

TILLY THOMPSON.

Notes for Guiding Friends 26/2/2008.

BORN 28 April 1871 MATILDA LOUISE CLENNELL

5 th Child of John Clennell. Engine Driver from Durham .England and Matilda McIntosh from Fifehire, Scotland who were married in Dec 1862 and lived in Wendouree.

Tilly went to Wendouree State School and aged 13 in 1884 commenced work with Davies the Draper and then Tyler's Drapery in Bridge St as a buyer.

In 1905. aged 24 Yrs she joined E. Lucas and Co and became Australia's first female Commercial Traveller and enhanced her already formidable reputation as a business dynamo.

*** (E. Lucas & Co. Established by Eleanor Hargreaves - born 1848 in Bradford, England. Family came to Ballarat before Eureka. Her mother died in 1855 and as her father was unable to cope she was boarded out with "sympathetic friends." She had 2 years schooling then went to work.

Aged 18 she married John Price, a gold miner who was killed in 1878 and Edward Hargreaves Price was born in the same year. Widowed and penniless aged 30 she commenced sewing in her home in James St.

In 1886 she married William Lucas who was killed in a mining accident in 1888. With the help of three daughters she worked up the business, notably "Whitework" and the firm titled very suitably "Busy Bee" In 1896 Edward Price, aged just 18 took over as business manager, the firm moved to bigger premises in Armstrong St the Doveton St. and in 1905 Edward employed Tilly.)****

1905 Tilly recruited by Edward Price to join Lucas.

She became the first female to get a driving license in Ballarat.

By 1907 Lucas' employed some 220 people with 160 powered sewing machines whilst Tilly roamed the country and interstate selling the firms products.

In 1914 aged 41 she married William Daniel Thompson, a wealthy Mining agent whose 1st wife had died in December 1913 leaving him with 6 children.

With the advent of the 1st World War the Lucas factory, as well as its routine work, supported YMCA workers at the front sending comforts parcels, farewelling and welcoming troop trains. In 1917 an Avenue of Honor was suggested, probably by Tilly and Lucas Girls raised money organising a football match with a Melbourne team "Khaki Girls" selling miniature bricks and eventually obtaining the bricks for the structure of the Arch of Victory from Selkirks, loading the trucks themselves. They famously presented to Prince of Wales with a suit of Pyjamas.

In 1926 she retired from Lucas' in 1927 William Thompson died. She lived at Homeleigh 510 - 512 Wendouree Pde before Building Sunways in 1939. She travelled overseas between 1927 and 1933 and became interested and a practitioner of Radiant Health and after a rapturous welcome back to Ballarat in 1933 she had classes. She also had an interest in alternative health and the Rev. Lelean would hold sessions at Sunways.

She was a strong member of the Jubilee Methodist Church and a good friend of Tom Toop who was also a member. Bill Greville, a gardener at the time remembers Tilly as a lovely lady and recalls that when Tom's wife died she suggested to Bill and his wife that they might consider moving in with Tom at the

Curator's Cottage,- the offer was not taken up.

In 1941 she was awarded the M.B.E. She died in April 1959.

THE TILLY THOMPSON GARDEN was commenced in ? 1989 and there are several surrounding benches and plaques. indicating the respect that other organizations held for her.

The Rats of Tobruk

Plaque commemorating Lucas participants in the services .

** Bill Greville says that Tom Toop laid out Tilly Yhompson's Garden using small conifers (*I think he may be referring to a rock garden suggested by Tilly as he talks about moving rocks*)