

# **History of The Basin**

## **Chapter 7**

### **Businesses and Industries**

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Last revised July 22, 2008**

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## Summary

This chapter details the history of businesses and industries in The Basin.

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 2008, only one still remains.

Three milk suppliers have operated in The Basin over the years and in 2008, 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 2008 the most successful would be Lowline Industries.

### 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".

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 half-penny 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.

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 and had it hauled to The Basin on

a large jinker by a team of 9 horses (see photographs on page 2).

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 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.

Later owners of the store included Poulter, Davies, Spong, Horsfield, and Youl.

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 development.

#### Youl's Store

In 1955, Keith and Mary Youl took on a five year lease on "Smith's Store" from the owner Mr Horsfield (see "A glimpse of History at The Basin Store" on page ). He promised to improve the



smith\_store\_1924

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

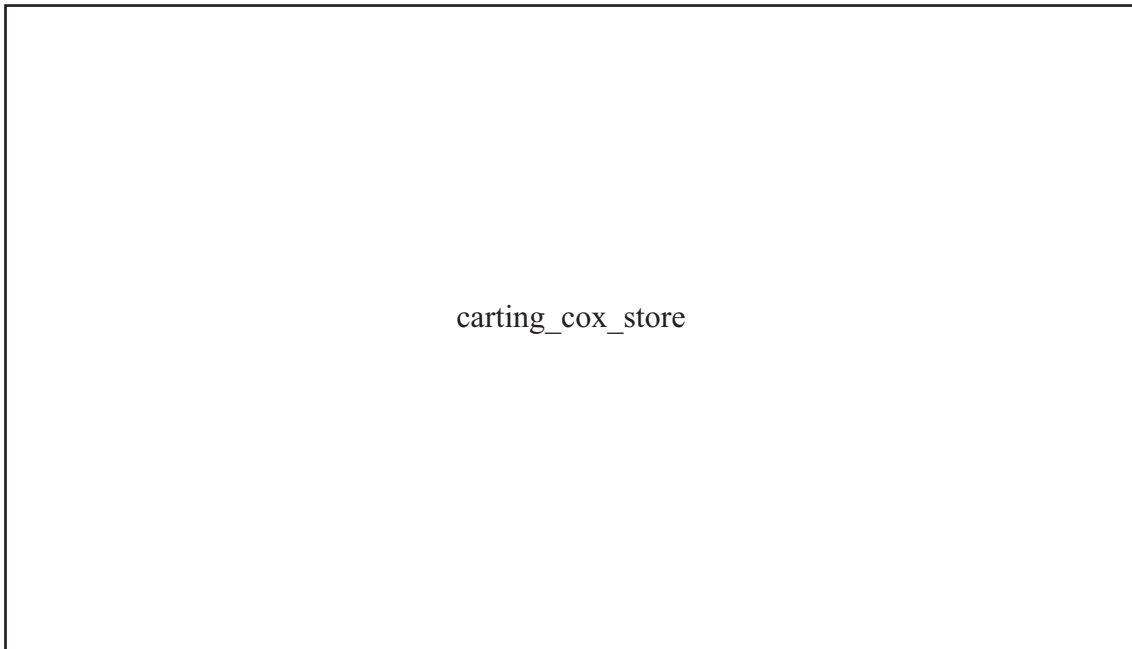
## Shops

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*Grain store near the corner of Toorak and Warrigal Road owned by Bob & Bert Cox. The store was purchased for use as a barn by R.B.Smith and carted to The Basin by a team of horses (see photo below). Photo shows store in normal operation. Circa 1926.*

*Photo courtesy Jeanette Ericson.*



*Grain store near the corner of Toorak and Warrigal Road owned by Bob & Bert Cox. The store was purchased for use as a barn by R.B.Smith and carted to The Basin by a team of horses. Photo shows store loaded on a jinker ready for hauling to The Basin by a team of nine horses. Circa 1926.*

*Photo courtesy Jeanette Ericson.*

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. The licensed grocer has been there ever since.

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 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.

### 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 kerosine 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 50s and 60s 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."

## Shops

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### 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, Koola and Lyrebird were on the walls of the shop (see photographs on page 5). 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  
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 holi-

day 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.

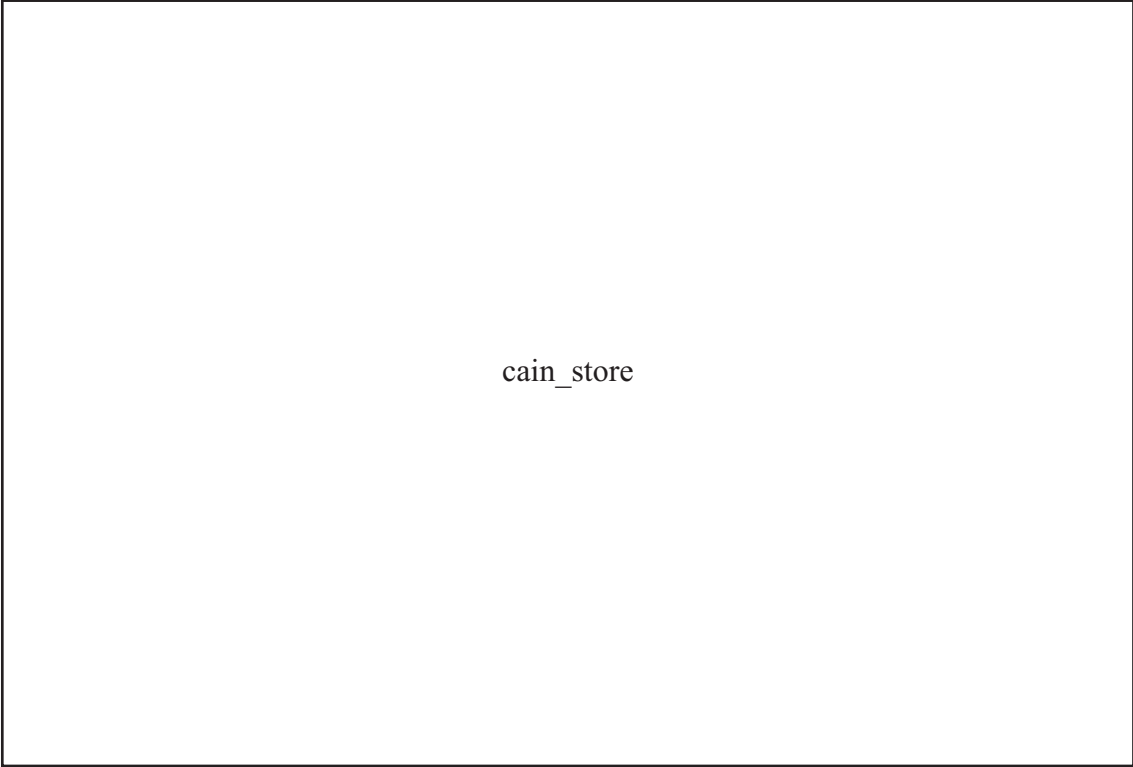
When they took over the shop and hall lease, the hall had a mini-golf course inside, complete with hills and bunkers. The Grettons removed the mini-golf course as there were many other potential uses for the hall. Mrs Gretton instigated many activities at the hall to provide entertainment for local people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



smith\_store

*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. Photograph courtesy Mrs. Poulter.*



cain\_store

*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. Photograph courtesy Ernie Gretton.*



rear\_glideaway

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

## Shops

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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.

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 (see page 17).

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 McNeillys (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



school\_store

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

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 2008, the original Junction Store building was still intact.

### **Langdon’s Store**

Langdon’s Store in Mountain Highway, just up from Clevedon, was built and operated by George Langdon from 1938 to 1950 (see photograph on page 9). His mother owned the house behind the store.

In the 1920’s and 1930’s, most houses in the area were only holiday homes and “weekenders” 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, she gave him the land adjacent to her house and suggested he build a store there - which he did.

The store was taken over 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 moving to The Basin. The store closed in 1965.

### **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 6).

Built and first run by Eddie and Alice Williams in 1949, it competed with stores in The Basin supplying lunches for the 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 Gandinnie and was first known as “The Centre



langdon\_store

*Langdon’s Store on Mountain Highway near Clevedon. Circa 1940. Photograph courtesy Mrs. Langdon.*

## Shops

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Store". Later owners included Davey, Weidner's and Walker Bros when it became known as "Walker's Store".

In earlier days, tables and chairs and a miniature golf course were available for use by customers. The store was later known as "Wright's Store" when owned by Bill and Blon Wright from 1949 to 1972 (see photograph on page 9). 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 green coloured 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 mid 1970's.) 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 verandah 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 him one of the towns "Distinguished Residents". His profile is detailed on page 8.

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 2008 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 create a take-away food section. The owners retained the old store name by calling the take-away section "Wright's Fish and Chips".

### 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.

### 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 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.

### The Last Straw

Roy Ritchie, who operated a milk bar and butcher shop on the corner of Conyers Street and Forest Road for many years, is well known to local residents.

Unfortunately, Roy had a run of bad luck in his shop. The residence behind the shop was burgled a number of times, he had a brick thrown through the shop window and a car ran into the shop. The last straw was when he was robbed at knife point and decided to close the store.

### 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 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". His profile is detailed on page 12.

### Clarke's Butchers

A butcher shop run by a Mr. Clarke operated from the middle 1920's to the middle 1930's 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 employed 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

wright\_store

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

## Petrol Stations

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Walker's (Wright's) store where she was bathed and fed.

### 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 café, draper, bread shop, greengrocer, milk bar, hairdresser, newsagency and doctor's surgery.

### 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.

## 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



thompson\_garage

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

Mountain Highway near where St. Bernadettes School is now located. This service was mainly operated by Mr Thompson Senior.

In the 1930's, he built a garage opposite Church Street on Forest Road. 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 1950's, the garage was sold to the Cook family who ran it for a while and in 1962 relocated it to the corner of Miller's Road and Mountain Highway. They 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 station owned by Benson. It is thought this station was only open for about five years.

### **Vanderlee**

In 1965, a new service station on the site of the old post office was built and opened by Fritz Vanderlee. Later owners have included Hart and Riley.

In 2008, this service station is still in operation.

## **Dairies**

### **Hornby's Dairy**

Hornby's Dairy, run by Victor Hornby, operated between the early 1930's and early 1940's at 310 Forest Road almost opposite Canarvon Avenue.

Victor owned 2 or 3 blocks of land between Forest Road and Old Forest Road. The Dairy, a garage and a small grazing area, had "Junction Dairy" painted on the doors. He grazed and milked his own cow but also obtained milk from the Salvation Army.

The dairy was also known as the "Basin Dairy" (painted on the milk cart). See photograph on page 11.



hornsby\_dairy

*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. Photograph courtesy Russell Hornby.*

## Restaurants

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Victor did milk rounds on his cart and his son, Russell, did a milk round with a lidded pail.

The dairy ceased operating in the early 1940's when 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.

## Restaurants

### Moonshiners

The Moonshiners opened in the early 1970's in the shop once know 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.

## 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.

### Les Greenwell

Les Greenwell lived on the corner of Forest Road and Harrison Street and operated a case making factory there from around 1960 to 1973. Prior to this he grew sprouts on the property for a couple of years.

Many Basin youngsters earned pocket money working in the case making factory. Les was also was 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.

### Roy Ritchie

Roy and his family arrived in The Basin in 1957. He was involved with the Badminton Club, President of The Basin Progress Association for 12 years, served on many Association Committees and was a charter member of the Boronia Rotary Club for 12 years. He was a trustee for the Elderly Citizens Club, Wicks Reserve and Batterham Reserve.

Roy operated a Milk Bar and Butcher's shop roughly opposite the Fire Station for many years.

Roy's greatest contribution to The Basin was undoubtedly his involvement with The Fire Brigade for over 30 years, particularly his 19 years as Secretary. Whenever the fire siren sounded, Roy would immediately close his shop and be the first at the Fire Station. In 1980, Roy was awarded The Queens Long Service & Good Conduct Medal for service to the Victorian Fire Services.

In 2008 Roy is in retirement.

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

Daffodils and Liliiums 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 Liliium society.

A variety of fruits have always been grown on the Dobson property in Liverpool Road. In 2008, they are the only fruit growers left in The Basin.

### Como Nurseries

William Chandler selected property in The Basin in 1873, after consultation with his friend Baron 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 know 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 Assoc. 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 Assoc. Inc., the headquarters of which are established at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Melbourne.

## Industries

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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 1cm 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 25-30cm 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 Cultivar 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.

### Locksley Textiles

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

### Jim Stephens - A Worker at Locksley Textiles

In about 1959-60 I was employed by Mr Harrison to work as a storeman 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 storeman. 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 storekeeping 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 Al-

ice 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 things 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.

seas 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. Bob's 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 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 weekender 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 build-

### **The day Sabrina came to The Basin**

Sabrina, a well known English film actress in the 1950's and 1960's known for her large bust measurement and tiny waist, once modelled bikinis at the Fellina Swimsuit Company that operated in Church Street.

Word travelled quickly in the tiny community of her impending visit and many locals, armed with cameras, descended on the factory. Alas, they were too late, as she had been and gone when they arrived.

ing 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 over the business and his daughter Jayne works in the office.

In 2008, Lowline Industries produce high quality canopies, roof racks and hire caravans, pop tops and camper trailers. They have the largest hire fleet in the Metropolitan area.

### **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 Basin-Olinda Road.

*"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*

After Doongala was burnt in 1932, 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 bull-oak track that the logs were drawn along could still be found in the 1990's.

### **Quarry**

Along Mountain Highway opposite Millers Reserve, there was once a quarry on J. J. Millers land. It has since been filled in and is not visible except that the roadside fence has a peculiar bend around the site.

### **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.

### **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 guesthouse. 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 previously known as “The Glideaway” and turned out about 50 - 60 instruments a month.

From 1942 to 1967, the Fellina Swim Suit Co. operated in the Glideaway building and employed up to 10 people making clothing and swimsuits. Sabrina, a well known English actress in that day, actually modelled bikinis there (see insert on page 16).

### **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.

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