWADING.

OLD HOMESTEAD, DONCASTER.
Note the wattle and daub wall, plastered and whitewashed new iron roof.

PEACH ORCHARD, DONCASTER.

the flick of a finger, so it is much easier to realise then, that with factors such as this, the immense demand for firewood, played an enormous part in the deforestation of some of our most valuable land, and gum trees which would have done succeeding generations a great service with their shade and artistic beauty, were ruthlessly destroyed to feed the fires of industry.

The event of the year, as always with Victorians, was the Melbourne Cup, first run at Flemington in 1861. The scene was a gay one, people from the outlying districts like Mitcham rose at dawn, and with packed hampers and plenty of liquid refreshment, started off with the best horse between the shafts of the spring cart. What was 17 miles then! They were covered in record time and a splendid position was secured along the rails, with the spring cart an excellent grandstand. Friends and relations, with all the family, met again after perhaps years of separation, and excitement ran high as it does today, as the "horse of the year" flew past the winning post. What did it matter if the moon *was* high in the sky before the homestead came in sight again? It was a wonderful day!

The next great event in the lives of the people of this district was the opening of the Railway line between Hawthorn and Lilydale on December 1st, 1882. This line, built in sections, started from Prince's Bridge, Melbourne, and was constructed by the Suburban Railway Company as early as 1861, and in 1865 another section was finished from what was then called Picnic Station to Hawthorn and was built by the Melbourne and Hobson's Bay United Railway Company. From Hawthorn to Lilydale, the line was built by contract and in 1878 was bought by the Railways; local labour was recruited as the line progressed. As many as 30 tip drays and horses would work at a cutting at the one time; pick and shovel workers received 7/- per day and a man with horse and dray received 10/- per day.

When the line progressed as far as the deep cutting on

the way to Ringwood, a number of men used to "duck off" to the old Coach and Horses Inn situated on White Horse Road, and only a short way from the line which runs parallel with it.

Once, a horse and dray arrived at the head of the cutting without its driver, the worthy gentleman in question having stayed over long with the amber fluid, so a man was chosen at random and asked by the Foreman in charge "Can you drive a horse?" "Too right I can" was the reply. "Right," said the Foreman, "get up and start driving and keep right on driving" and so promotion was given without any fuss; this incident put this man on his feet and he never looked back — one man's loss is another man's gain, and there was no strike over the matter either!

When the line was finished, and the first trains ran, they did so with great care and much waste of steam, as there were no fences and the line ran through paddocks studded with sheep and cattle, and often during the journey the guard would have to get down from the train and shoo cattle from the line before the train could proceed on its way.

Approximately 44 miles of post and rail fencing was cut to enclose the railway line and much of it is as sound today as when it was first erected, except of course, where it has been destroyed by bush or grass fires and replaced with wires. The line was electrified from Melbourne to Box Hill on December 17, 1922, from Box Hill to Ringwood on January 30th, 1923, and from Ringwood to Croydon on 28th November, 1924, and from Croydon to Lilydale on November 30th, 1925.

The derisive hoot of the steam train sounded the death knell of the coaching days, and soon the railway station became the centre of activity each day, as mail and goods began to come to this community in the modern manner.

Slowly the old order changed, electricity replaced the flickering kerosene lamps in the little village of Mitcham

and soon the lamp-lighter with his troop of juvenile helpers turned his hands to other jobs.

The pioneers have gone and their descendants today are reaping the benefits of society which were so hardily won for them, so let us bestow on them a passing thought as we drive along this famous highway, the link between a young city and the younger settlements beyond.

Mitcham today is a striving, go-ahead town, aggressive and modern with many good amenities, splendid recreation fields, Baby Health Centre, Schools and Churches. High and bracing, with unsurpassing beauty and prosperity on every hand, this place has been chosen by thousands in which to bring up their families to lives of pleasant pastimes, culture and an appreciation of the beauties of their native land.

CHAPTER VI

VERMONT

NO BOOK of this kind would be complete without the story of Vermont, a little village 1½ miles south of Mitcham and, next to Doncaster, the loveliest place I have seen this side of the Dandenongs. Situated as it is away from the busy traffic of Whitehorse Road, it is very akin to Doncaster in its life and activities. Vermont lies at the cross roads, its little shopping centre, school and church span the 4 corners of Mitcham, Canterbury and Boronia Roads, and with Mitcham, shares the reputation of being the highest point, 500 ft. above sea-level. Of course, Vermont people will tell you that they are exactly 501 ft. above sea level, so you can see for yourselves how the land lies in *that direction!*

The old stock route of Canterbury Road is claimed to be even more famous and older than Whitehorse Road, and old inhabitants will tell you that it was always almost impassable and could only be traversed safely on horseback. This may be an exaggeration, but there is little doubt that in the early days of Vermont's history Canterbury Road was but a winding track for the use of the drover and his herds, and the dense bushland a safe hiding place for bushrangers and horse thieves. Now the countryside falls away in a series of the most glorious undulations, the blue hills sharply silhouetted against the sky. Orchards and small farms pattern the scenery and the many shades of green and the elusive quality of the light have been the despair of artist and cameraman alike. Here we will find much that is gracious and in good taste, the orchards pioneered in some cases in the early 1840's are still held and worked by the descendants, who, through the years, have built around themselves the grace and culture, the beauty and tranquility which is so well expressed in home and sweeping garden, brilliant flowers and shady trees.

It was to this quiet little backwater that we, as a family, war weary and longing for peace, came to restore ourselves to sanity and the normal way of life.

It is good to listen in early summer to the whirr of the mowers cutting glorious paddocks of meadowhay to feed herds of prize Jersey cattle, or to bed down hunters and thoroughbreds. And it is a pleasant sight to see the green paddocks neatly divided with white fences, and to watch for a moment sleek horses and cattle grouped around the shady gums, nose to rump, the steady swishing of their tails in no way disturbing the general calm as they brush the flies from each other's faces.

The summer nights here are often cloudless and the stars brilliant and absolute stillness seems to settle over the country. It is on nights like these that the yelping bark of the dog fox can be heard echoing across the valley, and the answering call from some domestic pet following immediately, but sometimes, the night is filled with the music of night voices — the high-pitched cheerful chirruping of the little tree frogs, calling backwards and forwards, call answering call, until the senses are athrob with the music of it all. Sometimes there is a hushed stillness and there is only the solitary croaking of a big green bull frog from an ornamental pool.

All this, and a thousand other things have brought solace and restored the troubled soul for many men and women who have settled in these tranquil places and in the hills beyond.

Well watered, with an average rainfall of about 40" per annum, many little creeks wander here and there, their banks in many places a riot of blackberries, bush and maiden-hair fern, and in the late summer the cheerful voices of picnickers gathering the fruit can be heard, and blackberry jelly and blackberry pies are the order of the day for the next week or so.

In the early days, Vermont was known as L. L. Vale,

named it is said after one of Vermont's first residents, Dr. L. L. Smith, who had a vineyard and cattle run there, and Boronia Road was until quite recently, when it was renamed, known as L. L. Vale Road. This was most confusing for everyone concerned, and so in 1881, application was made by the residents to the P.M.G's Department to rename the township "VERMONT", meaning "The Green Hill", but it is not clearly known who gave it this name. In years gone by, there was a large notice at the crossroads which read "This is Vermont, now tell your friends." This has now been replaced by a Country Roads Board map which points to the four directions and gives the name of each township there. Why such a notice was ever placed there no one in Vermont seems to know, because the people were not particularly anxious to have a lot of newcomers cluttering up the countryside!

Between Mitcham and Vermont in the early days, lay a shallow marsh which abounded in birds and wild game of all descriptions and which was the despair of all those people who wished to travel from Vermont to Mitcham. The usual method of course in those days was to travel by horse dray or bullock wagon which the pioneers used to hitch one behind the other so that they could pull each other through the bog which was in some places axle deep. But as the heavy timber was cleaned out and the land prepared for orcharding, this swamp land was drained and a proper road put through. People thought nothing of walking the mile and a half to the railway station and it was not until 1923 that the first motor bus ran between the two places. Today, a regular bus service runs between Vermont and Mitcham and the road is lined with shops and pleasant villas with their gardens and trees, but it is not until we arrive at Vermont itself that we really feel that we are "in the country."

The early pioneers battled for spiritual guidance and in spite of being isolated from the normal church activities, worked hard in their efforts to have some form of worship, so church services were held as regularly as possible in the

homes and later in the tiny school house, and young student ministers would ride in all weathers across from their training school at Fern Tree Gully some 10 miles away, to conduct services for these hardy God-fearing people.

After a struggle they were able to erect the little Anglican Church on a site given them, and it is interesting to note here that this very spot was the camping ground and ceremonial place of the early aboriginal tribes and was called by them, "Happy Hill." St. Luke's Church of England stands today, with the addition of one new wing, as it has stood for nearly 50 years, a memorial to the work and devotion of the people of the past.

In the early days, Vermont was quite a cultural centre. The little school house was erected as early as 1877, and well before that, a school for young ladies was run by one of the early gentlewomen of the district. Pupils from as far away as Blackburn, Nunawading and Mitcham tramped across the paddocks to school, and many people who live in these districts today say that the careful teaching of the masters and mistresses in those early days, has stood them in good stead throughout their lives.

As in other districts, quarries had played a big part in giving employment to many people around about, and as Mitcham had its famous quarry, so it was with Vermont, and I think the best known of the Vermont quarries was Moore's quarry in Moore's Road. Stone from here helped to build miles of roads in the hills and surrounding districts, and even today remains of much of the activities in that direction can be seen in the old quarries in what seems to us the most inaccessible places. Old quarries have become in some instance the haunts of rock swallows, wombats, and hosts of little bats, and often the floors of them are a carpet of maiden hair fern, tree ferns, and a

wealth of pretty little fungi, which flourish in the shadowy crevices.

Quite a little prospecting went on too, and gold and antimony was found in small quantities in the surrounding districts of Blackburn and Vermont. At Ringwood, a few miles to the North, gold mining was quite well established, and three small shafts were worked for many years; but there was no "gold rush" to these quiet parts, and most people turned their hands to cutting timber, farming or orcharding.

Every district seemed to have had a few eccentric old bushwhackers, and there is an amusing story told about one old chap, who earned his living by giving a hand here and there on farms and orchards.

It is said, that he built for himself on the banks of the Dandenong Creek, a quaint little house, which had a fine bark roof weighed down with selected boulders and small logs, and which had an enormous chimney at one end, and two doors, opposite each other on either side of the house, but much to everybody's astonishment — no windows!

Now there was method in the old man's madness it seemed, because when the winter came, he used to hitch his old horse onto the most enormous log and drive him right through the house! When the log was in the middle of the house and right opposite the fireplace, he used to unhitch the horse and roll and lever the log onto the hearth, where this forest giant would smoulder for as long as a fortnight, and only needed a handful or two of nice dry bark to make a cheerful blaze to warm his house and boil his billy! While in the summer time he had a beautiful draught even on the hottest of days!

I dare say the house was somewhat gloomy inside, but when one rose with the sun and went to bed at dusk, windows were just an unnecessary luxury.

The most amazing thing to me is that these old hermits lived to be so old and, as far as we know, never had a day's illness.

The simple life, must definitely have been the answer, and we might profit today if we could bring ourselves to shed some of the luxuries of modern living, and return to the simple things once again. Personally I think man was never made to cope with the noise and bustle of our new way of life, as is shown time and time again by the number of mysterious nervous ailments with which so many are afflicted.

The people of Vermont today are reserved and somewhat "cliquey" and like those of Doncaster are not keen to see the orchards and the paddocks around them cut up for building blocks. But it is inevitable, as so many sons of farmers and orchardists were either killed in the war, leaving a very heavy burden for the old folk, or because of the war, sought employment in the city or elsewhere. Labour is costly, and where a little orchard a few years ago would keep a family in comparative comfort, the same orchard today could not carry any hired hands and the old folk have been forced to part with acres which had in some cases been pioneered by their parents.

If one takes time off from the weary occupations of the day to sit and chat with some of the "old folk" one will come to realize that all through the ages man has striven to better himself and much of his inspiration has arisen from his devotion to his God and his love of nature. The struggle for self-expression has taken him at times far from the beaten track and that driving power which is in nearly all of us, to strive when we can towards a better life, a higher sphere of thought, is most beautifully illustrated in the Buddhist conception of man's striving for perfection — "The lotus, which has it's beginning in the slimy filth of a stagnant pool, thrusts itself ever upwards

through the gloom until at last it opens to the sun in all its white perfection."

And thus we find time and time again, the same answer to the same question — "What brought you here?" And you will hear "Because it is so clean and fresh and one feels as though one can truly breathe here!"

And so today, in telling you the story of the pioneering days of these places, I hope I have in some measure conveyed to you the love of freedom, beauty and tranquility that was so desirous to our pioneers and to those who have come after them, and it is well to bear in mind the thoughts which prompted Lord Macaulay to say, "A people who take no pride in the noble achievements of remote ancestors will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered with pride by remote descendants."

THE END.