

# **History of The Basin**

## **Chapter 3**

### **Houses**

**Created by Rick Coxhill  
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## Summary

This chapter describes the notable houses and camps in The Basin.

Fern Glen or “The Basin Bower” was a Swiss-like chalet built by John M. Bruce in 1889 on the same site as Doongalla. It was destroyed by a flood in 1891.

Doongalla, built by Sir Matthew Davies in 1892, was the most lavish house ever built in The Basin and would have cost millions of dollars at today’s prices. It was destroyed by fire in 1932.

Ferndale, built by James and Emily Griffiths in 1888, was a large Swiss style house with extensive gardens and farm areas. The property supported a large work force for many years. The house was destroyed by bushfire in 1962.

Millers Homestead, built by John James Miller in 1888, is a good example of the Victorian-style houses built in the boom era of the 1880’s. Millers Homestead was acquired by the City of Knox in the 1970’s and has been partially restored.

Como was William and Kate Chandlers second home constructed in 1878. It was demolished in the 1960’s to make way for another house.

Glen Elbourne, situated on the Basin-Olinda Road near Hazel Dell, was well known for its three hectares of botanic gardens. In the 1930’s, the property won the “best garden in the mountain district” for three years in succession.

Cleve House, later known as “Clevedon”, was built in 1893 by Percivil Chandler for his uncle Robert Charles Chandler on 35 acres of land bordering Mountain Highway. It later became a guest house and then a camp. The main house was destroyed by fire in 1972.

Hazel Dell, on The Basin-Olinda Road, was built in the 1880’s by T. W. Hodgson and Sutherland for use as a homestead. It later became a guest house and then a camp. The camp stopped running in 1998.

The Seventh Day Adventist Youth Club, on The Basin - Olinda road, was started by H. J. Meyers in 1937. It closed in 1999.

Ferndale Camp, situated midway along Ferndale Road operated for about 30 years before closing in 1992. The buildings were removed and the land returned to the National Park.

### Millers Homestead

Millers Homestead is located on the corner of Melrose Court and Dorriggo Drive, Boronia.

Also known as “Melrose House”, Millers Homestead was built in 1888 as the second residence of Mr. James John Miller and his family. The homestead is built on a rise and from the verandah had an uninterrupted view across the valleys of The Basin. It is thought that the name “Melrose” was given by a later owner.

Miller’s first home “Bayswater House” was built close to the present Batterham Reserve. This house, which gave Bayswater township its name, had a garden of walnut, chestnut, cherry, peach, fig, plum, filbert, apple and pear trees.

The Miller family once owned most of what is now the built up area of The Basin, bounded by Mountain Highway, from Albert Avenue to Wicks Road, Old Forest Road, Forest Road and Mount View Road.

A tourist guide described Miller’s Homestead thus:

“Of the house itself it may be truly said to be quite up to the requirements of anyone possessing a cultivated taste for beauty, convenience, snugness and true sanitary conditions. It is of brick, of chaste design, and replete with every appliance which in these times is deemed essential to health, and that ample means can supply. The house, situated on rising land, commands a magnificent view of surrounding lands and hills”.

The homestead is a good example of the Victorian-style houses built in the boom era of the

1880’s. The house has high ceilings and simple lines with a stately elegance about it. A central passageway runs the length of the house from front to back, with all rooms feeding off the passageway. The front rooms are symmetrical about the passageway and have doors opening outside onto a verandah that wraps around the front half of the building and is decorated by cast iron. An underground wine cellar is located at the rear of the house. Some windows have original stained glass, thought to have been brought out from England. Original period chandeliers are located in some rooms. The original windmill and well stands on the front lawn but the well has been covered for safety reasons with a pond constructed over the top of the well.

The original Homestead garden was supposedly inspired by Baron von Mueller, a botanical researcher and visitor to The Basin in the 1860’s.

Racehorse owner, horse breeder and author of “Miller’s Racing Guide”, Miller migrated to Australia in the late 1840’s. He first purchased land in The Basin in 1872 and progressively acquired about a thousand acres of land around The Basin.

Together with his homestead, Miller established a stud farm with full size training and trotting tracks; the latter referred to in later years as “The Trotto”, the remains of which have been wiped out by residential development in the Batterham Reserve area. The Millers Racing Guide says:

“There are two training areas, one a cleared space about eleven acres laid with English grass.

### The Beauty of The Basin

When The Basin celebrated its Centenary in 1967, the town came alive with amazing exhibitions of a remarkable variety of skills and interests - a close knit community with an extraordinary village quality where everyone knew one another. The Basin Progress Hall was the hub, with the Post Office and shops gathered around it. It remains so today. The same roadside oak trees shelter a delightful park.

The beautiful view across the Salvation Army’s farm flats remains unspoilt. The deep hollow which gave The Basin its name sweeps uphill to the Mt. Dandenong TV towers, silhouetted against the sky. At all times of the day the changing angle of the sun beautifies this tranquil scene. The ancient oak on the creek side grows serenely on, sheltering the occasional luncheon or a painter with his easel.

Perhaps it is the roundabout, in bringing greater safety to the junction of the three roads, that makes the greatest visual change from the old times, introducing a feature of orderly supervision.

Even the waters of the Hughes Creek which meanders through the Army flats have been gently curbed to be most beautifully restrained at the retarding basin in Liverpool Road. The delightful park-like surrounds to this water bird haven are a pride and inspiration to all residents and visitors, providing vistas of water, treed meadows, and the Dandenong Ranges, clothed in their natural unbroken forest overlooking this wonderful foothills haven.

The population has grown considerably over the last quarter of a century, but the new homes have been absorbed into the leafy roads with little devastation of the foothills aspect.

May The Basin always retain this peacefulness, and resist the urban sprawl upon its doorstep.

**Edna Chandler.**

## Fern Glen

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The track is 40 feet wide, being of sandy loam without a pebble or least unevenness. The second track is for galloping, one and a half chains wide, well ploughed, sown and drained. The fame of Mr. Miller's Stable and the facilities he has for the exhibition of the qualities of his animals, will attract many hundreds daily to the training grounds".

The farm land was also reputed to be of the most modern standards with extensive underground drainage, complete fencing and annual fertilisation of land to produce high quality yields.

Miller operated a sweepstakes which was one of his main sources of income. In the 1890's the Government made it illegal to operate sweepstakes as a private enterprise. He continued to operate the sweepstakes, was raided many times by police, but was rarely caught. Eventually, he was caught, lost his business and was forced to sell his property in 1897 due to financial losses.

For the following 10 years the house was occupied by the Salvation Army and used as a farm and home for the "Little Boys". The older boys were accommodated at the other home called "Eden" in Mountain Highway.

Around 1917, the property was purchased by the Henderson family who farmed it for about 40 years.

Since then Millers Homestead has been occupied by a series of owners and the land gradually reduced in size.

Other owners have included Mr. Yeadon, a local Councillor who took up residence in the early years of this century, Mr. Henderson, John Lyons and Mr. Finger.

John James Miller died in December 1922 at the age of 91.

In the late 1970's, when the land was being subdivided, Millers Homestead was acquired by the City of Knox in a derelict state and has since been partly restored to its original state. The gardens have been carefully restored with a camellia walk as an integral part. The gardens are a popular place for wedding ceremonies and the homestead for wedding functions .

The Boronia and The Basin news, a magazine that circulated free in the Boronia and The Basin areas commencing in 1994, had Miller's homestead in its masthead from a painting by Leo Buckley.

## Fern Glen

The Doongalla Forest Reserve on the western face of Mt. Dandenong was once the site of a beautiful Swiss-like chalet known to tourists and locals as "The Basin Bower". The Forest Reserve consists of properties selected between 1885 and 1893 by Samuel Collier, J. Barnes, J. Jackson and the Bruce Brothers.

In 1889, John M. Bruce principal of Paterson Laing and Bruce, Flinders Lane, Melbourne, purchased Collier's property and named it "Fern Glen". He erected a Swiss-like chalet on the property. The house was built close to (or even possibly straddled) the creek that passes to the right of the Doongalla house site. It is thought that the extension of Pig Lane was once the original road into the property.

The property warranted this description in "Guide to the Upper Yarra District":

*"The pretty Swiss-like chalet stands well above the mountain runnel which sparkles and leaps over the stones and logs that form its bed. The house combines all the requirements of a pleasant and even luxurious home. It is roomy and airy for summer temperatures, yet snug and comfortable for chilly winter, and has a verandah which at any time can be converted into a ball-room or a dining or smoking hall for a hundred guests".*

The garden apparently matched the house having trees, shrubs and flowers of many and exotic kinds. There was an orchard embracing apples, pears, plums, peaches, walnuts and chestnuts. A pathway led to Mt. Dandenong with occasional rustic seats, steps cut in logs and small bridges.

In 1891, Sir Matthew Davies purchased the property. It has been reported that the chalet was destroyed by a bushfire in 1891 but no record can be found of this. However, there is a record of a severe flood which affected Melbourne and surrounding districts at this time. According to the newspaper extract below, the chalet was severely damaged when very heavy rain caused the creek to flood.

"The Flood"

"At Ferntree Gully, a land slip occurred at the country home of Sir M. H. Davies bringing down rocks, large trees, bathroom & outhouses, damages about £600."

doongalla.jpg

doongallaafterfire.jpg

*Doongalla before and after fire destroyed the building in 1932.  
Photos courtesy Knox Historical Society*

## Doongalla

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### Forgotten Roast

When Doongalla was burnt to the ground in 1932, it seemed that little of any value would be left, but a patrolling fireman found looters at work very early the next morning. Just the same they didn't find the leg of lamb which had been put in the big wood fire stove, but forgotten in the heat of the moment. Next day the ash covered doors were opened to reveal a nicely done roast.

Oakleigh & Ferntree Gully Times Sat, July 18, 1891

### Doongalla

The Doongalla Forest Reserve of 279ha on the western face of Mt. Dandenong was once the site of a magnificent mansion called Doongalla. The Forest Reserve consists of properties originally selected between 1885 and 1993 by Samuel Collier, J. Barnes, J. Jackson and the Bruce Brothers. The combined properties extend from an elevation of 152m to the top of the second highest peak, Mt Corhanwarrabul, also known as Burkes Lookout (previously Barne's Lookout), elevation 268m.

In 1889, the Bruce brothers purchased Collier's property and erected a Swiss-like chalet. In 1891 the prominent lawyer, investor, M.P. and land boomer, Sir Matthew Davies, purchased the chalet and all the property from the Bruce and Barnes.

The chalet was badly damaged in 1891 when very heavy rain caused the creek to flood. It is thought that the damage to the chalet was so severe that Davies never rebuilt it and instead demolished the remainder of the building.

In 1892, Davies erected a mansion reputed to have cost 35,000 pounds. He named it "Invermay". Materials were carted by a tramway constructed to the site from the Pig Lane area. The rooms of the house were organised around a central courtyard with servant's quarters and stables at the rear. Its 32 rooms were magnificent in every way; hallways panelled in Australian hardwood, other rooms in Swedish timber, and a roof of French tiles. The main building was clad in some of the first made machine-made bricks from Croydon. The roof of the main building was in slate. This fabulous house had enormous cellars, including underground butcher's facilities and a large bell to summon workers. A swimming pool

was constructed and fed from the creek that passed near the house.

It was during this era that the wealthy sometimes gathered at Doongalla for a weekend - food was in abundance and wine flowed. So merry did the parties sometimes become, that the participants occasionally went for a moon-light swim in the swimming pool. But generally it was the house party that people enjoyed. A highlight of many of these parties was the recitations by Harry Chandler, whose services were called for at many functions throughout the hills.

After the collapse of the land boom in 1894, Sir Matthew Davies was forced to surrender the house to the Bank of New South Wales to which it was mortgaged. The bank installed a caretaker to tend the property.

The property remained idle for some time until purchased in 1908 by Miss Helen Simson of Toorak to be used as her country residence. She renamed the property "Doongalla" and hired the Box family to tend the property.

The name "Doongalla" originated from the early Parish name of "Doutta Galla". There is a record of a Thomas Napier, who in 1839 held a depasturing licence for run on the Dandenong Creek, near the area now known as Wantirna. The run was in the Parish of "Doutta Galla", which extended into the area now known as "Doongalla Forest Reserve".

In 1909, she made substantial improvements to the property including fencing the house and grounds, building new servants quarters, coachmen quarters, and carrying out extensive planting of rhododendrons, camellias and a magnificent lily garden near the house. Alterations were made to the upstairs section of the house and an electric light plant was installed. She had tracks constructed through the property. Terraces were built in the front of the house so that guests could be entertained out doors on a sunny day. A new water scheme served the house and grounds. She contracted Mr. Yeadon, who owned land near The Basin Primary School, to construct the existing road into Doongalla.

A large staff of men were employed at 8 shillings per day when 5 shillings a day was the going rate. This attracted men from as far away as Monbulk, many walking to and from work each day. Others camping and returning home at week-ends.

### Local Doctor

They were pretty tough in the old days. For instance a gardener at Doongalla wrote in his diary that he was so worried about some stomach pains that he decided he ought to visit a doctor and promptly walked to Lilydale! The gardener was John Flenjar who lived in Upwey.

When Miss Simson died in 1912, the property passed to her fifteen year old niece Miss McKinnon. Miss McKinnon's father was the prominent racing man, L. K. S. McKinnon. who acted as trustee. When she died in 1922, the property was bought by a local estate agent T. M. Burke.

During Burke's ownership, a caretaker was installed and the property used for both family visits and as a rest home for Catholic Priests. It is reported that Burke also had plans to build a golf course on the property.

In 1927, Burke donated the lookout area to the Government, requesting that the name be changed to Burke's Lookout.

In January 1932, a bushfire swept towards the house from the North-west. Burke's daughter, Mrs J. Byrne, was staying at Doongalla with her children, relatives and a friend. Many local residents, including Fergus Chandler and the some of the Dobson family were waiting at Doongalla anticipating the coming bushfire and making preparations to protect the house. The property had a reticulated water supply and was well cleared. Fergus Chandler recalled commenting to another that "the house would be safe".

The bushfire was still some distance away when suddenly the top of the house erupted into flames, presumably from a cinder blown from the fire. Those in attendance fed hoses up the stairs but the hoses were not long enough to reach the source of the flames. It was realised that the house could not be saved, so furniture and carpets were quickly removed from the house and placed on the large grass area in front of the house. The fire quickly took hold. Everyone was forced to flee the house and watch as burnt to the ground. All that remained were the servant's quarters, and 13 chimneys.

Shortly after, the bushfire passed through and Mrs Byrne, her children and the visitors were protected by sheltering under a bridge in a nearby creek.

Fergus Chandler encountered a gathering of newspaper reporters at the Doongalla main gate

as he was leaving. He recalled reciting his version of the burning of Doongalla, but this was never reported in the press.

Wally Goodwin was only ten years old when he watched Doongalla burn from his parents property near the corner of Millers Road and Mountain Highway. In those days, the mansion could be clearly seen nestling on the hillside. He recalled that although the bushfire that swept in from the North west had not yet reached the house, the house ignited, presumably from a cinder blown from the fire.

While the property remained in Mr. Burke's name, the house was never rebuilt. Land north of Burke's Lookout was subdivided in 1934 and the remaining core of 279 hectares was eventually 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.

The property was sold again in 1940 to Mabel Annie Elijah. The servant's quarters were renovated and the property let to a man called Clay.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's there was an extensive campaign led by Sir Gilbert Chandler to "Save the Dandenongs" and as a response to a local campaign the State Government bought the property for 8,000 pounds. Since then it has been administered as a Forest Park by the Forest Commission.

The stables were demolished in the late 1950's as they had become unsafe. The only other building remaining is the servants quarters and these serve as a residence for the park warden.

The site on which the main building stood is now lawn area, equipped with picnic facilities. This area is used for all types of functions, including wedding receptions (my daughter had her wedding reception there). The bases of the old chimneys act as enlarged flower boxes. The steps leading down from this area give access to the several large terraces which Miss Simson had constructed. The old stable site forms a second picnic area.

Many attractive walks lead from the two picnic areas following the tracks constructed by Miss Simson. Each track bears a name which has an historical association. "Collier Walk" commemorates one of the earliest settlers. "Chandler Walk" commemorates Sir Gilbert Chandler who led the

## Ferndale

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campaign to buy back the land. "Lawrence Walk" commemorates a Chairman of the Forest Commission.

### Ferndale

Ferndale was built by James Griffiths of Griffiths Tea fame. The tea in those days was known as Signal Brand.

In the 1880's, Griffiths purchased some 130 hectares of land near what is now Ferndale Road and constructed a magnificent three storey Swiss-style home which had 17 main rooms including 11 bedrooms. These were complemented by three bathrooms, three studies, numerous laundries, workrooms and maid's quarters.

The house was situated on the western face of the Dandenongs with the mountain as a background and commanded an unexcelled view overlooking the Dandenong valley and the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Downhill from the main house were cottages for the labourers and farmhands who tended the animals, orchards and gardens.

The extensive gardens around the house included chrysanthemums, lawns and immaculate flower beds. The heavily ornamented entrance gates opened into a bluestone courtyard complete with fishpond and fountain.

One of the many special garden features were the chrysanthemums grown in a special area with a pipe framework to support a canvas cover which sheltered the blooms from adverse weather conditions. These blooms had been distended and tied to thin wire lines. These large round, almost perfect, flowers were the incurved varieties. At the time of blooming, on fine sunny days, the canvas cover would be drawn back to expose these magnificent blooms for all to see. Guests were amazed at the spectacle.

The property had varied agricultural interests. There were vegetable patches, 2 acres of orchards with various fruits and berries (currants, raspberries, gooseberries and strawberries). There were 5 to 6 acres of cropping paddocks for the growing of horse feed and fodder for cows. Harvesting of fodder crops was by horse drawn reaper and binder. Tea was grown in the lower part of the main gardens for experimental purposes, but not on a large scale.

Stock on the property consisted of poultry, turkeys, cows, pigs, sheep, ponies for wagonettes and working horses for the farm. All confined

stock was beautifully housed bedded and well fed. The stables had a drinking trough outside the door and a manger to every stall. Drinking troughs were supplied to every paddock and operated by ball stopcock. Feed and harness rooms were next door to the stables. Wagonettes and buggies were housed off the bluestone courtyard. Milking cow stalls were off the courtyard and a small dairy was situated beside the creek. Bacon was smoked and cured in a caged room beneath the dairy.

Ferndale had a unique water reticulation system. Above "Griffiths Falls", the creek had been dammed with stone and a concrete retaining wall. The water was taken from low in the dam's wall and fed through a 6 inch steel pipe to just above the house where it was broken into smaller piping and used throughout the property.

During the time past World War I, the Salvation Army had a fine brass band. On Christmas eve, they would march up the Old Coach Road from the Army Home to Ferndale and assemble at the front entrance and play band-music and sing carols. All local residents were invited and this was a highlight of Christmas eve.

In 1925, James and Emily Griffiths were killed at the Bayswater level crossing after a collision between their carriage and a steam train. At the time James was 75 and Emily was 83.

Griffiths left a will that bequeathed his assets to his wife Emily. However, Emily did not die until four days after the train collision and consequently two sets of death duties were payable on the estate. The estate passed to Griffiths' next of kin who could not afford to pay the death duties - so the land and house had to be sold to pay duty on the large house and business.

The Ferndale Estate was subsequently auctioned in December 1925 and purchased by Daniel John Gans, Edith Lilian Gans and a Mr Stuart. The Estates official owner being "E. L. Gans".

The large area of bushland that formed the rear of the estate was later subdivided in at least three stages and offered for sale. With the rugged and steep terrain, not many blocks were sold. Over time most of the blocks have been purchased by the Government and amalgamated into the nearby National Park.

The house was used in the late 1930's and 1940's as a guest house and was a favourite place for honeymooners.

In 1948, Leslie Rubinstein purchased Ferndale.

A Victorian Tourist Brochure of 1947 described the guest house thus:

“Take your holidays at the prettiest place in the hills - All modern conveniences. Excellent accommodation and cooking. Wonderful garden. Delightful walks”.

After the Second World War, Ferndale was used for a time as a migrant hostel for Dutch immigrants. Don Maguire, a Basin resident, recalled carting tons of potatoes up to Ferndale at that time. They seemed to be the resident’s staple diet. Don encouraged them to take on pumpkin, but apparently that was not a vegetable Dutch people ever used and all efforts failed miserably.

During the late 1950’s the mansion slipped into disrepair. Don Maguire recalled Jack Masters, who managed a small nursery on the property, calling him in to look at the interior, about 1960. Vandals had broken in and completely smashed the interior including the beautiful chandeliers.

The bushfires of 1962 completed the ruin of

another of The Basin’s historical buildings. Many older Basin residents interviewed in gathering information for this book recalled visiting the ruins of Ferndale after the fire and how they looked upon the ruins with sadness at the loss of this magnificent building.

After Ferndale was destroyed, an effort was made by The Basin Fire Brigade to utilise Ferndale’s dam as a filling point for tankers. Ferntree Gully Council was approached but it would have been an expensive exercise and the matter was dropped.

### Como

Como was William and Kate Chandlers second home, constructed from bricks made on the property. their property was originally known as “Fern Glen”, but when George Bruce’s house higher up the mountain was named “Fern Glen”, William re-named his property “Como”, after the famous Italian beauty spot, in order to avoid confusion. The brick house was first occupied in 1878.

This house was demolished in the 1960’s and



como.jpg

*Como House. Second home of William Chandler. Circa 1913. This home as demolished and replaced with another building in the mid 1960’s. Photo courtesy Fergus Chandler*

## Glen Elbourne

replaced with another. At the time it was in poor condition.

When William brought his family-then consisting of a wife and three children-to live at The Basin in the season of 1873, they were at first accommodated in a weatherboard building (mentioned in his application) built on the creek flats, well in from the existing corner of The Basin-Olinda and Doongalla Roads.

The house was built from straight manna gums and messmate timber found on the property. The timber was pit-sawn, even to the weather boards, and had another refinement lacking in most other bush dwellings-3 galvanised iron roof instead of shingles. Arch Chandler was born in the original house in 1875, and was then thought to be the first white child born at The Basin. Legend has it that the large oak tree still standing in Doongalla Road was planted to mark the occasion. It was certainly planted at the time the family occupied the original home.

### Glen Elbourne

Situated on the Basin-Olinda Road near Hazel Dell, Glen Elbourne was thought to be once known as "The Bungalow" The property was built in the early 1900's and was well known for its three hectares of botanic gardens. In the 1930's the property won the "best garden in the mountain district" for three years in succession.

Over the years, various owners have added to and improved the property. The main house is 32 squares with views of the city skyline and there is a second house of 12 squares.

The gardens include a bewildering variety of trees, two waterfalls, a gazebo, a trout pond and a bowling green.

Owners over the years have included Simpson, Wallis and Perry family who held the property for 33 years when they sold it in 1983.

### Clevedon

Managers of Clevedon	
1910's	Brown
1920's	Jones, Agar
Late 1920's	Tatchell
1939 - 1944	D. Donnelly
1944 - 1953	S. & M. Thornton

1953	C. Zelley
1953 - 1956	E. W. Taylor
1956 - 1958	L. Tweedale
1958 - 1960	Fletcher
1960 - 1961	Rushton
1961 - 1967	R. & G. Dixon
1967 - 1971	C. & N. Dixon
1971 - 1972	K. Becks
1972 - 1973	A. & L. Dixon
1973 - 1979	A. & G. Bailey
1979 - 1980	A. & L. Dixon
1980 - 1988	H. Roy
1988 - 2008	A. & L. Dixon

"Cleve House" later known as "Clevedon", was built in 1893 by Percivil Chandler for his uncle Robert Charles Chandler on 35 acres of land bordering Mountain Highway. Robert Charles acquired the property from his brother William.

Percivil Chandler was well known as a builder and is also credited with building "Sherbrooke Lodge" near Kallista.

Robert Charles Chandler was a naturalist and devoted much of his time prospecting for gold. He is credited with discovering a gold reef at Reefton, near Warburton. His two children attended the "first" The Basin Primary School in Doongalla Road. Robert Charles sold Cleve House sometime in the 1910's.

Cleve House was said to have been occupied by a German family during the First World War who were discovered sending messages to someone in the Croydon area. The Defence Department were contacted and the messages stopped.

In the 1920's Cleve House became a guest house with the Jones as the first owners and the name changed to Clevedon. Electricity for the guest house was supplied by a generator driven by a water wheel in the creek at the rear of Clevedon.

From the late 1920's to the early 1930's, the guest house was run by Tatchell's.

In October 1938 the guest house was auctioned. The auction brochure described it thus:

"The Main Building contains 8 Rooms, Large

Verandahs, Detached Ladies' and Gent's Bathrooms, 8 sleep-outs and 3 bungalows."

From 1939 to 1944 a Mr and Mrs Donnelly took over the lease of the guest house. Mr Donnelly enlisted into service shortly after they took over the property and Mrs Donnelly managed the guest house by herself. Many local residents were employed at the house by Mrs Donnelly to assist in its running.

During this period the guest house became very successful with bookings arranged through the Victorian Government Tourist Bureau. At weekends, the house offered Devonshire Teas for passing tourists.

Soon after reticulated electricity arrived in The Basin, Mrs Donnelly paid for and arranged for the it to be extended and connected to Clevedon.

Sid and May Thornton took over the lease of Clevedon in 1944 and continued to operate the guest house until 1953. During these years Clevedon's facilities were improved and its popularity dramatically increased. At one stage the property had 10 acres of orchard, a large vegetable garden, a piggery and 9 nine cows.

In 1947 the Thornton's purchased the property which at that stage was about 35 acres. The Thornton's continued to improve the property and a notable addition was the purchase of a number of old green miners cabins that were placed along the Mountain Highway boundary.

In 1951 they subdivided about 3 acres of the western part of the property and created the "Clevedon Estate". 17 lots were created with the streets Ross Street, and Clevedon Road. The Thornton's purchased lots one and two which were on the highest part of the estate and had a display house erected there.

A dark moment in Clevedon's history occurred on June 1, 1952. A group of mainly teenagers left Clevedon that Sunday evening on a bus heading home. They had been attending a religious weekend at Clevedon. After a stop at the Boronia Church of Christ in Boronia Road where they attended a service and sung hymns with local parishioners, the bus headed down Boronia Road towards the Boronia railway crossing. It was reported that the bus driver slowed down to check for approaching trains, but not seeing any, continued on. A Melbourne bound train slammed into the bus, slicing it in half. Initial reports had 13

dead and 16 injured, but the death toll was later amended to 9 (see insert "Fatal Crash Memories" on page 10).

Between 1926 and 1998, 28 people have been killed and 54 injured at the Boronia crossing which has earned it the title of "the death crossing". The public outcry after the 1952 accident saw flashing lights installed in October, 1952, but it was not until 1972 that boom gates were installed. In 1990, the crossing was named by the RACV as one of the worst three in Melbourne.

In 1998, the rail line was placed underground ending the delays and accidents at one of Melbourne's worst intersections.

Clevedon was becoming increasingly popular with groups from the Methodist Church. One of the Church leaders realised the potential for Clevedon as a camp and approached the Thornton's requesting that if they ever considered selling Clevedon would they give the Church first option to buy.

In 1953, four acres including the guest house and outbuildings, was sold to the Methodist Church Young People's department to be used a camp and conference house. The buildings then consisted of the Guest House, Promenade and Green Cabins. The Church relocated a number of buildings, including a house and hall onto the property. The remaining area was sold to Peter Hill who later subdivided an area of about 3 acres into 17 building allotments with Cleve street running down the middle.

In the late 1950's, a building known as "Valley View" was relocated to Clevedon. It was thought to have been transported from the Eildon Dam site.

In 1960 the Methodist Church purchased the remaining land from Peter Hill.

The Thornton's purchased a display house on the new Clevedon Estate and lived there until about 1960 when they moved out of the area.

In 1961, a dining hall and recreation room were relocated to Clevedon. These were also transported from the Eildon Dam site. The recreation room was officially opened by the President of the Methodist Conference Centre, Revenant G. D. Brinacombe.

In 1961, on the Mountain Highway side of Clevedon, a concrete cross was erected by friends of a Miss Girlie Lee as an expression of thanksgiving for her life and constant witness to

## Hazel Dell

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her faith. Girlie Lee was killed in the tragic level crossing accident at Boronia in 1952.

The original house built for Robert Charles Chandler was destroyed by fire on March 22nd, 1972. The original homestead garden and steps still remain on the property.

In 1975, a new conference centre building was erected on the site and this was opened by the then Minister for Sport and Recreation, Mr Brian Dixon.

In 1977 the Methodist Church amalgamated with others to become the Uniting Church of Australia.

In 1993, Clevedon held an open day to celebrate 100 years since the original building was erected. Previous owners and dignitaries were invited to a day of celebrations.

### Hazel Dell

“Hazel Dell”, on The Basin-Olinda Road, was built in the 1880’s by T. W. Hodgson and Sutherland for use as a homestead. T. W. Hodgson was one of the original land holders in The Basin having been granted an area of some 100 acres in 1881. Jack Hodgson (son) attended the “first” The Basin Primary School in Doongalla Road.

In the early days Hazel Dell was used by settlers as a kind of half-way house between the plains and the hill-top. At that time tracks past Hazel Dell were only suitable for pack horses.

Later, Hazel Dell was made a guest house when taken over by Mr. and Mrs. Hayes and the Gilmour Family. Ada Gilmour (later Mrs. Harry Chandler), Lizzie Gilmour and Mrs. Hayes had the largest input in running the guest house during this period.

Hazel Dell was described in a railway guide of 1905 as

“... providing an excellent standard of accommodation”

and was very popular.

Around the middle 1920’s, the guest house was purchased by Mrs. Rowe who operated it for about 10 years.

In later years the building was used as a Presbyterian Church Camp and was eventually purchased by the church. In 1977, the Presbyterian Church amalgamated with others to become the Uniting Church of Australia and took over running of the property.

As well as managing Clevedon, Alan and

Linda Dixon managed the camp for 3 years from 1990.

In 1993, Hazel Dell was sold by the church to be used as a residential property.

### Seventh Day Adventist Youth Camp

In the early 1930’s the Seventh Day Adventist Youth Club had a dynamic leader by the name of H. J. Meyers. He had a vision - to build a Youth Camp that could be used by the youth of Victoria to enhance their educational, spiritual, moral and social welfare.

Meyers investigated many potential sites for the camp. One important criterion Meyers required was that the selected site must have a perennial water supply. It is said that before finally choosing the site on The Basin-Olinda Road, he traced the creek at the rear of the property back to its source to satisfy himself of its perennial supply.

Land of some 15 acres was purchased in January 1937, plans drawn up by architect Mr. E. F. Billson, and timber buildings were constructed using voluntary labour under the supervision of Tom Harrington. The initial buildings comprised a Dining room, Vestibule, Kitchen, Supt. quarters and Office, caretakers lodge and four shacks each with 32 bunks.

A water permit was obtained in 1938 to pump water from the creek to supply a pool constructed that year. The ethics of the day dictated that boys and girls were not allowed to swim in the pool together but this was relaxed in later years. Local children were permitted to use the pool at convenient times.

In the early days the camp was so popular that sometimes far more attended than could be accommodated. On these occasions the overflow stayed at Hazel Dell.

Baxter-Cox, a nearby land owner, gave permission in January 1948 for the camp to run poles across his land to enable the connection of electricity. Electricity was eventually directly connected in 1952 enabling the use of modern conveniences at the camp.

In 1963, 4 acres of the original 15 acres purchased by the camp was sold to Michael and Ann Spry.

A fire in late 1972 destroyed the main building. In 1973, a larger steel and concrete building incorporating a badminton hall was erected at a

## Seventh Day Adventist Youth Camp

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adventistlh.jpg



adventistrh.jpg

*Seventh Day Adventist Youth Camp on The Basin - Olinda Road soon after building. Circa 1940.*

*The two photographs join together (top right side with bottom left side) for a panoramic view.*

*Photo courtesy Wilma Gotts*

## Ferndale Camp

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cost of \$50,000 and was fully funded by the Church.

From 1994 to 1999, Alan and Linda Dixon used the camp to handle the overflow from Clevedon

In 1999, the camp ceased operation and was idle for some years.

In 2001, the camp was sold.

For the many youths of Victoria who have passed through the camp since it commenced operation, the vision of H. J. Meyers has certainly been fulfilled.

### Ferndale Camp

Little information is available about this camp which was once situated midway along Ferndale Road. Apparently, it originally was the site of an early settler who built a house there. The site was most likely part of the Ferndale Estate which was subdivided in the 1930's This house was destroyed by fire around the 1950's. The property was subsequently purchased by the Congregational Church to be used as a Youth camp and a variety of buildings erected. For over 30 years it operated successfully as a Youth camp.

Towards the mid 1980's it use diminished and it fell into disrepair. In the late 1980's it was used for homeless youths for a while when taken over by Harrison House.

In 1992, the property was acquired by the Department of Conservation and Environment to be amalgamated into the surrounding forest park. The buildings were demolished in 1993.

### Sources of Information

- "The Basin Centenary booklet" - Ron Ikin.
- "Fire on the Hill, Flowers on the Valley" - Rick Coxhill.
- George Grumont for Ferndale and early road information.
- Wilma Gotts for Seventh Day Adventist Youth Camp photograph and information.
- Fergus Chandler for Ferndale and Doongalla information and photographs.
- National Parks brochure for information on Doongalla.
- Knox Historical Society for photographs.
- Alan and Linda Dixon for Clevedon and Hazel Dell information.
- Mrs Donnelly and Sid and May Thornton for Clevedon information.
- "Family of William Chandler horticulturalist" -

Helen Coulsen for information on Percivil Chandler and Robert Charles Chandler.

- Jim and Barbara Stephens for general information and help.



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