

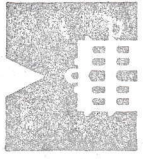
This booklet has been prepared for the people of Wonga Park by a sub-committee of the Wonga Park and District Residents' Association. Its purpose is to record some aspects of the nature and history of this area so that we, the newer residents, can have some understanding and appreciation of the growth of our community to pass on to our children as their heritage.

Generally it is not a personal history of the pioneers of this area although of course some of their names and stories do in part appear; it is, rather, a record of the history and development of the buildings and places that have been significant in the growth and changing functions of the community. As such, hopefully, the following pages will inspire readers to seek out more information for themselves.

In compiling the information contained in this booklet every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and wherever possible, original sources have been used. All other facts have been verified by cross checking the verbal testimonies of several long-standing or early residents of the area. If, however, any error is discovered or more information is available please contact the Wonga Park and District Residents' Association so that any future edition may be suitably amended.

Our sincere thanks must go to everyone who has contributed in many and various ways to the publication of this booklet.

DISCOVER WONGA PARK PAST AND PRESENT



MUSEUM OF
LILLYDALE

WONGA PARK AND DISTRICT RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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Note: Numbers refer to both text and position on map in centre pages.

1. SCOUT HALL

Wonga Park is a name known world wide to the scouting movement as being the venue for two Pan Pacific Jamborees and a World Rover Moot. The local scout group, The First Wonga Park Scouts and Cubs, was inaugurated by Lord Clifford about 1956. A Parents' Committee to support the group was formed in April, 1957 and in September of that year it was suggested that the troop be officially known as 'Clifford's Own Troop'. A Cub Pack was started in February, 1958 and in April, 1958 it was decided to use the Wonga Pigeon as the troop emblem on scarves and flags.

Until it obtained its own hall the troop met at various times at Clifford Park, in the local Hall and also in John Wolt's workshop. Land on which the present hall stands was donated by Mr. W. Lawrence and the first part of a two stage project was erected by working bees during 1962. The second stage extensions were added about 1970 and further improvements have since been made in the form of new toilets which were built in 1982-83.

Currently, active groups of Cubs, Scouts and Venturers meet here.

2. CYPRESS TREES

This row of cypress trees is said to have been planted about 1914 by 'Grandpa' Fitton, one-time owner of about 27 acres (11ha) of land in this area. The old house was wattle and daub and was situated near the old oak tree.

Two dams which were on this hillside until the recent subdivision are said to have been hand-dug by Mr. Fitton, the clay thus removed being used for the walls of the house.

5. FIRE STATION

The inaugural meeting of the Wonga Park Rural Fire Brigade was held at the Hall on 18th January, 1939. There were 29 people present and "a minute's silence was observed in memory of Mr. F. Topping, a pioneer of Wonga Park who lost his life in the terrible bushfire at Warrandyte on Friday 13th January, 1939" (Black Friday). The Brigade was formed and was affiliated with the Victorian Bush Fire Brigade Association. Later, in 1945, the Brigade joined the newly formed Country Fire Authority of Victoria.

The initial equipment of the Brigade consisted of five rakes, three bush hooks and two knapsacks, all kept at the local post office/store. Transport to fires was by privately owned trucks and cars with water carried in 44 gallon (200litre) drums. The membership fee at that time was two shillings (twenty cents) per annum and there were 38 members registered at 31st December, 1939.

In 1943 the fire fighting equipment was updated by an issue of a tank, pump and hoses from the Bushfire Association and all equipment was stored in a shed at the post office.

In 1954 a fibro-cement shed was erected at the site of the present fire station using funds donated by local residents and in 1958 the Brigade obtained its first truck, a second-hand Ford tanker donated by the North Croydon Brigade which had ceased operations.

Since that time, by hard work and good management, there has been a series of improvements made to both equipment and premises, the most significant being the replacement of the fibro-cement building with a brick one in 1973 and its subsequent extensions in 1976, and the issue in early 1984 of a 3,000 litre capacity tanker.

3. ICECREAM SHOP

Around the year 1925, Mrs. Bill Fitton, 'Grandpa's' daughter-in-law, served icecream, soft drinks, lollies and tobacco from a room attached to the left hand side of the house.

Each Friday it was the childrens' task to milk the cows and to help break into lumps the one hundred-weight (50Kg) of ice carted in by horse and dray. Icecream was made in a churn in a shed that was at the back of the house, then put into containers and surrounded by chunks of ice to keep it cold.

On Saturdays a red and white marquee was erected in the garden and icecream and soft drinks were sold to people after their games of tennis or cricket.

4. 'COOLIBAH'

Named so by one of the early owners of the original 40 acres (16.2ha), Mr. Brown, as trees near the house reminded him of coolibah trees around his home in Darwin.

This property has had numerous owners and has changed its boundaries several times, the original entrance being at the end of Launder's Avenue and across the wall of the big dam.

Land use has changed with the interests and talents of the different owners and has been variously used for goat raising, "cherries on the contour", and a top class dairy farm.

Current owners bought it in 1962 and the property is now worked as orchard and grazing land. Some subdivision has recently taken place on the front part of the property facing Yarra Road.

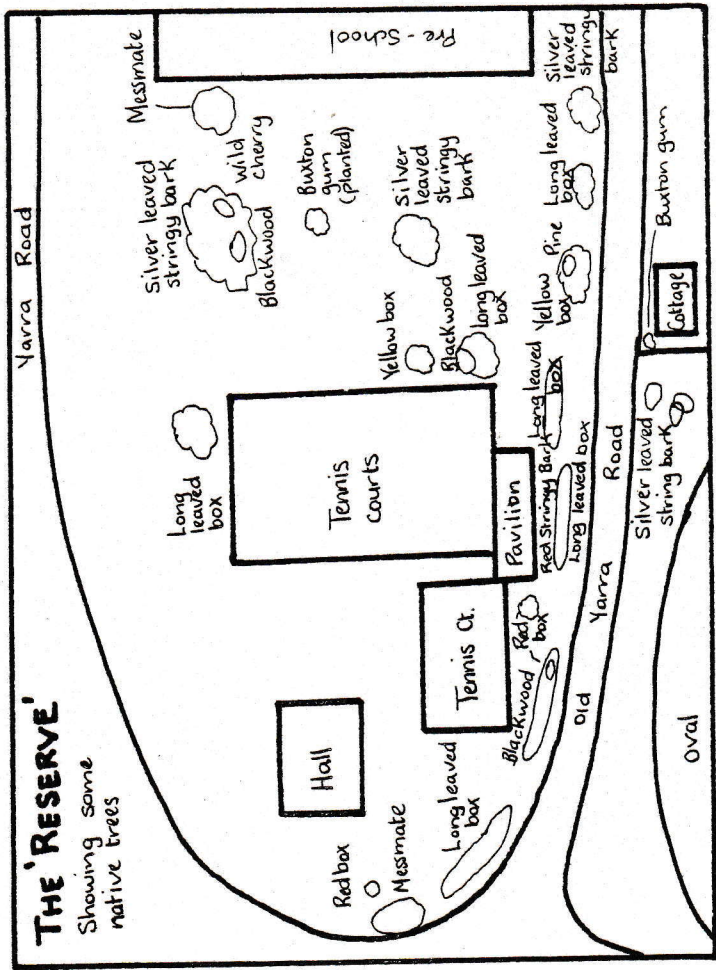
6. THE BURCH FAMILY MEMORIAL PRE-SCHOOL CENTRE

On the 9th May, 1972, Keith and Elsie Burch, their three children and a nephew were killed in a road accident on the Warburton Highway near Lillydale. Shocked by this tragedy, local people set up a Committee to raise funds for an appropriate memorial for this well-loved family. As the Wonga Park and District Residents' Association had already established that a need existed for a local pre-school centre it was decided, on a suggestion by Mr. Ted Smith, to use the money raised to found such a centre with the usual Shire Council and State Government assistance.

During the following two years the Committee received \$3,313.79 in donations. The members worked hard in collaboration with Shire of Lillydale Councillors to organize a site, the erection of a building and the collection of the basic equipment required by the Health Department.

On Saturday 29th June, 1974 the Pre-School Centre was opened with a dedication service by Mr. Clark, the minister from the Church of Christ, Croydon. Over 200 people were present, relatives and friends of the Burch family and local residents. The first children attended the centre on Monday 1st July, 1974.

The building was officially commissioned for the Shire of Lillydale on Saturday, 24th August, 1974 by the then Shire President, Cr. M. Seymour.



7. 'THE RESERVE'

This area has always been the hub of recreational activities in Wonga Park. It is evident by the standard of facilities present today that the sporting clubs of the area have a long history of keen interest and involvement by local people.

In the past the area has been the venue for local Easter Shows and many country sports days.

Along the road verge and on the reserve are still many examples of trees that occur naturally in the Wonga Park district. In the spring many wild flowers, including native orchids and heaths, can be seen by the careful observer.

This building, now the Community Cottage, venue for many leisure activities and meetings, was built around 1950 by Alan Bickford for his family. It was situated on an orchard which extended through to 'Coolibah'.

In 1978 the Lillydale Council purchased the cottage and some adjoining land to form part of the Recreation Reserve and in February, 1980 a meeting of interested local residents formed an Interim Management Committee. The first official Annual General Meeting took place in April, 1981.

9. THE HALL

There was no hall in Wonga Park in the early 1900's so the early settlers had to travel many miles over rough bush tracks by horse and cart to Warrandyte and other places for their entertainment.

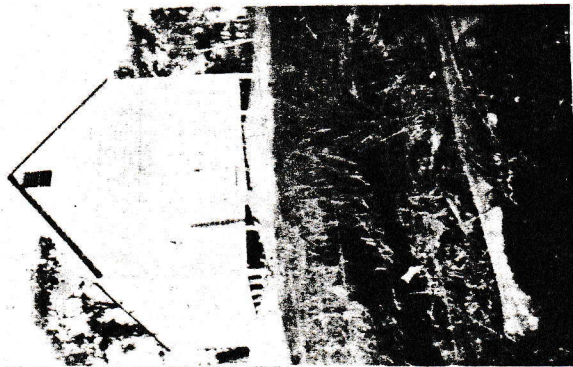
Dances, sing-songs etc. were held in homes or at the local school to raise funds to build a hall. The first hall was erected by a working bee of local people in 1912, people who felt so strongly about the need for a hall that many had mortgaged their properties to secure it. A grant from the State Government was received at that time to help establish a library in the new hall (Plate 1).

The library was run by Mr. Couper from the Cannery. Long wooden boxes containing books were brought regularly from Melbourne by horse and cart.

As the community expanded the old hall outgrew its usefulness and in 1926 a new hall was built with part of the old hall retained for the stage and supper room (Plate 2).

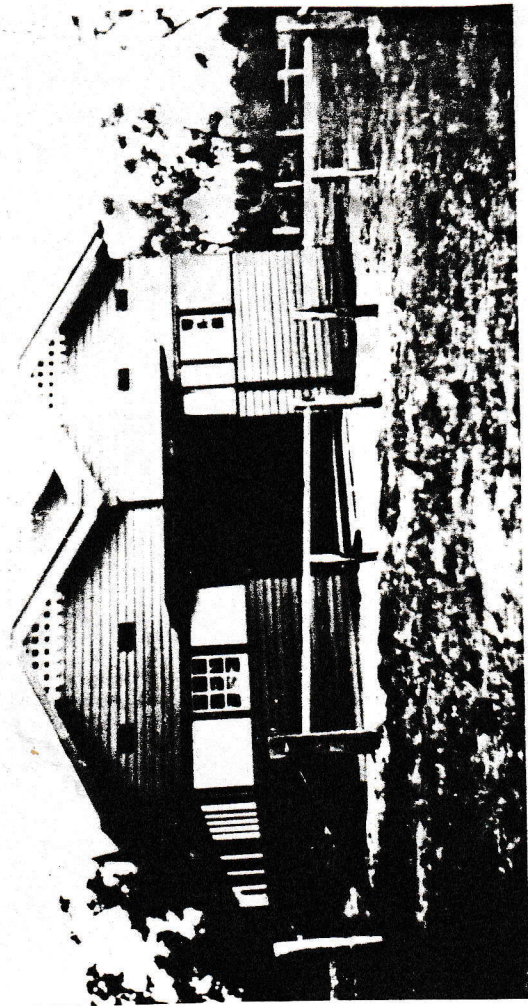
In 1978 the hall was further extended by the addition of a new supper room and kitchen facilities. The old supper room then became and is still currently used as an Infant Welfare Centre.

Plate 1. 1912



The Hall

Plate 2. After 1926



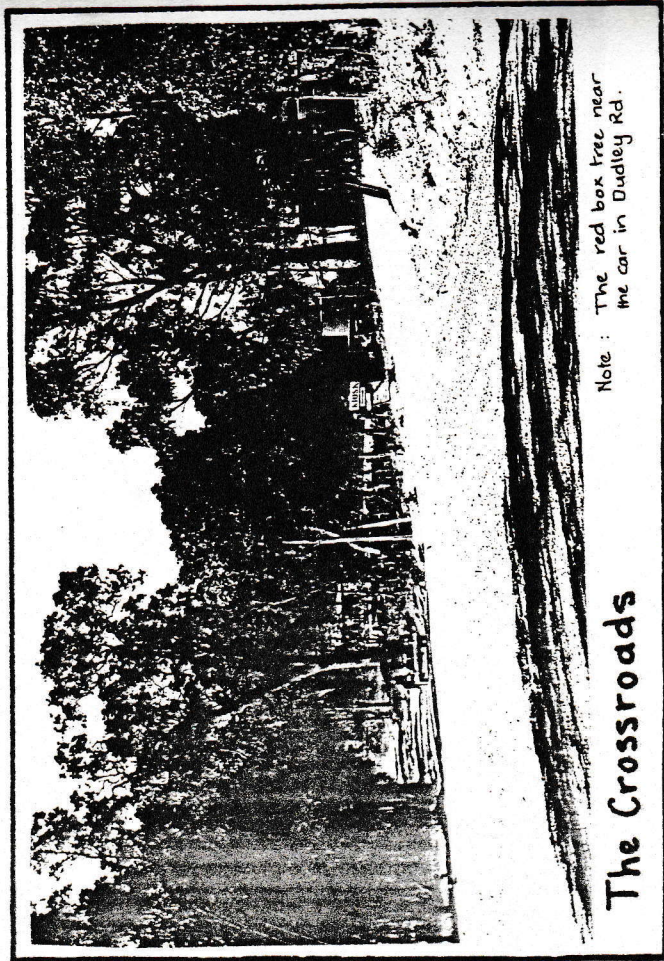
10. THE CANNERY

Mr. James Couper bought a house and property in Launder's Avenue from Mr. Kipps.

He built a three-roomed mud shed to establish a cannery for apples, pears, peaches and plums. One room had an open side and this housed the boiler. The other two rooms were for the fruit and tins. As workers, Mr. Couper employed local boys and girls who had left school.

During processing, apples were peeled and sliced by a hand-operated machine, packed into tins then put into a machine that sealed on the lids. The cans were then cooked in a steam boiler, cooled, labelled and stacked. Pears and peaches were treated in much the same manner except that they were dipped to take the skins off and then cut in half.

Mr. Heber Read carted the fruit to Melbourne on a large dray with two pairs of horses. It is said that a load was worth around £300 (\$600). The business suffered difficulties during the First World War as Mr. Couper could not obtain tins and the larger companies caused too much competition, forcing the cannery to close.



Note: The red box tree near the car in Dudley Rd.

The Crossroads

11. READ'S HOUSE

This house was the Read family home. It was built in 1902 and originally consisted of two rooms. In 1910 a kitchen, bedroom and lounge room were added. The big double chimney in the centre of the house was built by a Mr. Aumann. The story is told of how he walked from his home in Templestowe to do the job. He laid 1,000 bricks using sand for the mortar from the gully just over the other side of Yarra Road, finished the chimney about 4.15 in the afternoon and was then prepared to walk home. Mr. Read insisted on driving him home by horse and cart.

The house remained unchanged until 1925 when a two-room house from the adjoining property that had then been bought by the Reads was carted up the hill and attached to the back of the existing house and joined with a breezeway.

Apart from minor repairs the house has not been altered since that time and still has its original weatherboards.

The large shed just down Toppings Road next to the house was purchased at auction in the 1930's for the sum of £13 (\$26) from the Authority building the Eildon Weir. It was dismantled and for £19 (\$38) was carted from Eildon to be re-erected here.

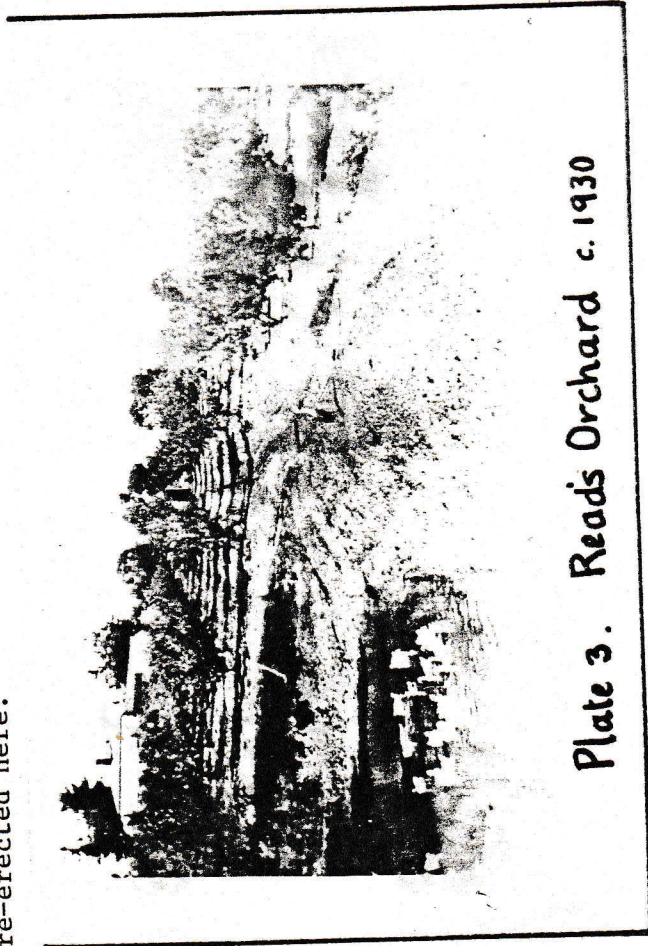


Plate 3. Reads Orchard c. 1930

12. ST. MARK'S CHURCH

Although the church was built in 1920 the first Anglican services were held in the Wonga Park Hall in 1914 and were conducted by visiting ministers. A portable altar for these services was made by Mr. Esdaile, one of the early settlers.

Mr. Fred Topping made a gift of the land for the church building on the corner of Toppings and Yarra Roads. Money was raised for the church by subscription and loan. The Diocese of Melbourne gave £1 (\$2) for each £1 (\$2) raised and in this way the sum of £300 (\$600) was subscribed.

Another of the early settlers, Mr. Charles Fulford, is reported to have carted the timber for St. Mark's in a horse drawn lorry in 1919.

Mr. Topping and Mr. Farran, both carpenters, put up the framework and the men of the parish completed the church by working bees in 1921.

A Lay Reader, Mr. Jack Knee, conducted the first service and the first marriage performed was between a Mr. Charles Fulford and a Miss Violet Hooper. St. Mark's was dedicated by Archbishop Harrington-Lees in 1923. Originally it was part of the Parish of Ringwood and later was included in the Parish of Croydon.

A further gift of land was made to the Church in 1965 by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Walker.

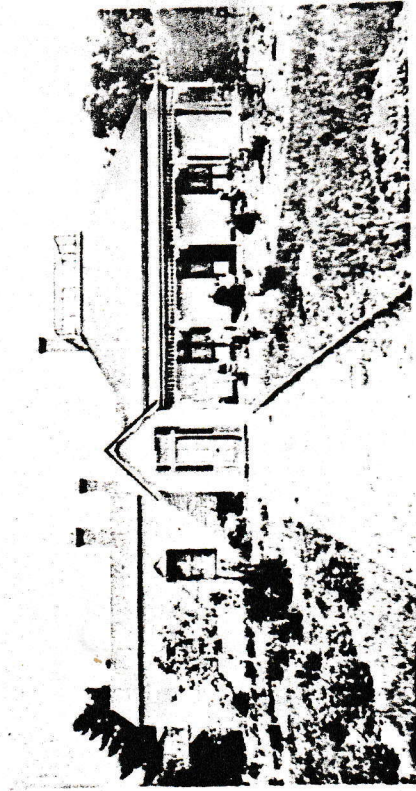
There are a number of brass plates throughout the Church commemorating the service of past church members and gifts of church furniture.

13. 'FOREST GATE'

Known to us as 'White Lodge', 'Forest Gate' was a beautiful old house built in approximately 1890 on 14 acres (5.7ha) of land and named after a suburb of London. It was the home of Mrs. Webb, a costume dresser for theatre people in Melbourne and a niece of George Launder. She ran the home as a guest house for her friends from the theatre. Her coachman, Billy Farran, drove regularly to Croydon to pick up the guests.

The original oak trees surrounding the house were grown from acorns brought out from England by George Launder, a key figure in the early 'Eight Hour Day' movement.

In 1908 part of the house was rebuilt because of white ants and at that time the front door was facing north. Deer brought to Australia and freed for wealthy people to hunt had become a problem to orchardists by eating the trees, but were pets for the people at 'Forest Gate'.



Forest Gate.

Plate 4.

14. POST OFFICES

Early this century there was no post office as such in the Wonga Park settlement. Instead, Mail Delivery Officers collected the mail from Croydon and distributed it from their houses to residents when they called.

i. The first 'Post Office' in Wonga Park was on the corner of what is now Reserve Road and Jumping Creek Road where the two old palms still stand. In the late 1800's, a house here owned by Mr. G.H. Smith served as the place where local people could pick up and deliver their mail. Apparently, Mr. Smith also sold corned beef and other meat that was stored in barrels.

ii. The next mail delivery office was a house owned by Mr. R. Cocking situated in Dudley Road on the block next door to the red box tree. The Cockings moved away from the area after their son was killed during the First World War.

iii. Mrs. Jones then ran the post office from her house on the corner of Painter and Dudley Roads. In about 1913-1914 the first phone was put through from there to Croydon. It was not an exchange and no other phones could be hooked into it, but it served to send and receive telegrams. Mail could be collected and posted and undoubtedly a few other items were sold from the house. Mr. Jones ran the horse coach service to Croydon.

iv. The 'Old Post Office' (Plate 5) in Jumping Creek Road was next. It was built by Mr. Marshall who owned the land from Jumping Creek Road through to the school. He continued to run the coach service and operated the Post Office as well as a small store selling groceries etc. This business continued under many owners until 1964-5 when telephones became automated at the exchange in Yarra Road. Currently this building is a private house.

v. Arthur and Teddy Davis moved a cedar train carriage onto the corner of Dudley and Jumping Creek Roads in 1946-8 and it became a kiosk/store (Plate 6). In the mid 1950's the train was moved to Painters Road where it still stands and the present store was built. For a short time in the 1950's the store was known as the 'Wonga-Rhon Store'. It became the Post Office as well in 1965.

In 1983 an era ended when mail delivery commenced to houses within a one mile radius of the Post Office.



Plate 5. Marshall's Post Office



Plate 6. Davis' Kiosk/Store



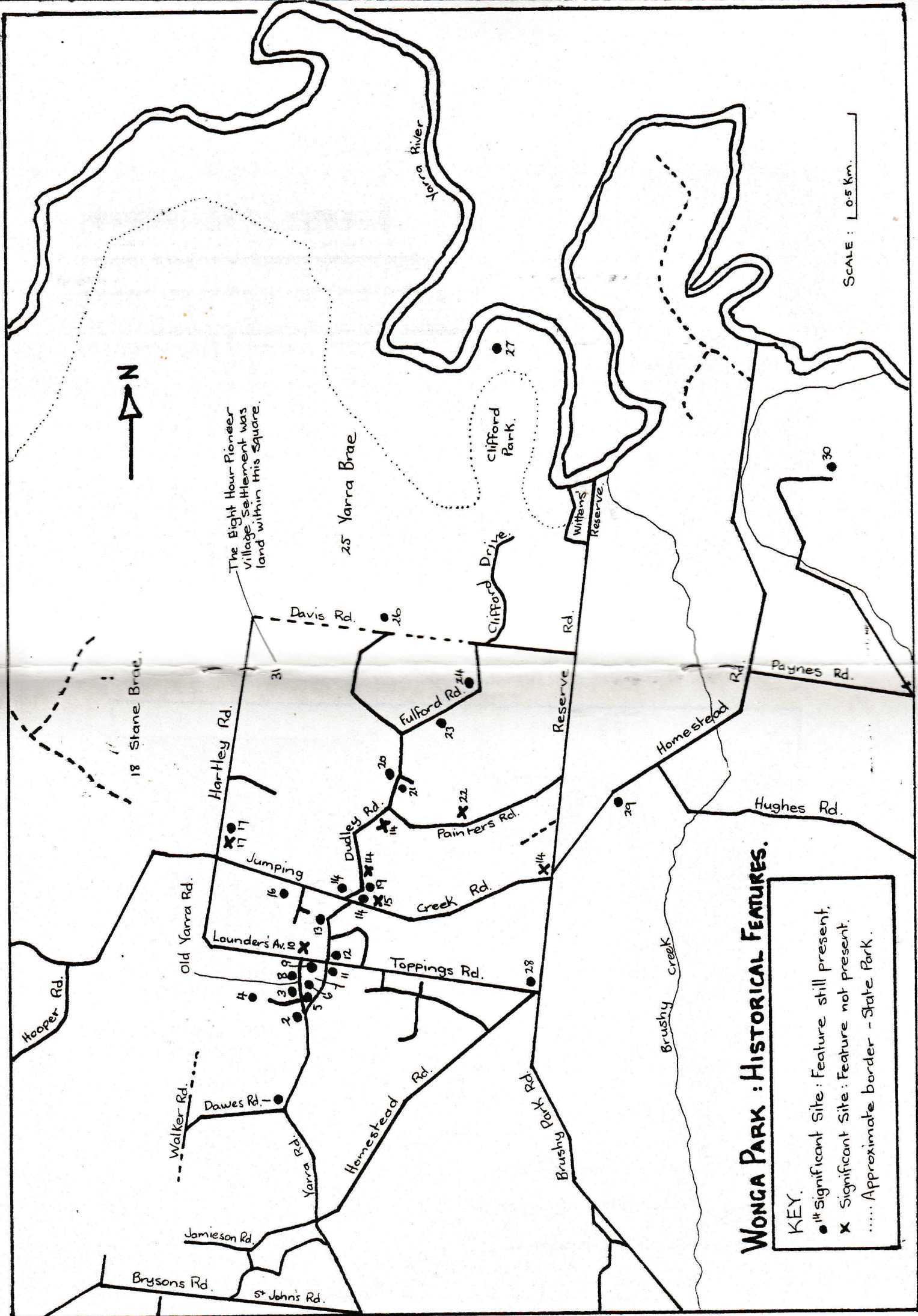
SCALE : 1 0.5 Km.

The Eight Hour Pioneer Village Settlement was land within this square.

WONGA PARK : HISTORICAL FEATURES.

KEY.

- 1st Significant Site : Feature still present.
- ✕ Significant Site : Feature not present.
- Approximate border - State Park.



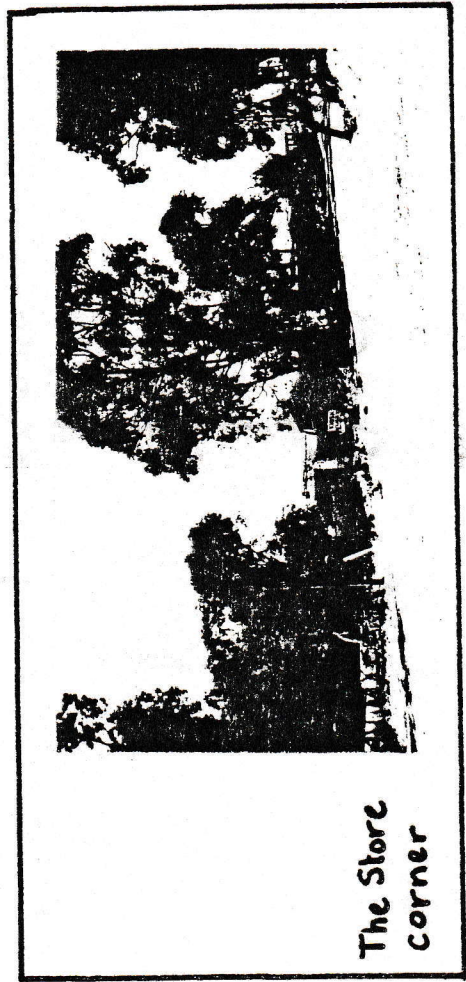
15. LADY NELL SEEING EYE DOG SCHOOL

Current President of the Guide Dogs Owners and Friends Association Inc., Mrs. Phyllis Gratton and her husband owned two blocks of land in the vicinity of No. 52 Jumping Creek Road. A Mr. Arthur McKay, their friend, owned the adjoining two blocks. In 1958, being sympathetic to the problems of blind people and their difficulties with the dogs then being trained Mrs. and Mr. Gratton made their land available for the establishment of a Seeing Eye Dog Training School. They built a contemporary house on one of the blocks for the use of training dogs with blind people; kennels and dog runs were built on the adjoining blocks.

Thus the Lady Nell Seeing Eye Dog School, named after Mrs. Gratton's own seeing eye dog, became the first 'seeing eye' dog training centre in Victoria, and was officially opened on 10th April, 1960 by the Hon. T.W. Mitchell. The school became registered with the Hospital and Charities Commission.

Accessibility to public transport and the built-up areas for training purposes became a problem so the property was sold in 1962 and more suitable premises in Thanet Street, Malvern purchased.

The house built by the Grations was completely destroyed by fire at 5.15am on Saturday 23rd August, 1975.



The Store
Corner

16. UPTON'S ORCHARD

Arthur J. Upton from Langwarrin purchased 40 acres (16.2ha) of land from Jim Couper in 1921, land which had been the original selection of George Launder. Some 13 acres (5.25ha) of the property had already been planted as orchard around 1900. These apple and pear trees still exist and still bear fruit.

Mr. Upton planted more orchard and to supplement the income from this he carted fruit on commission and cut and carted firewood for the bakeries in Box Hill.

The original home was situated on the property facing Old Yarra Road and was built of mud brick. In 1954 the cement shingle home was built. In 1948 when an extension was added to the school in Dudley Road an old sugar gum had to be removed. The timber from this tree was cut and milled to help build the present Upton home on Jumping Creek Road. Incidentally, the stump of this old tree was not removed and is still in the ground under the floor of the school.

Until 1925 the family used a horse and cart for transport. They then purchased a T-model Ford chassis and built a body on it to enable them to cart fruit.

Mr. A.J. Upton was very involved in public activities and at the time of his death was a Councillor with Lillydale Shire Council.

The property is currently owned by Mr. John Upton and is one of the only large orchards remaining in Wonga Park.

17. TEA ROOMS AND 'THE OAKS'

On the corner of Jumping Creek Road and Hartley Road during the early 1900's Mrs. Florence Annie Sharpe (nee Hughes, b.1880-d.1974) operated tea rooms and sold flowers and gum tips to day trippers from the city. The tea room itself was a green-house made from ti-tree (Plate 7). Later there were sides added and the building became a two room bungalow. Mrs. Sharpe lived in the house behind the tea rooms.

The original settlement of 54 acres (22ha) was taken up by Mr. Edward Hughes in 1893. The first building on the property had been an office which was moved from Collins Street, Melbourne, and was used for weekend accommodation. This was replaced with a house (Plate 8) that, with some additions and changes, still stands today (Plate 9).

The property was called 'The Oaks' after the row of oak trees that lined the drive up to the tea rooms. Some of these trees can still be seen today.

18. STANE BRAE

Stane Brae is one of the larger properties in the Wonga Park area. It originally consisted of about 730 acres (295ha) but since some blocks on Jumping Creek Road have been sold only about 500 acres (200ha) remain.

During World War II Stane Brae is noted as being the site for an Air Force training camp with facilities for about 600 men. Concrete slabs where huts and a magazine once stood are now all that remains of this camp that included a rope bridge across the Yarra River. Some of the men who were based at the camp may be remembered as they played with the Wonga Park cricket team and attended the local dances.

The original homestead on the property was a ripple iron structure. This was burnt down in the 1962 bushfires. Another house was then moved to the property from the Balwyn area by Mr. V. Philpotts. Land use has been for cattle grazing and pig farming.

Plate 7.

The Tea Rooms

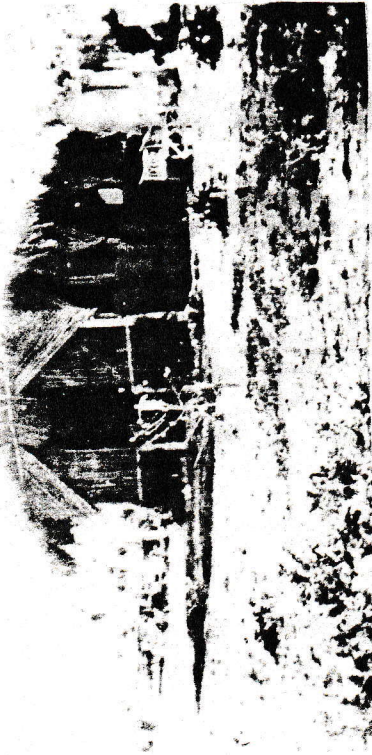


Plate 8.

'The Oaks'
1893

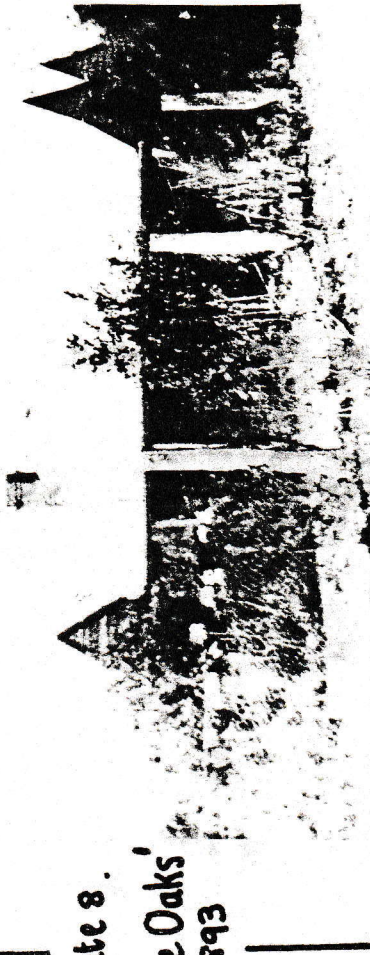
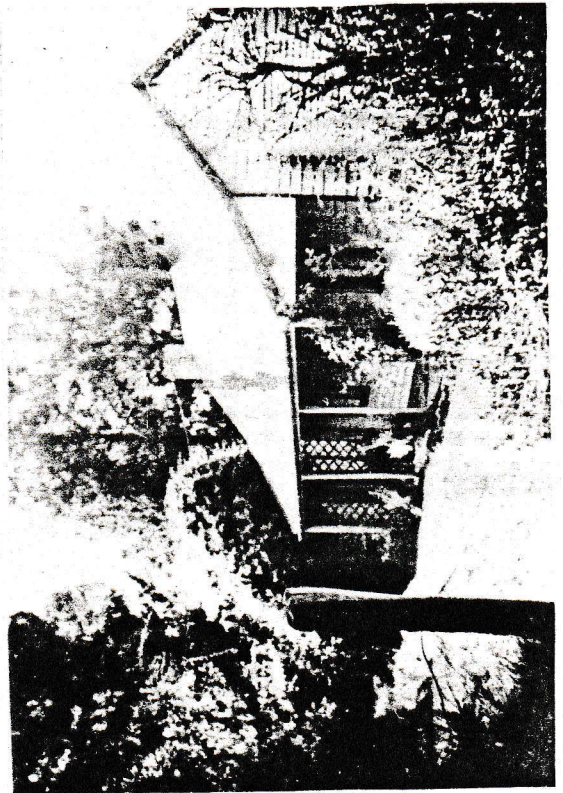


Plate 9.

'The Oaks'
1933



19. THE RED BOX TREE

This tree is believed to be the largest of its type left in the Wonga Park area, suggesting that it has survived bushfires and the firewood and timber fence-post industry of early this century. Being a slow growing eucalypt this tree could be hundreds of years old. There are still residents of the area who remember hiding behind this tree on their way home from school early in the 1900's.

20. WONGA PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL NO: 3241

The first application for a school at Wonga Park came from residents of the Eight Hour Pioneer Village Settlement. A school building was removed from Braybrook Junction and re-erected in Dudley Road. It was opened on 6th November, 1895 with Ida M. Body as Head Teacher. It was then known as Warrandyte East Primary School. The name was changed to Wonga Park Primary School in March, 1898 (Plate 10).

On 5th April, 1911, fire destroyed the school, the enrolment then being 20 pupils. A new building was built at a cost of £370 (\$740) and occupied on 11th March, 1912 and a second classroom was added in 1951 (Plate 11).

The school now has six classrooms and an enrolment of over 100 pupils.

21. THE IRON BARK TREE

Not indigenous to the area, this old tree is the only one of its kind known in the district. It is said that seed must have blown across the river from its more common habitat to the north.

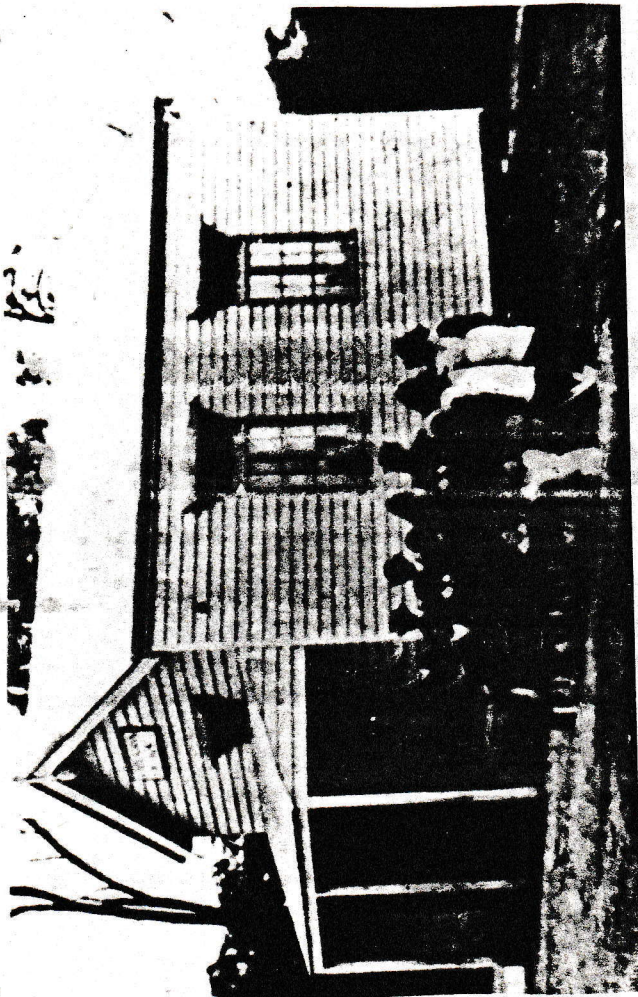


Plate 10.

1898

The School



Plate 11.

1912

22. PAINTER'S HOUSE

In the early 1890's when the government timber reserve was thrown open for settlement there were too many applications for the land available, so a ballot for acreages was held. Samuel Painter, a saddler from Carlton, was successful in obtaining about 21 acres (8.5ha) at a cost of approximately \$1 (\$2) per acre.

This land was worked as an orchard but later he opened a saddlery shop in Croydon. Originally the family home was wattle and daub; this was later improved with corrugated iron (Plate 12).

During his time in the inner suburbs Painter stood for Federal Parliament in the Collingwood/North Melbourne area. He was killed in a horse riding accident on 21st May, 1914.

23. BURCH'S HOUSE

Mr. J.C.Burch owned 22 acres (9ha) of land in Fulford Road. The original home (Plate 13) was a log cabin built around 1890. Interior walls were lined with clay dug from the dam behind the house and the roof was of corrugated iron. The floor was compacted earth.

Mr. Burch divided his land equally between his two sons. Mr. Ted Burch then built a new house (Plate 14) in front of the log cabin and his father moved in to live with him. The front wall of the old house was removed and the building used as a packing shed until around 1945 when it was pulled down.

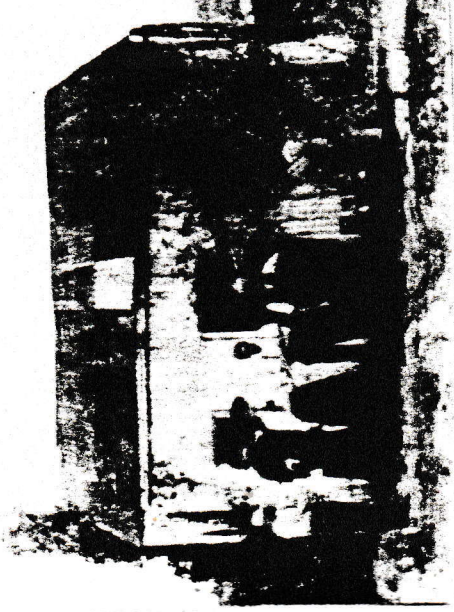


Plate 12.

Painter + Family



Plate 13.
Burch's log cabin

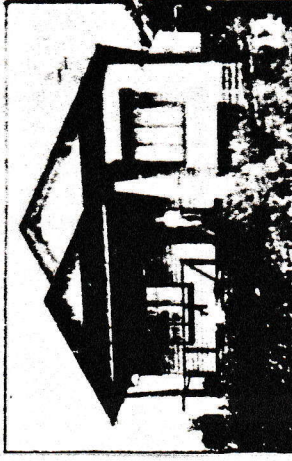


Plate 14.
Ted Burch's house

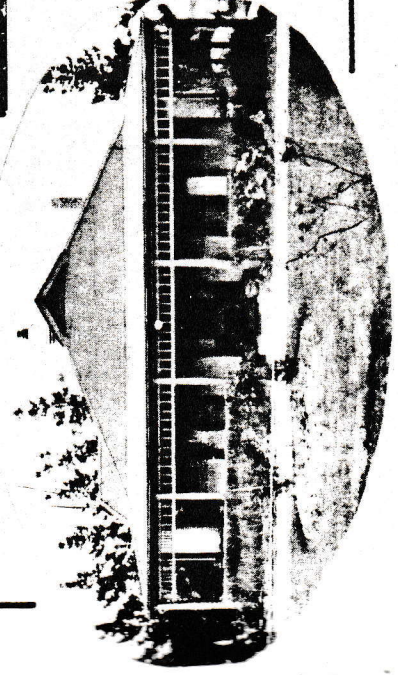


Plate 15.
Yarra Brae
Homestead
1940

KELLYBROOK WINERY

The Kelly family have lived here for about fifty years and their home is named after the old Kelly family home in County Westmeath, Ireland. The present Cider Apple Orchard was planted about 21 years ago, the original one having been destroyed by the 1962 bushfires. Kellybrook became a winery in 1970 and is Australia's only commercial Cider Apple Orchard and distillery and so is unique in having cider, wine and brandy making on its premises. Grape vines planted some years ago will soon reach maturity and be used for wine production.

The winery and restaurant is particularly noted for its champagne cider.

YARRA BRAE

One of the largest properties in Wonga Park and believed to be originally part of the Wonga Park Cattle Station, Yarra Brae has had many owners including Mr. Peter Davis (1852), the Mutual Assurance Society (1899), Mr. Henty (who ran the coach from Wonga Park to Croydon), Mr. Lindsay Cock (until 1940), and the Honourable Lewis Clifford (1941-1967).

Early this century a ripple iron home was built on the property (Plate 15) but this was burnt down in the early 1970's. The cream brick house still on the property was built by Lord Clifford during the war years.

Apart from the section known as Clifford Park and used for scouting activities, land use has been for dairying, cattle grazing, some market gardening and horse agistment. Much of the area adjoining the river is still natural bushland with abundant wild life, while valleys cleared for grazing years ago contain stands of beautiful old candlebark and swamp gum trees.

During 1983 the Victorian State Government purchased land along the river frontage of Yarra Brae to be developed as State Park.

THE BOULEVARD

Just inside the gates of 'Yarra Brae' is a small cutting in the hillside and the beginnings of a road. This was to be the start of a boulevard along the Yarra River from Yarra Brae to Melbourne. The dream of Clement John De Garis (b.1884-d.1926), public relations man and entrepreneur, was begun but never realized. A man of many schemes, De Garis is best known for the promotion of the dried fruit industry near Mildura.

ROWALLAN HALL

Situated in that part of Yarra Brae known as Clifford Park and site of Pan Pacific Jamborees in 1948 and 1955 and of the 1961 World Rover Moot, Rowallan Hall was built by the voluntary labour of members of the scouting movement. It was named in honour of Lord Rowallan, the then Chief Scout of the British Commonwealth.

These scouting activities brought many people to Wonga Park and thus necessitated the making of the main roads in the area which had previously only been bush tracks.

BAISHANT'S PROPERTY

T.B.Baishant was another of the original selectors and who owned 33 acres (13.5ha) of land bounded by Toppings, Homestead and Jumping Creek Roads.

In the mid 1890's an oregon cabin was moved to the property from Spencer Street railway station and bolted together to form the original house. Later a single width gable-roofed room was placed in front. These two rooms were joined to form the present home in 1928.

Land use has mainly been for orchard, dairy cattle and pigs. During the 1950's the property boasted a practise race track where horses and greyhounds were trained.

Some subdivision has taken place over the years but the remaining property of two acres (.8ha) still has a small orchard.

This site is one of the earliest white settlements in Wonga Park, and the place from where the name 'Wonga Park' was first derived. Settled by squatters as early as 1852, this property has varied in size over the years, once including all of Yarra Brae and down to Bryson's Road, an area of over 4,000 acres (1,620ha). It has been a cattle station, a horse stud with its own race track and in more recent times, a very successful dairy farm.

During the 1870's aboriginal stockmen, mainly from the Yarra or Wurunjeri Tribes, were employed here and the head man of the Tribe then was 'Wonga'. Despite some conjecture, the most accepted opinion is that 'Wonga Park' was named after this Aboriginal who worked on this station, not after the Wonga Pigeon as some people believe. These Aboriginal drovers had their own burial ground on this property somewhere near the Brushy Creek.

The 1867 winner of the Melbourne Cup, 'Tim Whiffler', was housed on this property. His stable was somewhere near the old dairy on the left hand side of Homestead Road. This group of buildings is now known as 'Stocks' Barns'. The Stocks now own the property.

The homestead has been renovated but parts of the original ripple iron house still remain at the back of the house. These ripple iron houses were built by the Mutual Assurance Society during the 1890's when it owned much of Wonga Park. After the Great Depression many farmers had over extended themselves in this area and were forced to sell out to their creditors. Unfortunately the back of the Wonga Park Homestead is the only ripple iron erection remaining in the area. Seaweed was used to pack the walls of these houses. The present house was renovated during the 1940's.

The Bruce family originally held this property which included Mt. Lofty. Not until Captain A.E.T. Payne took up the land in 1905 did it become a showplace amongst agricultural properties in Melbourne. Captain Payne improved the land by clearing it, sowing the pastures, draining, irrigating and fencing, in fact, much of the fencing timber came from the Wonga Park area.

Yarra View became a model farm, breeding Romney Marsh sheep and studs of Geurnsey cattle, Birkshire pigs and Clydesdale horses. Known as a millionaire by local people, Payne bred many Royal Melbourne Show Champions here. His farm boasted all modern conveniences including electricity, hot and cold running water, telephone and a wireless.

When Captain Payne died in 1954, the property was taken over by the Order of St. John of God as a training farm for intellectually handicapped persons. After many early difficulties, extensive building took place in 1961. The Order now runs a dairy herd, a Hereford stud and an Angora goat stud with many recent show successes. They also have their own plant nursery specialising in Camelias, and a workshop.

Some of Captain Payne's buildings are still used as is his name for prize stud cattle such as 'Paynesville Bernard', a Grand Champion at Whittlesea and also at Dandenong in 1980. Indeed, Yarra View is still a premier Victorian stud farm, the roads and paddocks lined with Cypress trees planted during Captain Payne's time there.

In compiling this booklet many interesting stories about ways of life early this Century were related.

We were told about the ...

... 'Bright Lights' Theatre Company

... The 'Entertainers'

... The happenings and characters of the production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' at St. Mark's Church

... The comedy skits and songs at concerts in the Hall

... The finding of a gold nugget in a Wonga Park gully by the inebriated uncle of one of the residents

... An illicit whisky still, the product of which was ferried across the Yarra for gold prospectors.

As well as many stories of hardships, hard work and poverty, there were stories too of fun and comradeship that illustrate the stamina of our forebears in the area. Unfortunately, these stories could not be included in this publication, but they would make excellent material for another booklet.