

Chapter 12

Miscellaneous

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Summary

Summary

The “Chandler” oak tree in Sheffield Road was planted from an acorn by early settlers William and Kate Chandler in 1875. Legend has it that it was planted to celebrate the birth of their fourth son, Archibald, who they thought was the first white child born in the district.

There are many prominent people that have lived in, or had an influence on The Basin and some of these are described.

Many proposals that involved The Basin never eventuated and some of these are described here.

The “Chandler” Oak Tree

This famous oak tree in Sheffield Road was planted from an acorn by early settlers William and Kate Chandler in 1875. Legend has it that it was planted to celebrate the birth of their fourth son, Archibald, who they thought was the first white child born in the district. However, it is now known that Louisa, daughter of William and Margaret Turner, who was born in 1851 near where the oak tree is now, was the first white child born in the district. Tragically, Louisa died at the age of 17.

The tree is located beside Dobsons Creek in Sheffield Road, near the corner of Sheffield Road and The Basin-Olinda Road. William and Kate Chandler built their first house on the flat near the tree.

The tree is regarded as one of the oldest and finest specimens of English Oak (*Quercus Robur*) growing in Australia and is approximately 30 metres high and 25 metres across.

As part of The Basin Centenary Celebrations, a stone cairn was erected by the Chandler family under the oak tree in 1967.

The tree has special significance for the Chandler family, who held a reunion beneath the tree in 1975.

The tree has been pruned a number of times over the years and in 1982 steel cables were attached from the main trunk to support the weight of its massive limbs. Over enthusiastic pruning by Knox Council has on occasions led to the intervention of local residents.

In 1984, the tree was classified by the National Trust because of its size, form and historical significance

The famous tree is cared for by the Knox Council.

The Who’s Who of The Basin

Many famous, sporting, community minded and high achieving people have lived in, or been associated with, The Basin at one time or another.

Some specially selected “Distinguished Residents” are profiled in other chapters. Other people are highlighted in various chapters for their contribution to the community.

Danny Findlay

Danny was the “D” of the pop group “MPD Limited” who made their fame in the 1960’s. The M & P being Mike Brady and Peter Watson. Originally a member of the “Sonics” band, who played at local functions, he went from success to success after forming the band MPD Limited. Their record “Little Boy Sad” headed the hit parades for 8 weeks. Many other records followed.

Jason Daniltchenko

Jason started playing at The Basin Football Club and later played for the Australian Football League club North Melbourne.

Shane Flyne

Shane started playing at The Basin Football Club and later played for the Australian Football League club Carlton.

Baxter Cox

Baxter Cox designed the Science wing of the Perth University. He lived at “Wychwood” on Old Coach road. He gained prominence as an architect and war historian. Closer to home, he designed the redevelopment of the Salvation Army No 2 Home in 1958.

C. J. Dennis

The wife of the famous Australian poet C. J. Dennis lived for some time in Forest Road. Mrs Dennis had vivid recollections of her husband’s friendship with Henry Lawson and also told how her husband came to write of the now famous character “Doreen”. It appears Dennis attended the Progress Association meetings in a small country town, and there the Secretary often broke off into lyrical descriptions of his friend Doreen. Dennis was so impressed that he wrote this character into his poems.

Bob Irwin

The father of the famous Steve Irwin, Bob, once

Bob Irwin

lived in The Basin and attended The Basin Primary School.

He once worked at Locksley Textiles, the site of which later became Lowline.

It is rumoured that he kept snakes and other reptiles in boxes under his bed. Naughty young children were threatened to be sent to his house for punishment.

Jean and George Hill

Jean and George Hill have between them won over 60 local and international medals for commercial food preparation.

George, as a member of a team of four who represented Australia, won a gold medal in food preparation in the Culinary Olympics in 1980. In 1983, George was the recipient of the Australia Food Service Manufacturers Award or the "Australian Caterer of the Year". In 1988, he was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study Hospitality Education in the USA and Canada. He was also the first recognised Australian International Cookery Judge in Work Skill in Austria. When George was head of the food department at William Angliss College he organised thousands of meals for the fire fighters during the Ash Wednesday bush fires.

Jean became renowned as a commercial food artist winning medals in many competitions including the Culinary Olympics and "Food Asia". In 1992, Jean became the greatest individual winner of Culinary Olympic awards when as a member of the Victorian team of chefs, she was awarded three gold and two bronze medals from five entries

Both George and Jean were active members of the local community over many years.

Steve Crabb

Steve Crabb was a minister in the Cain/Kirner Labor Government that governed Victoria from 1982 to 1992. He was the MLA for Knox which included The Basin area. He held various ministerial positions whilst Labor was in office.

At the time, he resided in The Basin and conducted a number of Carols by Candlelight in The Triangle.

Sharon Begg

Constable Sharon Begg scooped the pool at the 1987 Victoria Police Games by winning 17 Medals. She won 12 gold, two silver and three bronze.

Kevin Gale

In 1971, Kevin Gale was awarded the Knox "Citizen of the Year". Kevin was a tireless volunteer for a number of organisations.

Kevin later left The Basin and was appointed the Prince Regent of Hutt River Province in Western Australia by Price Leonard who originally established Hut River as an independent principality.

What Did Not Happen

Many proposals that involved The Basin never eventuated. Some were controversial and did not proceed because of resident action. Others were too advanced for the time.

Tramway Past The Basin

Around 1888, a proposal was put for a tramway to run from Bayswater to Olinda past The Basin. The scheme was to take advantage of the recent extension of the rail link to Ferntree Gully.

The rail link did not satisfy everyone. Not all locations would be served and many considered that a link from Dandenong would have served the area better. As expected, many schemes were soon announced to take advantage of the new extension. One such scheme was to construct a multi purpose tramway from Macaully (Bayswater), running East, past The Basin to the North, and terminating at the State Forest boundary, roughly below Olinda.

Concern for the Trees

When the State Electricity Commission (SEC) commenced upgrading the power supply lines along Sheffield Road in the 1980's to cater for increased development in the Milleara Road and Simpsons Road area, they chose the wrong side of the road to run the power lines. Their route headed straight through the famous oak tree and they fully intended trimming branches to make way for the lines.

The vehement intervention of a local resident whose grandfather planted the oak soon changed the workers mind.

The lines were re-routed to cross over to the other side of the road.

The tramway was to have been electric or cable and be used to assist local rural and forestry activities and the tourist trade.

The promoters included many well known and influential land holders and residents including John James Miller and Mr Bruce, owner of the retreat in The Basin known as "Fern Glen" or "The Basin Bower". Considerable time and effort was expended in pursuance of the scheme. It was reported that a Mr Muntz, a surveyor of railway projects, had submitted a favourable opinion of the project. Extensive publicity was given in the publication "Visitors guide to the Upper Yarra and Fern Tree Gully Districts".

Plans were drawn up showing a detailed route and the Shire of Berwick passed a motion, put by councillor Dobson, granting permission to construct the tramway but it never eventuated. At the time, there was an act forbidding any person to operate a railway except the Victorian Railways. An exception was that tramways were allowed, requiring the approval of the local municipality. Hence the Shire of Berwick's involvement in the approval.

Overall Development Plan

In 1992, The Basin Progress Association called a public meeting to discuss Knox Council's Overall Development Plan (ODP) which would allow land development along Mountain Highway. Over 250 people attended the meeting, one of the largest attendances ever. The proposed large scale development of land on the North side of Mountain Highway including a large amount of the Salvation Army, Dobson's and The Basin Primary School.

The plan was developed by the Council after a request from the Salvation Army to redevelop an eight hectare paddock. Council extended the area requested by the Salvation Army to see how the area could be developed in the future. Residents at the meeting said they were not opposed to the Salvation Army development, but the further development made possible by the ODP. Knox Council was accused of "cutting out the green heart of The Basin".

Under extreme pressure from all sides, the Council revised the development plan to what the Salvation Army had originally asked for – the re-development of an eight hectare paddock. It took another four years before the area was subdivided and made available for housing.

Grab For The Basin

In 1994, the then Sherbrooke Council revealed it had applied to include The Basin and parts of Fern Tree Gully into its boundaries. At the time, the areas were covered by the City of Knox. Sherbrooke believed that The Basin should be part of the Council that covers Dandenong Ranges

Residents of The Basin disagreed with the proposal. A petition circulating the township opposed the move on a number of grounds. In particular, that the move would split the township and that the Sherbrooke rates are considerably higher.

The proposal hinged on discussions between the neighbouring councils with the City of Knox against the proposal.

Discussions broke down and the proposal never eventuated.

Fire Buffer Zones

In 1990, the State Government put forward a proposal to create a "Fire Buffer Zone" classification for properties in The Dandenongs. The concept involved the compulsory acquisition of properties for fire control. A few properties in The Basin would have been affected by the proposal.

The scheme became controversial when the Government refused to identify a time frame for the identification and acquisition of classified properties and to what degree residents would be

Fire Buffer Zones

compensated for the loss of their homes.

After a bitter battle with the Hills community, the Government relented and abolished the scheme in 1992. Any properties that the Government wished to acquire in the future would need to be rezoned to permit the purchase.

Healing Centre

In early 2009, residents of Augusta Road in The Basin learned that The Department of Human Services (DHS) had purchased a residence at 20 Augusta Road.

DHS had lodged an application with the Knox Council to change the use of the property from a dwelling to a place of assembly. The intention was to operate a “healing centre” that will “prevent, reduce and respond to all forms of family violence to indigenous people who live in the eastern metropolitan region”. A DHS spokesperson said that Knox had the second highest indigenous population in the Eastern Metropolitan Region, but “no Indigenous services delivery site”.

About 40 families lived in the street. Some had been there for decades. All residents disapproved of the location for the centre and set up an “Augusta Road Fighting Fund”.

Local politicians and councillors supported the concept but thought it was in the wrong place.

Knox Council considered the proposal in April 2009. The Council received 73 objections and no submissions in support. Council voted for the centre to go ahead, but only if it did not turn into a drop-in centre, crisis accommodation or halfway house.

The residents, through the “Augusta Road Fighting Fund”, appealed Knox Council’s decision to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) as a group action.

The DHS also appealed because it wanted to be able to use the centre for crisis accommodation.

After a two day hearing in October 2009, VCAT ruled against the DHS centre. VCAT provided a number of reasons. In particular:

“The incontrovertible value of the healing service does not, in our view, outweigh the direct amenity impacts the proposal would have on the abutting residential properties”.

In April 2010, The property at 20 Augusta Road was auctioned and sold. An alternative site for the healing centre had been proposed in Lilydale

The Best Place To Live

The Basin of course! The many articles that have appeared in local papers praising the attributes of living in The Basin. Headlines such as “Basin brimming with friendliness”, “Togetherness is still alive in the foothills” are testament that it is the best place to live.

The Doctor

Dr Lorna Jones was the only Doctor in The Basin/Boronia area in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s. Originally, she used a horse and buggy to do her house calls but later moved up to a motor vehicle.

In recognition of her services to the local community, the council built and dedicated a playground behind the Methodist Church in Boronia. Later, the playground was moved to Maguire Park and upgraded to the status of a regional playground whilst still retaining the name of “Lorna Jones Playground”.

With the building of the Boronia Junction shopping centre, the playground was again moved to a small area near the Boronia station. The name Lorna Jones was removed and the playground downgraded to a few metal animals.

Sources of Information

- “The Basin Centenary booklet” - Ron Ikin.
- “Fire on the Hill, Flowers on the Valley” - Rick Coxhill.
- Jim and Barbara Stephens for general information and help.
- Various newspapers for information on the best place to live, the healing centre proposal, Overall Development Plan, Fire Buffer Zones and grab for The Basin.

Media Items on the Internet



The 1971 winner, Kevin Gale, left, is congratulated by 1967 winner Bill Wright.

BASIN MAN IS CITIZEN OF YEAR

The Basin scored again last night when the Boronia Rotary Club nomination, Mr. Kevin Gale, was awarded the Knox Jaycees-Dunlop "Citizen of the Year" prize.

Mr. Gale, who accepted the award "with the deepest amount of respect," is the second Basin resident to win the award in its five years standing.

The first was local storekeeper and former president of The Basin Progress Association, Mr. Bill Wright, who won the first award in 1967.

Mr. Wright and other winners, Mr. Jack Callahan (Fern Tree Gully), 1968, Mr. David McInnes (Boronia), 1969, and Mrs. Vivian Farrant (Boronia), 1970, were present at last night's function at the Sky High Restaurant, Mt. Dandenong.

Announcing the winner, Knox Jaycees president, Mr. Neil Harrison, said

the response to the award over the past five years has shown Jaycees the dedication and time given by so many people to their organisation.

"This is surely an indication of the tremendous voluntary effort being performed within our city," Mr. Harrison said.

Mr. Harrison said of the award winner, Mr. Gale, that he had been an active worker not only among the young people, but he had devoted years of service to community projects, charity and school committees.

● Outstanding

He described Mr. Gale as an outstanding member of one of the city's service clubs, and spoke of his organisation of the successful appeal for a relief vehicle for the Salvation Army; a charity ball which ultimately raised \$15,000 for local charities, and fund-raising effort for the fire brigades.

Snow in The Basin

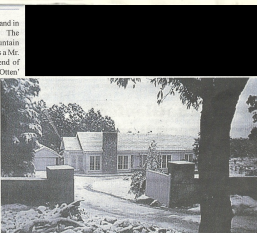
The readers may find the attached photo to be of interest. The house was built in the late 1940s, on Mountain Highway, the Basin, opposite the Salvation Army grating paddocks, between Augusta Road and Stanley Street.

Initially I thought it may be of interest because of the snow. The photo was taken at the beginning of June or July, 1971. (I cannot remember which but I'm leaning towards July) That was the year my family moved from Caulfield to The Basin and we couldn't believe we had snow. I was rather surprised, when I went to catch the bus, at the shops, there were green men in the middle of the intersection engaged in an amazingly snowball fight. But then, I thought some history might also be of interest.

My father bought the house from Stanley (7) Ralph. It was situated on six acres. I think Mr. Ralph had

owned quite a large amount of land in that area and had developed it. The builder of the houses in Mountain Highway and Stanley Street was a Mr. Jeffrey. He lived at the end of Stanley Street, along with the 'Omni' family. Just down from our house were the 'van Tiel' and the 'Hill' and perhaps Mr. Ralph's brother. On the eastern corner of Stanley Street and Mountain Highway there was a Mr. Cyril Rish. No doubt there will be readers who can fill in the gaps.

The house was sold in 1972 through to King, as the church. It was leased until about 1982, when the construction of St. Demetrius was commenced. Frances Radford, The Basin.



CHILDREN MOLESTED AT THE BASIN

Residents have expressed concern at the bullying and intimidation indulged in by youths who are terrorising several of the school children on their way from school. Strong action will be taken by parents if there is any repetition.

Satan 'Ordered Woman's Death'

MELBOURNE, Monday. — "Satan has directed me and I have killed," an alleged murderer had said when captured on a bush road, the Prosecutor, Mr. P. Mullaly, said in the Criminal Court today.

The man had been captured near the camp of reclusive psychiatrist Dr. Annie Yoffa, 68.

The old woman, camped in the bush for 10 years, was "the Mother of Israel" and had to be "destroyed," the man later told police, according to Mr. Mullaly.

Victor Maxwell Jones, 28, gold prospector, of Greenvale, is charged with the murder of Dr. Yoffa.

Mr. Mullaly said Jones had beaten Dr. Yoffa to death with a tent pole and sapling lengths he broke off at Dr. Yoffa's tent camp at The Basin, in the Dandenong Ranges.

Dr. Yoffa was killed on February 18, 1959, but Jones was certified insane a few days later and had been in and out of mental institutions until a recent declaration that he was fit to stand trial.

Mr. Mullaly said two men would testify they were driving along the road about 8 p.m. on February 18 and saw a man trying to drag a woman through the bush.

The woman was not Dr. Yoffa, but a woman who tried to intervene as he was beating the old recluse.

Mr. Mullaly said the men came across the "chaos" of Dr. Yoffa's camp and her

"terribly battered" body. The men went back to the road and down it half-a-mile and saw Jones in the centre of the road.

When told he would be taken to a police station, Jones replied, "Satan has directed me and I have killed." He kept muttering about "Devil," he told police.

The trial will resume tomorrow.

Army land rezoning

REZONING of Salvation Army owned rural land in The Basin will not necessarily lead to subdivision, the project's planning consultants said this week.

Last week Knox Council voted to prepare a planning scheme amendment to rezone a portion of the Army's land on Mountain Hwy, west of Melbourne Water's storage tanks, to a residential zoning. The land is currently zoned as

special uses.

Rezoning would pave the way for subdivision into 725 square metre residential blocks, but Greg Tulloch from planning consultants and architects Perrott Lyon Mathieson, said the Salvation Army has no plans to subdivide at this stage and is simply broadening its long-term options.

The amendment will be placed on public display for one month.

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