

# **Chapter 7**

## **Businesses and Industries**

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Summary

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Summary

The first store in The Basin was built in 1924 and known as “Smith’s Store”. The owner, R. B. Smith, had a large influence on the early development of The Basin.

Other influential store owners have been Bill Wright (Wright’s Store) and Roy Ritchie who owned and operated a number of stores in The Basin. Apart from running stores, both proprietors have assisted the community with their involvement in local voluntary organisations.

The Basin has hosted three petrol stations over the years. In 2017, one remains but no longer sells fuel.

Three milk suppliers have operated in The Basin over the years and in 2017, only the Salvation Army remains but it does not supply milk on a commercial basis.

The most influential small business in The Basin was undoubtedly Como Nurseries which had been operating for nearly 80 years when it closed in 1988.

Many small industries have operated in The Basin and in 2017 the most successful would be Lowline Industries.

Distinguished Resident

Bill Wright

This former proprietor of the general store on Forest Rd. came here in 1949 and was a driving force behind many community efforts. And drive he could – secretaries and committees alike were amazed and exhausted by Bill’s tremendous enthusiasm and will to work. As The Basin Progress Association President for a total of eight years, he saw the hall almost completely overhauled, mainly due to finance derived from monthly cabarets he arranged.

Bill was 1st Lieutenant of the fire brigade for 11 years, and devoted a great deal of time during bush fires. In V.F.A. football, Bill umpired 108 games including a final series. He recalled that the Grand Final he umpired in 1949 saw the end of the throw pass. Nicknamed “Wrighty”, you could never talk about A.F.L. Football or he would have converted you to the Saints in no time.

He was J.P. for 32 years, a member of the Eastern Districts Football Tribunal, a member of the Wicks Reserve Committee and President of The Basin Centenary Committee. In 1967 he won the “Knox Citizen of The Year Award”

He was – suffice to say, a man who has contributed much more than most to our township. In 1972, Bill sold his store and moved to Boronia.

## Shops

### Smith's Store

The first shop in The Basin was built in 1924 by Mr. R. B. Smith on the corner of Basin-Olinda Road and Mountain Highway and was known as "Smith's Store". Mr Smith was affectionately known as "Smithy".

Mr Smith started his store from a room off his house which was situated about halfway between The Basin Primary school and the first The Basin Post Office along Mountain Highway. He sold sweets and grocery items from his house. As a child attending The Basin Primary School, Emily Stephen could recall occasionally spending a halfpenny there on her way home from school. A Mrs. Collier served in the shop at the time. Emily was the daughter of Brigadier J. R. Stephen who was manager of the Salvation Army Home No. 1 from 1914 to 1932.

Mr Smith added a barn to the rear of his shop in 1926. He purchased a grain store that belonged

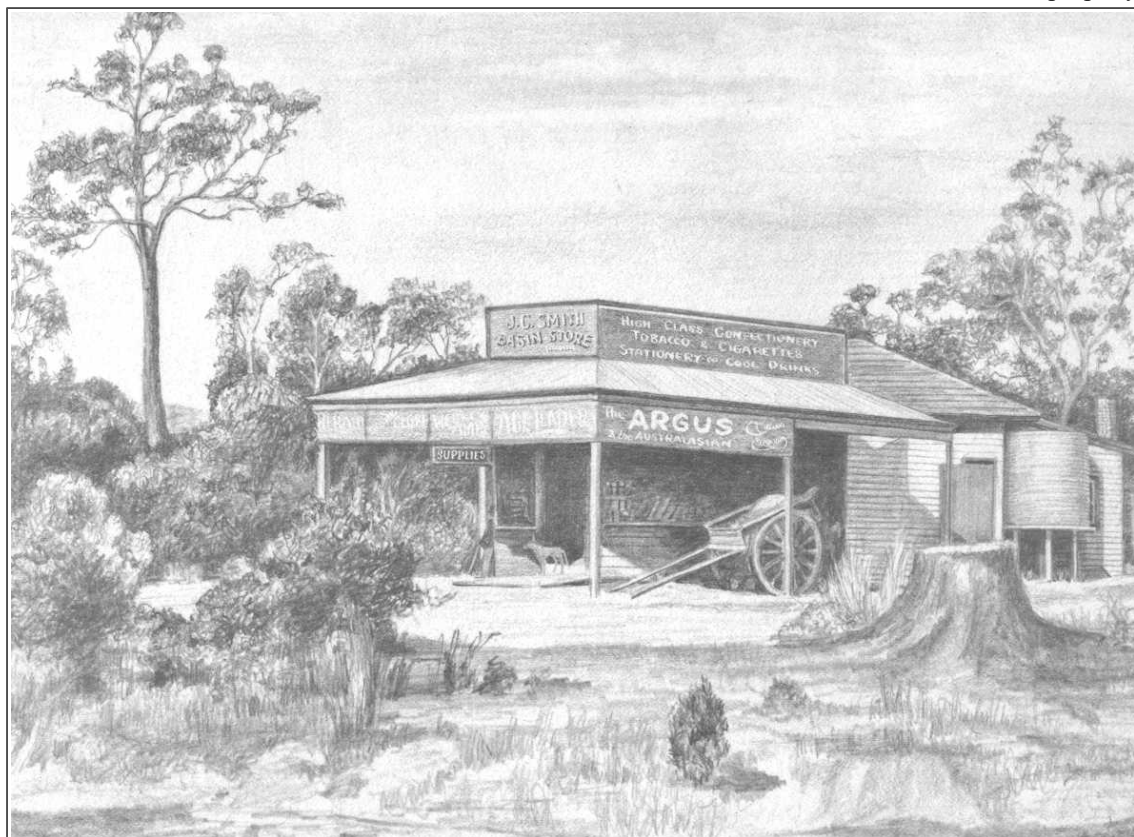
to Bob & Bert Cox near the corner of Toorak and Warrigal Roads (see photograph on page 4) and had it hauled to The Basin on a large jinker by a team of 9 horses (see photograph on page 5). This became his barn.

Barn dances became a fashion in the 1920's and what better spot could be found than Smith's Barn? Many dances were held here to provide entertainment and raise finances for building the The Basin Progress Hall.

Mr. Smith was a leading figure in district activities and was instrumental in the formation of The Basin Tennis Club. He built two tennis courts at the rear of his property where competition tennis was played for many years. He was the unofficial Mayor of The Basin.

Later owners of the store included Poulter, Davies, Spong, Horsfield, and Youl when the store became known as The Basin Store.

The store, and barn were demolished when the new shopping centre was built in 1963. The tennis courts were built over in a later property



*An etching depicting Smith's Store in the 1920's.*

## Smith's Store

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development.

### Youl's Store

In 1955, Keith and Mary Youl took on a five year lease on The Basin Store, formally known as "Smith's Store", from the owner Mr Horsfield (see "A Glimpse of History at The Basin Store" on page 10). He promised to improve the store which was in a dilapidated state. After the lease ran out and the promised improvements never eventuated, the Youl's purchased land in Forest Road opposite the current Fire Brigade and built a new store there.

They ran the new store for about 7 years but could see the demise of corner stores so they sold the business to Kevin Hevey. He later applied for a license to sell alcohol in the store but was refused because of the store's proximity to the Infant Welfare Centre and Kindergarten. Kevin later discovered that if he moved his business to the new shopping centre he could obtain a license – which he did. In 2017 the licensed grocer is still there.

Kevin Hevey also moved the newsagency out of his shop and started the newsagency in The Basin as a separate concern.

After Kevin Hevey moved his shop, Youl's

Store had various tenants before becoming "The Moonshiners" restaurant in the early 1970's and later on the "Calendula" restaurant.

### Lolly Lady

In the 1930's a small shop operated from a house at No.16 The Basin-Olinda Road and was run by Mrs Vic. Webber who was affectionately known as the "Lolly Lady".

She apparently well looked after the interests of visiting scouts and local children. The original house was built on the edge of the land with a serving window.

### Cain's Store

On The Triangle, on the corner of Mountain Highway and Church Street, a small grocer and lolly shop was built in 1926 by S. Cain. Local boys and girls met there and drank soft drinks.

Attractive signs featuring a Kookaburra, Kookaburra and Lyrebird were on the walls of the shop (see photo on page 6). Written on the wall above the Kookaburra at the front of the shop was the saying:

*"On this wall*

*The wise I see*

*This shop right here*



*Grain store near the corner of Toorak and Warrigal Road owned by Bob & Bert Cox. Circa 1926.. Photo shows store in normal operation. The store was purchased or use as a barn by R. B. Smith. See photo on page 6*  
*Photos courtesy Jeanette Ericson.*

*At the back of me"*

Around 1929, a verandah of the shop was closed in and the building extended to form a hall beside the shop. The hall was constructed with horizontal timbers and on one side it was open in the way some verandahs were built with roll-up canvas blinds. On hot nights, when the blinds were raised to let in any breeze, moths and mosquitoes also appeared. In 1933, the first Church of England service was held there.

In 1930, the shop and hall were leased to Mrs Mary Ann Gretton and run by her son Bert.

Charles and Mary Ann Gretton bought a holiday house in The Basin at 32 Conyers Street in 1924. In the late 1920's, they moved to The Basin permanently. In 1930, at the height of the depression, Charles had work but his son Bert did not. Mrs Gretton decided to lease the shop and let her son run it.

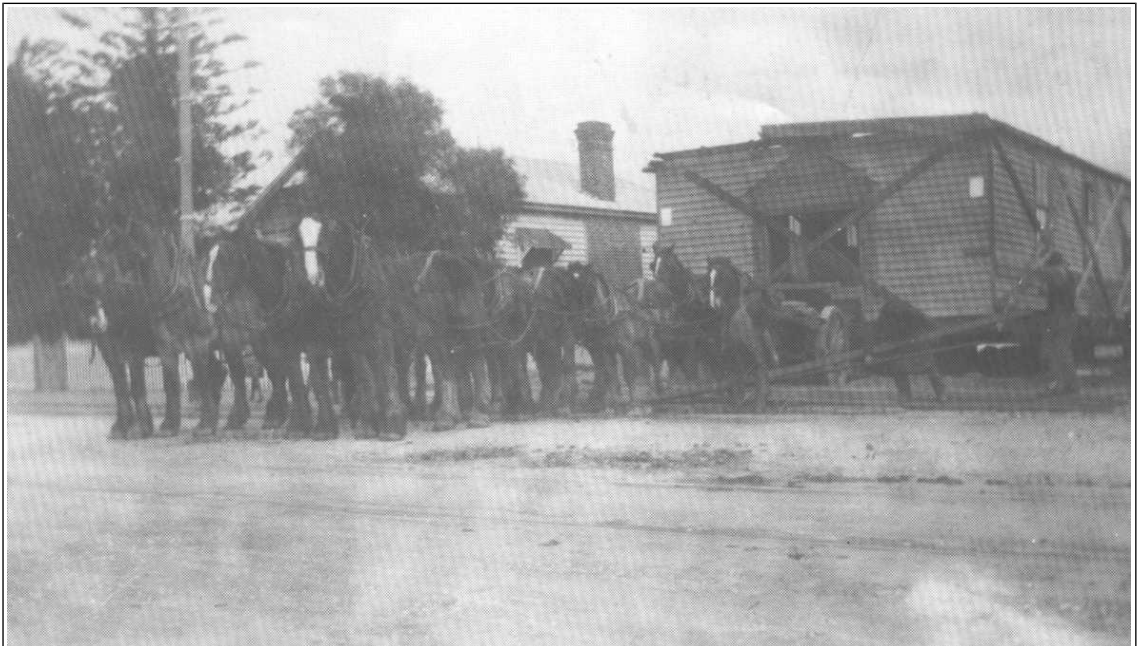
When they took over the shop and hall lease, the hall had a mini-golf course inside, complete with hills and bunkers. The Grettons removed the mini-golf course as there were many other potential uses for the hall. Mrs Gretton instigated many activities at the hall to provide entertainment for local people and the unemployed. These included

euchre parties, socials, and on special occasions, a "Spider Web Night", where strings were tied to a central ring from the ceiling, woven in and out of other strings before being attached to the wall with a prize of chocolate awaiting its owner.

Mrs Gretton also introduced regular dances in the hall and it became known as "The Glide-away". In the days when dancers wore soft leather soled dancing shoes, an impeccably polished floor was essential. The method of polishing the floor was simple but arduous. Candle shavings were spread across the floor and a hessian bag was put under a wooden box weighted with bricks. With a rope around the box, Bert dragged the box over and over the floor until it shone like glass.

From its spot at the corner of Church Street and Mountain Highway the strains of the orchestra could be heard echoing across The Ravine until early hours. Just the same, these dances were much rivalled by those held in the Bayswater Hall. This hall, opened in 1892, has been the scene of many well known functions.

In 1934, Mrs Gretton left the shop and the Bennet family bought it. They ran it for about 5 years but business declined and they left.



*The store was purchased for use as a barn by R. B. Smith and carted to The Basin by a team of horses. Circa 1926. Photo shows store loaded on a jinker ready for hauling by a team of nine horses.*

*Photo courtesy Jeanette Ericson.*

## Cain's Store

Later on, a guitar and mandolin manufacturer operated in the Glideaway Hall, and from 1942 – 1967 the building was a base for the manufacture of clothing and swim suits.

Around 1969, for a few years, “Terry Wilde’s Boxing Academy” used the hall.

In the 1970’s, Knox Council purchased the land and the remnants of Cain’s store and the Glideaway Hall were demolished as part of Council’s plan to turn the Triangle into a passive park.

### Gretton’s Shop

A block of land on the corner of Forest Road and Conyers Street was once owned by Mrs Mary Ann Gretton. When her lease on “Cain’s Store” ran out in 1934, her son Bert built a one room shop on the property and operated it for a year or two. The property was then bought by Mrs Gretton’s son Frank. He sold it to Mr. W. J. Wallis (who later donated it and the adjacent block to the Council).

### Junction Store

Very close to Wrights Store on the corner of Forest Road and Old Forest Road was the “Junction Store” run by the Felder family and later by McNeilly’s (mother and daughter). It operated from the early 1930’s to the 1940’s.

The term “Junction” was attached to the Junction Store and the Junction Dairy. At the time, Forest Road had just been created (in the Forest Heights Estate) from the corner of Old Forest Road to The Basin main centre, so this area became an important “Junction” of roads.

For a while, the original “Junction Store” sign was still visible at the top of the building even after the store closed, but repainting has since hidden it.

It seems strange that the “Junction Store” and “Centre Store” could operate effectively so close but this may be the reason the Junction Store closed.

In 2017, the original Junction Store building was still intact.



*Front of Cain's Store on the corner of Mountain Highway and Church Street. Circa 1930. Mrs. Mary Ann Gretton and Mrs. Seville sitting on seat. Note inscription on wall above kookaburra.*

*Photo courtesy Ernie Gretton.*

### Langdon's Store

Langdon's Store in Mountain Highway, just up from Clevedon, was built by George Langdon in 1940 (see photo on page 11).

Around 1930, his parents purchased six blocks of land in the Schneider Estate subdivision and built a week-end shack on one block fronting Claremont Ave. They visited for week-ends and holidays travelling to Bayswater and then by coach or walking.

In the 1930's, most houses in the area were only holiday homes and "weekender's" and people would ask his mother for small stores. The requests became so frequent that she opened a small store from her verandah. When her son married in 1938, she gave him the land higher up from her house and suggested he build a store there – which he did. He later added rooms at the rear.

The store was taken over in 1950 by a Mr. and Mrs. Usher for about one year and then later by Rod Travis and his wife. Rod was a journalist for the Sun and Herald newspapers before mov-

ing to The Basin. The store closed in 1965 when Rod retired.

### Williams' School Store

Opposite the Basin Primary School in Mountain Highway, where the original school crossing was, there once was a store that operated from 1949 to the late 1960's (see photograph on page 12) called the "School Store"

Built and first run by Eddie and Alice Williams in 1949, it competed with stores in The Basin supplying lunches for the The Basin Primary School and the needs of local residents.

The Williams family sold out to the Davis family in 1952 who operated it for another 10-15 years. It eventually closed and was demolished.

The Phone Box beside the store remained for several years after the store closed but was eventually removed. The Post Box was moved to near the new school crossing location.

### Wright's Store

The original store on the corner of Forest Road and Wright Street was built in the 1930's by



*Rear of Cain's Store. Circa 1933. The attached "Glideaway Hall" is on the right. Both were demolished in the 1970's. Eileen Turner standing on Mountain Highway.*

*Photo courtesy Eileen Turner.*



## Wright's Store

Gandinnie and was first known as "The Centre Store". Later owners included Davey (1933 to 1939), Weidner's (1939 to 1943) and Walker Brothers (1943 to 1950) when it became known as "Walker's Store".

In earlier days, tables and chairs and a miniature golf course (on block of land West of store) were available for use by customers. On Sundays, the store sold pies and drinks to the Sunday motorists. The store was later known as "Wright's Store" when owned by Bill and Blon Wright from 1950 to 1972 (see photo on page 13). Wright street was named after the Wrights.

The store sold a wide range of supplies, including kerosene, briquettes, groceries, stamps, wheat and bran. The public phone box near the store was the only phone in the area.

The Wright's did not just run a shop, the store was the centre of most activities in the area and open seven days a week. On a Saturday, after the football had finished and the pubs had closed, residents often waited at the store for delivery of "The Sporting Globe". (The Sporting Globe was a

small newspaper produced late on a Saturday that contained all the sporting results of the day. It was produced quickly and rushed to stores. It ceased production in the late 1990's. It was printed on pink paper.) Heated discussions between rival footy supporters sometimes occurred and many a time blows were exchanged.

Many people called in for a chat and a gossip. It was a social outing to come to the store. The store had a long veranda with chairs where people would sit and talk.

In the early 1950's, there was no reticulated electricity, but the buses ran seven days a week and late at night. Buses left from the store and people would come down at night with their hurricane lamps to see visitors off on the bus.

The Wright's raised seven children whilst running the store. Bill Wright was also involved in many local activities including the Progress Association, Fire Brigade, Football Club, The Basin Centenary Celebrations (for which he won an award) and he was a Justice of the Peace. Bill's numerous voluntary involvements makes



*Smith's Store located on the corner of Mountain Highway and Forest Road. Circa 1940. Note Sennitts Ice Cream sign, W Class tram seat near front door and petrol bowser.*

*Photo courtesy Neville Sanders.*

him one of the towns "Distinguished Residents". His profile is detailed on page 2.

In 1970, Bill had plans of upgrading the store. The plan involved leaving the old style front section of the store in its original state and rebuilding the rear to a more modern state. Blon was not keen on the idea as it meant at least another 8 years in the store. Also, preliminary discussions with the local Council on the idea were not fruitful. Bill decided to sell the store in 1972 to Peter Papageorgiou who demolished the old store and built a new store which in 2017 is the current building.

Bill and Blon retired to live in Boronia. Blon passed away in 1991.

In the early 1980's, the area in front of the store was sealed and a parking area and median strip created.

In 2000, the store was internally remodelled creating a take-away food section. The owners retained the old store name by calling the take-away section "Wright's Fish and Chips". Subsequent

owners have retained this name.

### Granger's Butchers

In 1956 a butcher shop and dwelling was built by a Mr. F. Thoren on the corner of Forest Road and Conyers Street. The shop was set up and operated as a butcher by Ron Granger and his father for about one year. Roy Ritchie took over this shop in 1957.

### Ritchie's Shop

Roy Ritchie took over Grangers Butchers when he moved to The Basin with his family in 1957.

In the early 1960's he divided the shop into two shops and continued running the butcher in one. The other shop had various tenants until 1971 when he opened a milk bar in it. With the help of Mrs Radford he operated both shops until 1978 when he decided to close the butcher shop after an operation made it difficult for him to continue.

He continued to operate the milk bar with the help of Mrs Radford until early 1987 when it



*Smith's Store located on the corner of Mountain Highway and Forest Road. Circa 1945 when owned by the Poulter family. Note tennis court for hire sign and petrol bowser.*

*Photo courtesy Mrs. Poulter.*

## Ritchie's Shop

closed. Various tenants have since occupied each shop.

Over the years, Roy has been involved in many voluntary organisations in The Basin making him one of the towns "Distinguished Residents".

### Clarke's Butchers

A butcher shop run by a Mr. Bert Clarke and his daughter operated from about the years 1930 to 1934 on The Triangle a little up from The Basin Progress Hall on Mountain Highway. He also home delivered meat and sometimes carved it up on the spot on his chopping block in the back of his vehicle.

Before opening his shop, Mr. Clarke was em-

ployed felling trees in Doongalla, digging the "1 in 20" road (Mountain Highway) and at the saw-mill in The Ravine.

Mr. Clarke closed his butcher shop due to ill health. Another butcher opened sometime later across the road and a house was built on and used as a residence. In this house, Bill Borthwick lived for a time. He later became an M.P.

Another resident of this house was a Mrs. Theresa Woodyatt. She was lost in the hills for a couple of days around 1948. Search parties were organised and she was found in the gully behind where the water tank in Bayview Crescent is now located. She was carried down the hill to Walker's (Wright's) store where she was bathed and fed.

### A Glimpse of History at The Basin Store

"We had looked at, at least nine country stores but when we walked into the The Basin Corner Store, we knew immediately it was the one we wanted. There was a wholesome country store aura about the place, from the large blocks of cheese to the barrels of wheat," said Mary Youl, and her husband Keith agreed.

It was 1955 when they took over the lease from the owner, Mr Horsfield.

"The shop was nearly falling down," Keith added, "but we could see the potential of the people and the area. We were promised all sorts of improvements and maintenance but they never happened. Our lease was for five years so I suppose the owner thought it was a waste of money. Anyway, with no experience, a large mortgage and three small children, Bruce, seven, Nerida five and Glenda three, we took on the challenge. It was a wonderful experience for us and the children and we never regretted it."

"The store was a weatherboard building," Mary explained. "With a verandah around the front with seats and a hitching rail. Attached to the shop at the back were two bedrooms and a living room. We only had one power point in the residence and were always blowing the fuse by overloading, but we were lucky to have power. It only went a short way up the hill. Consequently, we had a marvellous trade in kerosene for the first year or two until the power supply was extended."

According to Mary, she and Keith

endeavoured to supply the local community with all their needs.

"If people wanted it we got it. Keith used to go down every Saturday morning to the baker in Boronia and bring back trays of freshly baked sticky buns. There would be a queue waiting for them."

They had a newsagency, bank and dry-cleaning agencies. They sold stock food, knitting wool, children's clothing, haberdashery, hardware, a huge range of groceries and delicatessen products, and had a petrol bowser out the front. Gumboots were a great seller and most of the stock for the shop came up by train.

"Keith would pick up things from the station in our bottle green Austin A40, and of course he had to go down to get the papers off the train. There was always a social gathering outside the shop on the verandah waiting for the last edition of the Herald and the Sporting Globe on Saturday nights," Mary said. "We had a gentlemen's agreement with the people across the road in the milk bar and didn't stock things that they sold."

Mary obviously has a kind heart because the store stocked comics that were well read but never sold, and when she ran out of broken biscuits to sell to the children she would break some of the good ones up so as not to disappoint anyone.

On weekdays, the store opened at 6 am and closed at 9 pm, with an hour off for lunch between 12 o'clock and 1

pm. Saturday, they closed at midday but opened in the evening for the papers. Sunday was supposed to be a holiday but urgent requests were seldom refused.

Keith used to do deliveries to Ferndale, Boronia, down the Ravine and up to Doongalla.

Thinking back, Keith said, "Sometimes I thought that little A40 would never get back out of The Ravine. It was a terrible climb. Especially in winter on the unmade muddy roads."

The Basin in the 50's and 60's was the first home for many new arrivals from overseas.

"Wonderful people," Mary said. "We had our language problems but always seemed to sort out what was wanted. Everyone was so honest to. We had no fences and no security. Our lock for the front door of the store was a chair or a ladder propped against it on the inside. When we left the business in the 60's we were not owed one penny."

"When we first took over the business, we realised we were the interlopers and had to be accepted by the locals so we let them show us how things were run. We handled practically no cash and what we did came mainly from passing trade. Every family had a book into which we wrote their purchases, and then on pay day or endowment day, all the accounts were settled. It was a good arrangement that suited everyone."

### Howe's Greengrocers

In the 1950's a shop was built in Forest Road, roughly opposite where the scout hall is now located. This shop was first operated as "Howe's Greengrocers" by Mr. Howe.

In 1962, the business, which was then a milk bar, was taken over by Mrs Radford. In 1970, it was sold back to Mr Howe who continued to operate it for a year or two before closing. It then became the Forest Lodge Restaurant which closed in 1997.

### Main Shopping Centre

In 1963, The Basin's shopping facilities were greatly increased when a centre of 13 shops was built, organised by Pages Real Estate. The tenants have changed over the years but have included a chemist, butcher, grocer, hardware, fish and chips, draper, bread shop, greengrocer, milk bar, hairdresser, newsagency and doctor's surgery. The first fish and chips shop in The Basin was opened by Albert Foggitt in this centre.

### The Basin Central

The Basin Central opened in 1985 in Forest Road opposite Church Street on the site which was once the petrol station operated by Thompson. The complex consists of four shops which have been occupied with various tenants over the years.

### Chemist Shop

George Leake has the distinction of being the longest serving shop proprietor in The Basin, having operated the chemist shop from 1963 to 1999, a total of 36 years.

George retired in 1999 and closed the chemist shop. The Basin Progress Association organised a function for George where members of The Basin community paid their respects to George for his service over the years. Over 100 people attended the function where George was presented with awards from The Basin Progress Association and The Basin Rotary.



*Langdon's Store on Mountain Highway near Clevedon. Circa 1940.  
Photo courtesy Mrs. Langdon.*

## Petrol Stations

### Petrol Stations

#### Thompson

The Thompson family ran a horse cab service between Boronia and The Basin in the 1910's. The base for this operation was their property on Mountain Highway near where St. Bernadettes School is now located. This service was mainly operated by Mr Thompson Senior (Alfred). Due to poor returns he changed to Bayswater station but was in competition with Bert Piergrosse and was driven out.

Returning to Boronia, he was in competition with Vere Page who later concentrated on land sales.

In the 1920's he built a small shop on land opposite Church Street on Forest Road. Initially, the shop was an estate agent and later a shoe repair business ran by Mr Hall.

In the 1930's, he built a garage on the site (see photo on page 17) and called it The Basin

garage. The garage had a dirt floor. Later on, an extension was built on the RH side with a wooden floor. The garage was also a depot for hire cars. The Thompson family siblings, Alf, Dick, Edith and Ernie, ran various aspects of the business.

In the 1953, the garage was sold to Frank Cook and his son Maurice.

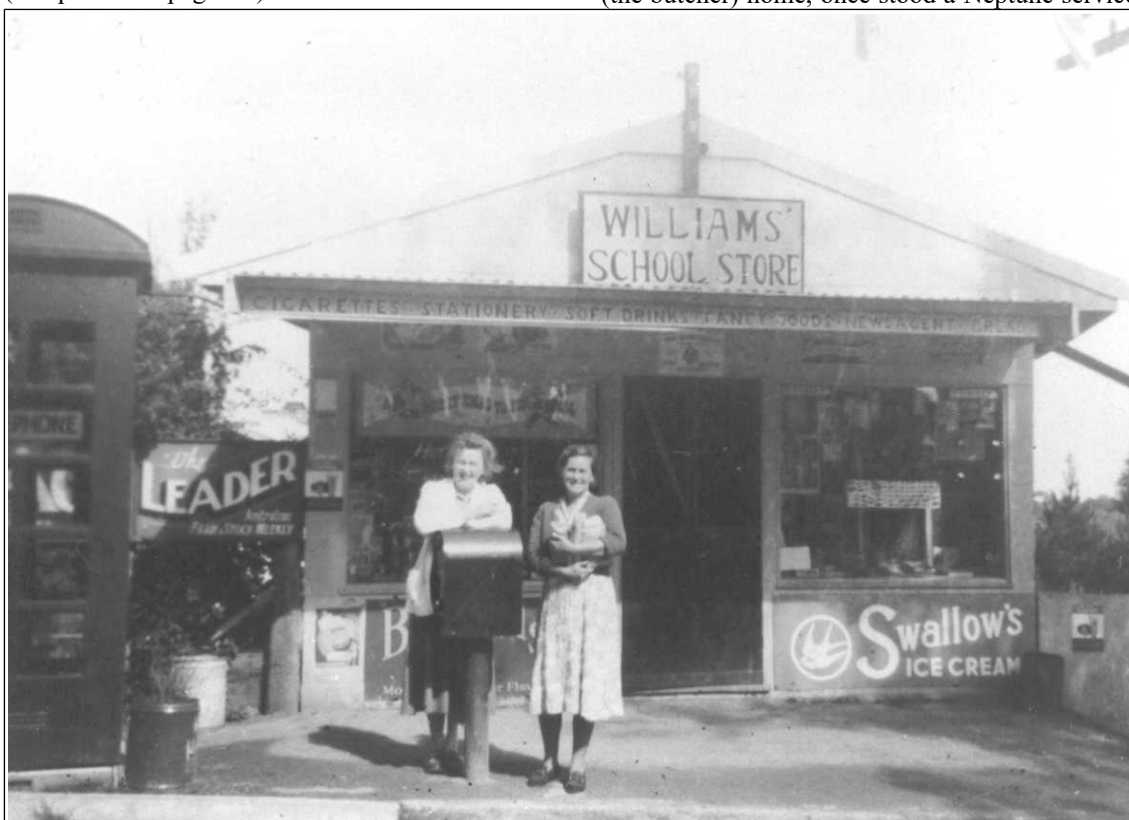
#### Cook

In 1961-62 Frank Cook built a service station on the corner of Miller's Road and Mountain Highway and then closed the one in The Basin that he purchased from the Thompsons. They later sold the business to the Parr family.

In 1997, this station was demolished and a modern new service station erected complete with car wash.

#### Benson

Around the early 1950's, in Mountain Highway, adjacent to the "Glideaway" in front of Clarke's (the butcher) home, once stood a Neptune service



*The School Store located opposite The Basin Primary School in Mountain Highway. Circa 1950. Alice Williams leaning on Post Box, Beatrice Henderson beside her.*

*Photo courtesy Eddie Williams.*



station owned by Benson. It is thought this station was only open for about five years.

### **Vanderlee**

In 1965, a new service station was built on the corner of Mountain Highway and Old Forest Road where a milk bar once operated. It was rented by the Cook family who had customers at both service stations. The mechanics and the Cooks working wherever needed. Fritz Vanderlee took over the business. Later owners included Hart and Riley.

In 2009, the station stopped selling fuel and concentrated on mechanical repairs and tyres and became known as Hillview Motors run by Ian Hedrich.

In 2016, Ian moved his repair business to another location.

### **The Basin Store**

Early photographs show petrol bowsters outside the shop but it is not known when the store stopped selling fuel.

## **Dairies**

### **Hornby's Dairy**

Hornby's Dairy, run by Victor Hornby, operated between about 1926/27 and 1936/37 at 310 Forest Road almost opposite Carnarvon Avenue.

He was a notable yachtsman before coming to the district. His yacht "Nauroi" won several events around Port Phillip Bay in the 1922-1924 period. Victor purchased 2 or 3 blocks of land along Forest Road and built a holiday house there. He saw an opening for a dairy and moved here full-time.

The Dairy had a garage and a small grazing area. The garage had "Junction Dairy" painted on the doors. At first he grazed and milked his own 2 cows supplemented with milk obtained from the Salvation Army. He also obtained milk from Colliers in Colchester Road. Later, he did not milk his own cows.

The dairy was also known as the "Basin Dairy" (painted on the milk cart). See photo on page 15).



*Wright's Store on the corner of Forest Road and Wright Street. Circa 1960.  
Photo courtesy Bill Wright.*

## Hornby's Dairy

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Victor did milk rounds on his cart and his son, Russell (born 1928), did a milk round with a lidded pail before school.

The dairy ceased operating when local shops began selling milk.

### Day's Dairy

Les Day is one local business man whom few people were up early enough to see. Les was the "milko" in The Basin for about 40 years, from the days when every household had their milk delivered to the front gate.

After his discharge from the Air Force in 1945, he began delivering to The Basin by horse-drawn cart, when Brown's Dairy of Boronia had three delivery men. By 1975, there were 16 carts criss-crossing the foothills. In that year Brown's sold out to Model Dairies and home deliveries were discontinued. Delivery contractors were hired to deliver to shops, cafes and commercial premises.

For many years after then, Les did runs from The Basin to Tremont, Monbulk and Belgrave, with two trucks working from midnight to early morning.

### Salvation Army

The Salvation Army home in The Basin is known to have supplied milk at various times to local dairies. The home has from time to time grazed dairy cows and had their own milking machines.

For more than 30 years around the 1920's, the wagon that delivered milk was driven by a man known as "Old Sarge", a familiar sight in The Basin.

## Restaurants

### Moonshiners

The Moonshiners opened in the early 1970's in the shop once known as Youl's Store on Forest Road opposite the Fire Station. The restaurant provided entertainment and by the mid 1970's was very well patronised, particularly on a Wednesday evening when folk singing was introduced.

The Moonshiners closed in 1998.

### Forest Lodge

The Forest Lodge restaurant opened in the shop once known as Howe's greengrocer on Forest Road opposite the Fire Station. It closed in the mid 1990's.

### Calendula

Situated in the old Moonshiners building in Forest Road, Calendula opened in 2001 operated by Kate Hall and Jamie Liebe. It closed in the late 2000's.

### Oak Tree Tavern

Started in 2000 by Mal Leather in a converted shop in The Basin Central.

In 2005, the business was purchased by Jane Flanagan.

In 2008, the business was purchased by Barry Valentine.

### Acorn on Forest

In 2001, Mal and Aileen Leather opened the Acorn on Forest in the building once occupied by Forest Lodge which was originally known as Howe's greengrocer.

Based on a British pub theme, it provides meals and special entertainment events throughout the year

In 2015, the business was sold to good friends Suzanne and Ross Mackintosh.

## Small Businesses

### Walker's Estate Agency

Mrs. Helen Walker operated a Real Estate Agency from around 1950 to 1965 in Mountain Highway, just up from Wicks Road.

The agency was in a small building at the front of a house.

### Les Greenwell

Les Greenwell lived on the corner of Forest Road and Harrison Street and grew sprouts on the property for a few years. From around 1960 to 1973 he specialised in making sprout cases and had a case making factory there. Les was a familiar figure around The Basin with his faithful old horse, Bob. Later, he pensioned off Bob and purchased a truck for making deliveries.

Many of The Basin youngsters earned pocket money working in the case making factory. Les was also the local scrap dealer. On the opposite side of Forest Road, on the Stuart Street corner he also operated a wood merchant yard from around 1950 to 1960.

## Industries

For a community to hold its settlers and to gradually grow, a source of employment is necessary. Obviously the farms, nurseries and orchards have

kept many families together but various other ways of turning a coin have been found.

### Flower and Fruit Growers

In the early years, The Basin was a prodigious producer of a variety of flowers and fruits.

Boronia was introduced to the district well before World War One and William Chandler is credited with propagating the first Boronia in The Basin district. Others of the Chandler family including John and Don Maguire, Alfred Chandler and John Chandler grew Boronia. Wally Goodwin grew Boronia on his property on the corner of Millers road and Mountain Highway but later changed to growing apples. Production was at its peak in the district in the 1920's and 30's. There was a setback in 1932 when a rust disease decimated most of the Boronia in the area.

The variety of Boronia that was principally grown was the Boronia Megistigma (sweet smelling brown Boronia). It was not a striking flower, but had a beautiful scent that made it pop-

ular. It was marketed as a cut flower and sent state wide and interstate.

Daffodils and Liliums were grown by Michael Spry on his property in The Basin. In 1964 he was awarded the Australian Daffodil Championship and was once president of the Australian Lilium society.

Daffodils were also grown by Don Maguire on a property in Old Coach Road.

A variety of fruits were grown on the Dobson property in Liverpool Road and apples on the land around Gravenstein Crescent before it was subdivided.

Lemons were grown in the 1930's by the Beaumont's on their property on the slopes below Ferndale. The Crawfords also managed lemon orchards on a property off Old Coach Road from about the 1950's to the 1980's.

### Como Nurseries

William Chandler selected property in The Basin in 1873, after consultation with his friend Baron



*Victor Hornby in his milk cart with Hornby's Dairy in the background. Circa 1940. The dairy was in Forest Road almost opposite Carnarvon Avenue. Photo courtesy Russell Hornby.*



Von Mueller. Previously he worked with his father William in his nursery and market garden in Glenferrie Road, Malvern which was established in the 1850's. William Chandlers selected property was bounded by The Basin-Olinda road, Sheffield road and Doongalla road. William and later generations grew vegetables, fruit and flowers on The Basin property and is credited with propagating the first Boronia in the district.

William and his wife Kate had eleven children, most of whom worked on the property until they married, when they were given land, mostly in The Basin/Kilsyth areas. William died in 1911 and the property was inherited by brothers Wref and Bert who conducted a partnership which became unsatisfactory. Bert purchased Wref's share in 1919. It was around this time that the concept of a specialised nursery was conceived and began development. This nursery became known as "Como Nurseries" after the name given to the Chandlers second house, which was built in the 1870's.

Bert and Jessie had three sons, Fergus, Geoff and John. Not long after Jessie's death in 1931, the two elder sons found it necessary to leave Como. John, after finishing school at Burnley Horticultural College, worked continuously at Como, only being away for the three years he spent in the A.I.F. during the Second World War. In 1948, Bert after helping his two older sons in business and to obtain part of the original Como property, formed a partnership with John as Bert Chandler & Son.

The association of Bert and John was always a close one from the mid thirties. They both had a deep love of the property, their vocation and enjoyed working together improving Como Nurseries, collecting new plants and propagating less common trees and shrubs which they shared with friends and sold to the public.

By the time of Bert's death in 1970, Como Nurseries was a well known and respected nursery. John inherited the property from his father's estate and soon after formed a company called "Bert Chandler & Son Pty. Ltd., Como Nurseries" with his wife Margaret and family. The family were all given shares in the new company.

In 1976, a six acre display garden was created at the "Mail Bag Corner" paddock at the corner of Basin-Olinda and Sheffield Roads and named by

the family the "Bert Chandler Gardens". The garden contained a large collection of less common trees and shrubs which were collected over the years. The plants were all named and listed in a plant catalogue printed every two years so the public could find plants in which they were interested. The gardens were open every day except Christmas and Good Friday and knowledgeable staff were always on hand or available as the retail sales were conducted from the garden.

Como Nurseries was requested by the newly formed Ornamental Plant Collections Association. Inc., to have the *Prunus Serrulata* collection and also applied for the *Magnolia* collection. The Association also requested that the Bert Chandler Gardens be used as the venue for the official launching of the Ornamental Plant Collections Association. Inc., the headquarters of which are established at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Melbourne.

The gardens were made available to people wanting to have their weddings in the grounds and were becoming popular with plant lovers both local, interstate and overseas. Walking tracks were formed up along the creek with its fern gully and up the hill through natural bush where maiden-hair fern has grown for over 100 years.

A number of outstanding plants came out of Como Nurseries over the years. Two of note are firstly, *Pieris Japonica* Bert Chandler. This plant originated in a tray of seedlings grown by Bert, as a tiny thing less than 1 cm tall. It had a pale leaf which went yellow and most people at this stage would pull it out as being a freak or sick. Bert saved it. Immediately after the Second World War the first stock was propagated by layering and Bert named it *Pieris Japonica* Chandleri.

When it was finally produced in quantity, a plant was sent to Hilliers Nurseries, Winchester, England. Mr. Hillier wrote back and asked if the name could be changed to *Pieris Japonica* Bert Chandler to comply with the new International nomenclature laws that were being formed around the world. Another nurseryman, Mr. Cyril Isaacs requested permission from Bert to nominate it for a Gold Medal from the Federation of Australian Nurseryman. This was awarded in 1964. This plant is now grown and catalogued in many countries around the world.

The second outstanding plant to the history is

a Magnolia imported from England in 1956. This plant takes 18 years to flower and was not found true to its name; it was a garden hybrid which was regarded unusual at the time. The Magnolia grows into a beautiful upright plant with magnificent mauve-pink flowers 25-30 cm in diameter. After consultation with an International authority on Magnolias, it was named "Magnolia Como".

John and Archibald Chandler also developed special Boronia seedling types that were accepted by the Australian Cultivator Registrar. These were the Red Megastigma Boronia.

One of the most pleasing features of the Chandlers over the years was the close association and friendship with their staff.

In 1988 it became apparent that Como Nurseries could not continue with all family members being involved and sadly it was agreed that the only solution was for Como Nurseries to be sold. John made the announcement to the staff on 5 September 1988. A local lad who started with the Chandlers in 1978 directly from school, Mark Hall, was appointed new manager.

After 117 years, Como Nurseries no longer belonged to the Chandler family. John Chandler moved out of the area.

In the early 1990's the remaining Chandler property was subdivided. Two one acre allotments were created on the corner of The Basin-Olinda road and Sheffield road. A 15 acre allotment incorporating the Bert Chandler Gardens was sold in 1996 to George and Pat Hetrel. Over the next two years they built a home overlooking a man-made lake. A large shed was built to house a large historical car collection and motor memorabilia.

In consultation with John Chandler, they rejuvenated the Bert Chandler Gardens that were originally created by John in 1976. A miniature train track was constructed that runs through the gardens and over trestle bridges which cross the creeks that pass through the property.

They have opened the gardens to the public on many occasions

### Locksley Textiles

Bob and Jean Harrison bought the 10 acres of land in Mountain Highway, The Basin in about



*Thompson's garage on Forest Road opposite Church Street, Circa 1930's. Dick Thompson in photo.  
Photo courtesy Mrs Dick Thompson*

## Locksley Textiles

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1937 or 1938. Bob was a sales rep for Noel P Hunt & Co, textile machinery agents. When WWII started he was rejected for military service and put in charge of machinery parts procurement to keep the textile industry going in Australia, South Africa and New Zealand for the war effort. It was impossible to get new parts from Britain as they were likely to end up at the bottom of the ocean thanks to German U boats. Bob had an inventory of all machinery parts, new and second-hand, held by all textile mills in Australia and New Zealand. He was able to issue orders for their compulsory acquisition for the war effort and have them shipped to where they were required to keep vital machinery running.

In 1947 Bob and Jean decided to start a textile mill at The Basin. As there had been no industry in The Basin or Bayswater this was the first real "industry" in the whole area. As building materials were still in short supply because of the war, he purchased an old barn at Cranbourne, had

it dismantled, transported to The Basin and erected.

Six Crabtree (basic pick and pick) weaving looms and a warp mill and creel were purchased from a mill in Sale. The first contracts were for the supply of army blankets for the military as they were in short supply. All blankets sent overseas with troops were never brought back. Many thousands were produced. Blankets for the domestic market were also produced for the well known brands "Laconia" and "Invicta".

The business grew fairly quickly and a new factory was built around the old barn. More modern looms capable of creating complex fashion fabrics were purchased. Bobs wife Jean worked in the mill as a weaver. Eldest son Robert (jnr.) joined the mill when he left school in 1955 aged 15.

As the demand for blankets fell, the old pick and pick looms were used for weaving of cotton cleaning cloths. Two carding machines and a pair

### Jim Stephens – A Worker at Locksley Textiles

In about 1959-60 I was employed by Mr Harrison to work as a store-man at his textile factory in Mountain Highway, The Basin. Having recently got a contract with a large woollen mill that would mean handling great quantities of baled wool and tons of spun threads, as well as completed cloth, he needed a new store-man. My wage was £15 a week (\$30).

At this time the company took the name of Locksley Textiles where previously it had been known locally only as Harrison's Mill. The factory building was expanding and although the spinning area was open to the winds it gradually became weatherproof.

The storeroom was my concern and the store-keeping duties were varied and interesting, but when things were quiet I often worked on the winders and in other areas.

Wool came in huge bales. It was put through the machines and spun into thread which was sometimes sent away as thread and sometimes woven into fabric.

For some time the Harrison's did the basic weaving of blanket material which was then sent elsewhere for completion of the blankets. We also pro-

duced finer Jersey material made from much thinner thread. Half this thread was spun normally and the other half spun in reverse. In weaving, each second thread was reverse spun.

We used a variety of wools, some pure wool, some included re-used wool and some had artificial fibres. For along time we also wove and cut into long, two foot wide strips, an absorbent cotton material which, when returned to the Melbourne manufacturing company, was cut and hemmed into dish-cloths.

The looms held up to 200 or 300 feet of cloth in a run, with a shipment consisting of up to thirty lengths of cloth.

In my second year of employment at Harrison's, my wages were increased to £16 a week. There were times when an evening shift was necessary, but not regularly. Much of the spinning was done at night.

During the twenty years of Locksley's operation, employment must have been provided for a great many local people. There were probably about twenty people employed by Harrison's in the two years of my employment. Some of whom I recall were Mr and Mrs Harrison in the office, weavers

Alice Galloway, (?) Galloway, Mrs Kable, Mrs Rothwell and Mrs Chick. Winders Mrs Thoren, Mrs Galloway, (?) Beale and spinners Pierre (?), Mr Foggett and his daughter. Loom turner/mechanic Bill Girvan, Warper Robert Harrison (who was later killed on the Boronia railway crossing soon after duplication of the line) and tea lady Mrs Bates (Mrs Harrison's mother).

Unfortunately, when the 1961 credit squeeze began, things become tough for Locksley and the textile industry in general.

Over several months many thing were trialled to keep the business going. We tried making special wool for carpets but because the carpet company was unable to pay regularly, this project was abandoned. Another trial job was making wool hanks for use in lubricating railway trucks. The hank was designed to have one end in a bath of oil while the other end rested on the axle and thus kept it oiled.

During this time, many members of staff had to be laid off and I was among the last to go when the business was forced to close.

of spinning mules were added, allowing for the conversion of raw wool to yarn.

By 1956 Locksley Textiles employed 100 people and worked 24 hours a day and Bob took on a partner to facilitate further expansion. Promised performance from the partner in securing new contracts fell short of expectation. In 1959 Bob sold his remaining share in the business to a colleague of his partner.

Christmas 1960, Bob and Jean decided on a “tree change” to a small farmlet at Glenburn, moving in March 1961. In April 1961 son Robert was killed on Boronia railway level crossing. Ironically, mother Jean had been hit by a train on the same crossing in 1952.

A credit squeeze in 1961 saw Locksley Textiles go to the wall. Bob and Jean were never paid for the final share of the business sold. Expecting this to pay for their little farm and their retirement, they returned to Melbourne and rejoined the workforce once again in the textile industry.

Bob and Jean finally retired in 1979 aged 75 and 61 respectively, moving back to the farm at Glenburn which had become a weekenders for many years. Jean passed away in March 1986 aged 69, Bob finally succumbed in October 1995 aged 91.

### Lowline Industries

Les Lowe, the founder of Lowline Industries, started his business in 1946 as Lowline Canopies. He first built plywood canopies in his parents back yard in Croydon eventually building a factory on the site. He then manufactured plywood, fibreglass and aluminium canopies, sun visors, tow bars, bull bars and roof racks.

In the late 1950's he branched out into selling caravans which were becoming popular. In 1962, Les purchased an existing caravan yard in Ringwood and started LowLine Caravans, Sales and Hire. Canvas work was a speciality at this site. Sales did not suit Les, so he concentrated on hiring caravans.

In 1974, he purchased the 10 acre site in The Basin that was once Locksley Textiles. He sold 6 acres, retaining the 4 acres that included the original Locksley Textiles factory, and moved his Lowline Canopies business to this site.

In the 1980's, he moved Lowline Caravans to The Basin site and merged the two businesses to become Lowline Industries.

Les Lowe passed away on the 10th November 1998 at the age of 75. His son Dennis took then over the business and his daughter Jayne worked in the office.

Up to 2014 Lowline Industries produce high quality canopies, roof racks and hire caravans, pop tops and camper trailers. They had the largest hire fleet in the Metropolitan area.

In 2014, the business closed and it was intended that the land be subdivided for housing.

### Dunlops and FibreMakers

In 1952, Dunlop's Aviation Division was opened in Bayswater. British Nylon Spinners (first known as Fibremakers) opened in November 1958, and at the time employed a large number of people from The Basin.

### Logging and Sawmills

Scars are still evident on some properties around The Basin Olinda Road and Old Coach road when logging cleared most of this area in the 1860's.

There was a sawmill in The Ravine that operated between 1919 and 1923. In the 1990's, the property that was the site of the mill still had the scars of the mill visible and traces of sawdust could be found. Nearby, were the original houses of the paymaster and the mill workers. Apparently, the mill was a good source of Blackwood Timber. Timber in and out of the mill was carted along the “Mill Track” which ran from Claremont Avenue around the back of Clevedon onto the The Basin-Olinda Road.

In 1992, Doris Langdon (Mrs Fountain) remembers playing in the heaps of sawdust as a child about 1924/1925 but the mill was no longer there.

*“There was quite a big bush-fire over in Mackenzies today, it started at the place where they are building the Mill to saw timber, the mill hands were beating it out.”*

Janet Dobson Diary 7/11/1919

*“The big engine went up to the saw-mill today, drawn by 6 horses. I am afraid a saw mill will spoil the look of the mountain.”*

Janet Dobson Diary 12/11/1919

*“At dinner time a big bush-fire started up in Ferndale and came down towards uncle's orchard”.*

*They went over and all Mr Griffiths men and Uncle Arthur, Mr Agar and several others burnt a*

## Logging and Sawmills

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*break along the Mill track. They carted the mill wood through Jack's paddock.*

*They had to work hard to keep it from Mr Grumont's house. It got very close to Meadways house, there were over a dozen men beating it back.*

*It got into Maguire's cut scrub and it looked something grand at night, we could see our shadows, it was the light from the fire."*

Janet Dobson Diary 23/2/1920

After Doongalla was burnt in 1932, 279 hectares of the property was sold to four Smith brothers in 1935 for 2,000 pounds. They built a saw mill initially sited behind the ruined house and over the years logged much of the unburnt mountain ash and messmate which remained on the property.

About 30 metres up from the last bus terminal in Mountain Highway there was once a log loading bay used when the slopes of One Tree Hill were last logged in the 1930's. Traces of the bullock track that the logs were drawn along could still be found in the 1990's.

The name "One Tree Hill" is shown on the 1868 map of the Dandenongs created by John Hardy. It is also referenced in one of his field books.

### Quarries

#### Mountain Highway

Along Mountain Highway opposite Beresford Road, there was once a quarry on John James Millers land. In the 1930's and 40's there was a large hole in the roadside bank. When the Melrose Estate was created the quarry was filled in and is not visible except that the roadside fence has a peculiar bend around the site.

#### Rosney's Land

Rosney's land ran north from the original Cobblestone Road to Sassafras just opposite Griffith's land. The Cobblestone Road would have required maintenance and it is thought that there was a small quarry on the corner of Ferndale Road and The Basin-Olinda Road because there are a few dug-out sections in the bank.

#### The Basin Primary School

There was once a small quarry on the edge of the school grounds on Liverpool Road. Remnants of this were once visible between the staff car park and the road. In the 1930's there were holes and

loose rocks visible which have since been covered.

*"The council is having the road over the old quarry near the school formed and metalled. It has never been done before"*

(Janet Dobson Diary 9<sup>th</sup> October 1919).

### Depression Workers

During the 1930's, depression days work was long and hard. One nursery worker was paid one shilling and three pence for picking 20,000 daffodils.

Some became sustenance workers working for the Government. The stone wall on Mountain Highway was built by these men, as were many local roads including Old Forest Road.

The sustenance scheme was established for the relief of individuals able and willing to work but unable to find employment. The scheme was managed by the Employment Council of Victoria (from 1932) and relief committees were created throughout Victoria.

Sustenance payments were made on the basis of eight shillings (10 cents) six pence (5 cents) per week for man and wife with an additional one shilling and six pence per week for each additional child up to a maximum of 20 shillings 6 pence per week. In addition, each approved individual was provided with an identification card which enabled him to gain groceries, meat, bread and milk for a four week period through nominated shopkeepers selected by the individual. Sustenance also included the provision of babies' food, clothing and footwear for school children, firewood and rental assistance.

Only unemployed applicants who resided in Victoria for three or more months prior to application and were not found to have refused any opportunities for employment were eligible to apply.

In return for sustenance, male applicants were required to perform work for the municipality.

### Gold

There is no official record of large amounts of gold having been discovered in The Basin area. However, there have been traces of gold found in some of the local streams and shafts have been sunk into some of the nearby mountains.

A miner named Gaunt sunk some shafts on the northern side of Schneider's Hill but do not locate any gold veins. It is thought that he dug the shafts after some traces of gold were discovered

in Old Joes Creek which sources in that area.

A nugget of gold was once discovered by a Miss Hayes between Hazel Dell and Sassafras. Miss Hayes lived at Hazel Dell around 1890 with her parents who ran Hazel Dell as a guest house. It is reported that she was walking up a track after a heavy rain and noticed the nugget on the track. Hazel Dell was located on a well-used packhorse track to the top of the Dandenongs and it is most likely that this nugget had fallen from the pack of a miner using the track as no other gold has been found in this area.

Specks of gold have been found in Dobsons Creek which sources behind Hazel Dell and runs alongside the Basin-Olinda road, across the Salvation Army flats and into the Dandenong Creek. The creek was sluiced, but no gold was discovered.

### **Other Small Industries**

A guitar and mandolin manufacturer once operated in Church Street in the building known as "The Glideaway" and turned out about 50 – 60 instruments a month.

From 1942 to 1958, the Fellina Swim Suit Co. and Row clothing factory operated in the Glideaway building and employed up to 10 people making clothing and swimsuits. In 1958, they relocated to the CBD.

In 1958, a clothing company called "Prudence Jane" rented the "Glideaway". Prudence Jane was owned by Dick and Joan Townley who had been previously operating the business from their home in Montrose. They had introduced and popularised the bikini into Australia. Benches, sewing machines and the like, were moved in and more staff sought. This gave employment to a number of local women and young girls, many of whom went on to become professional designers or dressmakers.

In 1958 the 'Glideaway' building was owned by Harold and Ruby Bennett, so it wasn't surprising their daughters Shirley and Lynette started with 'Prudence Jane'. Shirley cut and stitched glamorous outfits for some of the TV stars, including Pilita and Helen Reddy. Typically, they were figure-hugging designs, often with a frilly fishtail below. At the new, enlarged premises, business continued to flourish and a new range of children's wear was being made and marketed through the exclusive "Banbury Cross" shop at 47

Collins Street, Melbourne.

Sabrina, a well known English actress and model at the time, once modelled bikinis in the Glideaway. It was early January 1959, and the sleepy hollow of The Basin shimmered in the summer heat, when Ted Harris, aged 13 and on school holidays, glimpsed a vivid pink Vauxhall (with leopard skin patterned upholstery) coming along the Mountain Highway. As it drew closer, followed by several other cars, someone shouted, 'Hey, it's Sabrina,' and within a minute or so kids and adults came out to look.

They were right, the big pink Vauxhall, with photographer Laurie Kimber driving, pulled up outside the 'Prudence Jane' factory at the old dance hall. Pandemonium erupted in the little village as word spread and reached a young motor engineer, George Russell. He grabbed a couple of his mates and they set off in a tray truck, others running along and jumping aboard as word spread: 'Sabrina's at Prudence Jane!!'.

The business boomed until 1963 when a credit squeeze forced the business to close.

### **More Information Required**

1. History of The Oak Tree Tavern.
2. History of The Acorn on Forest.

### **Sources of Information**

- "The Basin Centenary booklet" - Ron Ikin.
- "Fire on the Hill, Flowers on the Valley" - Rick Coxhill.
- "A Fragrant Story" - booklet by Don Maguire about growing of Boronia in the district.
- Current and former residents for information and photographs. In particular, John Chandler for information on Como Nurseries. Jim and Barbara Stephens for general information, Emily Stephen for information on Smith's store and the Lolly Lady, Jeanette Ericson for information and photographs of Smith's barn, Eddie Williams for information on the School Store, Kate Lowe for information on Lowline Industries. Bill Wright for information on Wright's Store.
- The Boronia and The Basin Community newsletter for information on the Glideaway, Locksley Textiles and Youl's Store.
- Newspaper clipping for information on Locksley Textiles.
- Newspaper clippings for information on Wright's Store.
- John Fleming for information on "Prudence

## Sources of Information

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Jane” from an article in The Australian Photographic Collector's Society.

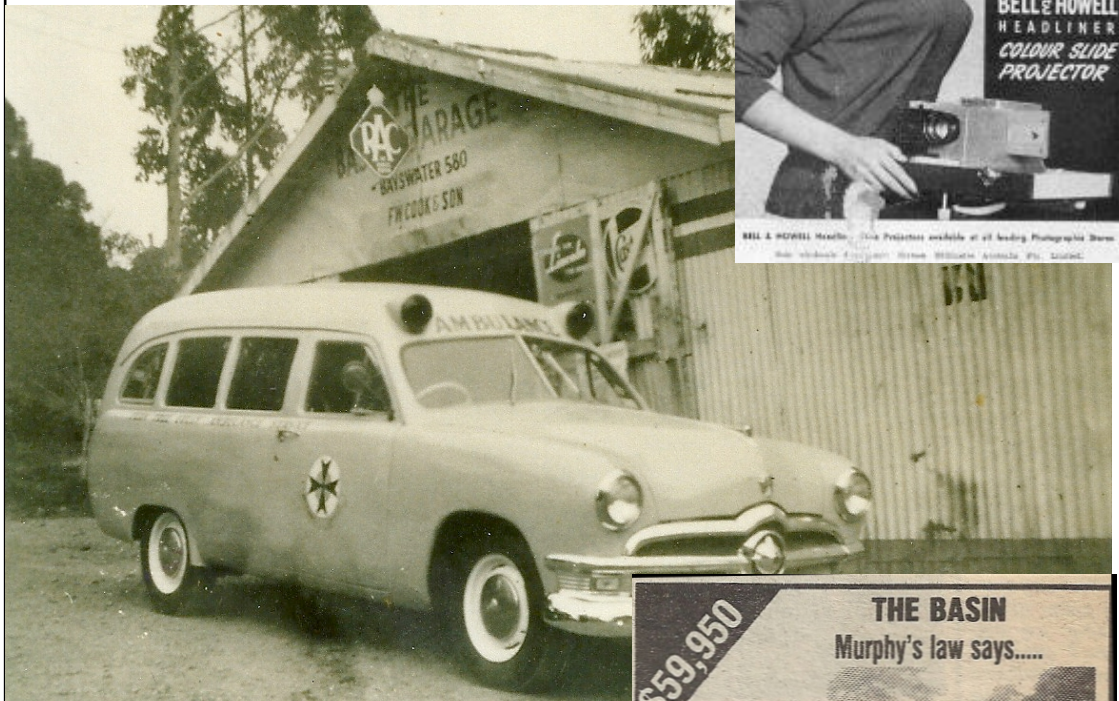


## Media Items on the Internet

### LETTER BOX AT BASIN

A new letter box has been installed next to the telephone booth outside Langdon's Store at The Basin.

The box which is cleared at 3.45 p.m. each day is proving of great advantage to residents and visitors.



### BIKINI SWIM SUITS

New Styles for Sun and Sea  
Prices from £3/10/6

Catalogue Available

Men's Continental Trunks,  
£2/10/6.

### PRUDENCE JANE

"CALULU"  
MT. DANDENONG ROAD,  
MONTROSE, VICTORIA.

and for that ultra suntan "P.J."  
models use and recommend.

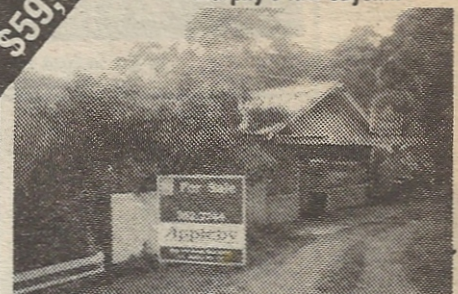
*Surf Club* SUNTAN  
OIL



"Romper," £4/14/6; matching jacket,  
£2/15/6.

\$59,950

### THE BASIN Murphy's law says.....



"Whatever can go wrong will go wrong". This home proves Murphy was right!! Just about every conceivable thing that could break is broken!!... but at this price you'll only be paying for the land and the cottage is FREE!!

QUICK PHONE NOW!!  
BORONIA OFFICE 762 2744 AH 800 2019



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