

MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

published monthly, except December

Meetings: 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7.30 pm
in St. Andrews Presbyterian Church Hall

Vol. 6 No. 8

AUGUST 1990

WELCOME TO THE AUGUST NEWSLETTER

In last month's newsletter, we printed an account of the 1929 Back to Morwell Celebrations when the returnees were welcomed by Shire President Cr. Ted Heesom. The Heesom family is one of the oldest in the area and we are indebted to Miss J. Heesom of Traralgon for allowing us to publish an account which she originally wrote for the younger members of the family.

Many readers will remember Mr. Jock Lawson who was Head Gardener at Yallourn from 1928 to 1966. Shortly before his death in a car accident in September 1988, Ann Hollenson interviewed Jock Lawson and we are grateful to the Latrobe Regional Commission for making her account of that interview available.

Another item of interest is the map of the proposed Driffield/Hazelwood Sth. power development which never came into being. Our thanks go to Leo Billington of the Latrobe Regional Commission for this and for the item on Jock Lawson.

We also include, at the request of the Ambulance Service, a letter drawing members' attention to the benefits of subscribing to the Service.

Members have been assisting several students from Maryvale Campus, Kurnai College, who are researching local history as part of their Year 12 history course. Topics include: Morwell Bridge/Morwell West; Women in the Workforce in Morwell During World War 2; The Depression and Its Effects on Morwell and District. We wish those students well with their options and look forward to receiving a copy of their work when it is finished.

On October 1, Morwell Shire will be proclaimed a city. The Shire Council is planning some pre-proclamation festivities for Sunday September 23. We are asked to provide a display. Any suggestions or contributions?

In 1970, Dallas Brooks presented Jock Lawson with a British Empire Medal for his services to Yallourn.

Jock offers one piece of advice to gardeners today: "Never allow weeds to go to seed." He believes private gardens are improving in this region, although such efforts are handicapped by commercial buildings, especially in Morwell, which have become unsightly as they are built right up to the footpath. Landscaping is improving all of the time now, Jock says, as people are learning by their own errors.

Trees are very important in successful landscaping. Last century Melbourne planners became interested in landscaping, planting many elm trees throughout the city. Jock believes these trees were a poor choice. While deciduous trees have their advantages, he believes the autumn leaves in Melbourne are a nuisance. He also points out that an avenue of trees 140 feet apart looks just as pleasing as an avenue of trees 40 feet apart, which crowd the street. He believes that plums, cherries, hawthorn and Queensland Tristaneas (Brush Box) are ideal street trees, as they are relatively small and pleasing to look upon. However, Jock warns that street trees should be standards, with trunks a minimum of one metre tall as such trees look sharp, clean and neat and do not provide shelter for potential thieves or other dangerous characters.

Jock claims the biggest calamity in the gardening world recently has been the advice given by "experts" on weed killers such as DDT and 245T. These chemicals were used in Yallourn to control weeds, as the residents had never known the dangers of the substances. Also, the use of superphosphate, which has promoted the growth of algae in lakes to such an extent that it has upset the ecological balance, is another such disaster, says Jock.

Jock believes Traralgon is a well planned town, attractive and aesthetically pleasing. However, in his view, Morwell his present home, is badly laid out, although improving gradually.

The advice of Jock Lawson, former head gardener of Yallourn, the most beautiful garden town ever to have emerged in this region, is invaluable. His advice is gladly given and people should be encouraged to seek out and consult with this wonderful man.

.....

A CLAYTONS CENTENARY?

Morwell (the whole area of the present Shire, not just the town) will become a City on October 1st this year. Since the Shire of Morwell will be only 98 years old when it ceases to exist, what price the proposed Shire Centenary celebrations planned for 1992 ???!





AMBULANCE SERVICE VICTORIA - SOUTH EASTERN REGION

Regional Headquarters: McDONALD STREET, MORWELL 3840

Please Address mail to:

P.O. Box 148

Morwell 3840

Reference:

Telephone: (051) 34 3266

Fax: (051) 33 7917

July 18, 1990

The Secretary
As Addressed

Dear Sir/Madam

The Ambulance Service is constantly receiving enquiries from interested persons concerning available insurance against its high cost of ambulance transport.

As stated in the attached brochure, the Ambulance is not a free service. A minimum journey costs over \$140.00 and it is not unusual for one trip in an ambulance to cost \$480.00. Ambulance members avoid these high charges.

The current membership rates are as follows:

Family	\$36.50 per year
Single	\$22.50 per year
Pensioners (Family)	\$6.00 per year
Pensioners (Single)	\$4.00 per year

Your co-operation is sought to include the above information in the next edition of your newsletter to ensure that all members are aware of the Ambulance Subscription Scheme.

Yours faithfully

D.F. HAYNES
Regional Superintendent



NEXT MEETING

TUESDAY AUGUST 21ST



DON'T FORGET!

1990-91 SUBS

DUE NOW -

\$ 7.00 Single

\$ 10.00 Couple or family

Kerosene tin chest,
1930s.



RECYCLING - IT'S NOT NEW!

Did you ever own a piece of furniture like this one? Kerosene tins were used for all sorts of things on farms - for feeding animals, boiling, washing, carrying water, storing food to name just a few.

Also of great use were sugarbags. They made serviceable aprons, pot-holders, peg-bags etc. and they were the preferred method of carrying goods from the nearest town by people who either had to walk or ride a horse and carry their purchases on their backs. They were also sometimes joined together and tacked over walls to help exclude the draughts that whistled through the slab buildings.

Flour and oatmeal bags were washed and made into underwear for children. They were also used to cover meat and, stuffed with kapok or other filling, they made good pillows.

What other examples of re-using materials can you remember? Send us YOUR hints on recycling.

NOSTALGIA FOR THE OVER-FIFTIES.

Do you remember -

- the day the clothes prop broke and dumped Mum's whole week's wash in the mud?
- buying a 3d. bag of broken biscuits from the grocer and finding pieces of all those lovely expensive ones that Mum would never buy?
- collecting chips for the bath-heater or copper for your weekly bath - then being last in after all the rest of the family?
- listening to the Sunday night serials on A.B.C. radio ("Greyface", "The Werewolves") then being too scared to go to the toilet which was at the end of the garden?
- getting Christmas and birthday presents wrapped in brown paper and tied up with string?
- some of the chores you had to do as a kid - painting the fireplace with red ochre, blackleading the stove, cutting up newspaper into squares to be hung behind the toilet door on a string?
- putting dry ice into the inkwells at school so you couldn't use the ink?
- when teacher used to use the strap? And the day the Grade 8 boys cut it into little pieces when he wasn't looking? And the look on his face when he found it?

THE HEESOM FAMILY

John Underwood Heesom is recorded as having married Mary Jane Sherwood at Welton, near Hull, Yorkshire, in 1858. Welton at that time, was a village outside Hull but, as the city has expanded over the years, it has now become a suburb. The church where J.U. and M.J. were married is now beside a small ornamental pool with a weeping willow. The windows are of an unusual pastoral character and the surrounds very attractive.

That same year, John Underwood and his bride left for Australia, maybe on their honeymoon, and I think it possible that, about the same time, two other brothers could have gone to America, as work in England was scarce and poorly paid.

J.U. and M.J. boarded the "Jessie Munn" at Liverpool on 9th September 1858 and arrived at Geelong on 24th February 1859. As an assisted migrant, J.U. would probably have had to take his turn at some tasks aboard ship.

At that time there were migrant centres at Geelong and J.U. and M.J. would have lived there before moving into a single fronted wooden house at West Geelong. J.U. worked on road building and other available jobs, helped to run a merry-go-round and must at one time have driven a Cobb & Co. coach between Geelong and Ballarat as he was given a nugget of gold about the size of a pea as payment by one passenger. This was later made into a tie pin.

Three children were born - Sarah: 1862died 26-1-1888
 Thomas: 1863died 12-2-1885
 Edmund: 1866 died 26-4-1930

Mary Jane Heesom died in April 1869 leaving Sarah 7, Thomas 6, and Edmund 3 years and, in september of that same year, J.U. married Mary Blake, a dressmaker at Geelong. In 1871 Martha was born.

About 1876, land was thrown open for settlement at Hazelwood near Morwell in Gippsland and J.U. evidently had amassed enough money to avail himself of this opportunity and he and Mary brought their children to settle on land opposite what is now the Hazelwood Pondage. For many years the wattle and daub kitchen of the original home remained on the property but was then pulled down for want of repair.

In 1876, J.U. joined other settlers in the fight for a school and is recorded as having built the original Ridge school for £5 on land opposite his property. The floor was of slabs and the whole building rather draughty. Water was obtained from Eel Hole creek and at the beginning it was the duty of the children to carry it about a quarter of a mile up to the house.

Land was cleared and fenced, in some cases, with dog-legged fences, the logs being pulled into place by bullocks. Tales are told of the boys wishing to join others on a certain holiday and J.U. finishing the argument with a flick of his bullock whip - there was a fence to build. I can remember that fence, or what little was left of it, years later when being taken to Morwell.

Goods came to Rosedale and, as he grew older, Edmund (Ted) drove a bullock team to and from Hazelwood to Rosedale for supplies and, while on those trips, filled in time learning to play the concertina.

Sarah died at the age of 21 and Thomas at 22, both from T.B.

Hard work paid off and J.U. took his place in the community as a member of the Morwell Water Trust.

Another tale was told of the boys taking horses and sneaking off to a dance one night. Other lads sheared the hair from the tails of some of the horses and unfortunately J.U.s was one of them. Next day justice was dealt out but the dance had been good, and later, the sight of J.U. going off to a meeting, elegant in frock coat with a starched white handkerchief in the breast pocket, on his bob-tailed horse, was funny enough to compensate.

Better land with a river frontage became available at Middle Creek, Yinnar South, and J.U. with Edmund and Martha moved to a property there.

In time Martha married and Ted took up land at Budgeree. Finally J.U. and Mary retired to Black Rock. Mary died on 16th January 1912 and J.U. on 11th May, 1923.

THE HEESOM FAMILY (cont).

As Ted reached maturity, he desired land of his own and selected about 150 acres, five miles south of Yinnar, along Whitelaws Track at the foot of the Budgerie Hills. J.U. had given him a horse on which he rode each week to Yinnar for supplies. Money was always in short supply so, when he had the opportunity of selling this horse for £5 and buying another for £3, he did so. Unfortunately, on a later journey, this new horse put its foot in a crabhole, broke its leg and had to be shot. So, from then on Ted had to walk those five miles at the end of each heavy week and carry the goods home on his back.

Slowly clearing progressed and there was sufficient grass to commence dairying and here, I daresay, stock for starting a herd came from the Middle Creek farm, where Ted was still giving help.

Holidays, if any, were spent at Geelong with a Scottish family whom J.U. and Mary had known and it was at their home that Ted met Jessie Irvine. The friendship ripened and they became engaged. Later, on 22nd November 1894, they were married at the home of Jessie's sister Jean Usher at Willow Grove, near Moe. The Breakfast was at the home of another sister, Mary Lamont, close by. Ted was 29 years of age, and Jessie 26.

Two rooms were built at Budgerie and in those Ted and Jessie set up house. Round the house there was little more than a chain of cleared land in any direction as previous clearing had been concentrated on land to run the cows. The cow shed was about 8 to 10 chains from the house.

With fresh incentive, the bush was pushed back from the house, a bark kitchen was added, a few flowers planted, and gradually a homestead took shape. They planted pines and decided to call it "Pine Grove."

As more cows were added, a way to treat the milk had to be found so Ted started a creamery down by the waters of Middle Creek. There he took the milk from Pine Grove, and other farmers brought theirs. At the creamery, Ted separated the cream from the milk and each farmer took home his share of skim milk for feeding pigs and calves, while Ted took the cream to the factory in Yinnar to be converted into butter. He must have been a very busy person but the money paid by the other farmers was a big help and paid for many improvements at Pine Grove.

By some mischance the bark kitchen was burnt down so another proper room was added to the existing two and a verandah built out in front. It is difficult to date just when each improvement took place but over the years the pines were planted, an orchard with a row of ornamental trees down one side was established and another row of trees planted from house to dairy.

On October 2nd 1895 the first child was born and named Mary Jane Sherwood after Ted's mother. Over the following years Edith Myra, Thos. Edmund, John William, Jessie Ethel and Robert came in quick succession. All but Robert, who died soon after birth, survived.

Naturally the house had to be enlarged as the family grew. Each year further clearing was done on the farm, with everybody helping cutting ferns, stoving stumps and burning up rubbish. I remember how, as children, we had given each stump in the house paddock a name. They were our playmates and many an exciting game of Hide and Seek we had on moonlight nights, using them for cover. All were sacrificed for one shilling per stump! We spent hours keeping the fires alight and piling soil strategically on top until every root was burnt out. The paddock looked better but sometimes we wondered if the money earned covered our loss.

Eventually the farm was able to carry a herd of up to 30 cows plus other stock. Cows were milked by hand, a job at which Mary (Tot) and Edith became very skilled. The poor girls milked 9-10 cows each day before starting out to walk their 2½ miles to school and repeated the task after coming home, taking the place of a hired man.

Round about 1914, Ted bought a T-model Ford car and became an agent for the sale of these vehicles, an occupation which pleased him quite well as he was a persuasive talker and a good mixer. Always a progressive person, he became interested in Council work and politics.

Income was also derived through dealing in cattle etc. which meant constant attendance at sales. All this time spent around the district would not have been possible without hired help and the work of his wife and family at home.

When Jessie died in 1919, the break up of Pine Grove began. Mary, Thomas and Ethel were already away and Jack was on Middle Creek. Edith stayed for a while then moved to Melbourne. A married couple were installed. The home interest was lost and Ted spent more and more time on outside activities. When he became ill, Ethel was on leave from teaching. She and a trained nurse did all that was possible to make him comfortable and he died

peacefully on 26-4-1930, aged 64 years.

THE HEESOM FAMILY (cont).

Before her marriage to Ted, Jessie had worked in some of the more wealthy homes in Geelong district. 5'8" in height and of slim build, she carried herself well and was always particular in dress. Her hair was auburn and curly and she had the sensitive skin usually associated with that colouring. She and Ted made a handsome couple.

Not as outgoing as Ted, Jessie was often thought to be stand-offish, maybe conceited, but this was not so. She didn't make friends as readily, but, once made, those friendships were lifelong.

Handy with her needle, Jessie sewed for her family and was always well turned out and she was a good and thrifty housekeeper. Food was plain but good and there was always a place at table for any caller. With the belief that housekeeper as well as farmer deserved consideration, as far as possible meals were at regular hours and all must come to the table tidily dressed.

Mornings were for the more disagreeable and messy tasks and afternoons for the lighter ones. For Sunday, all vegetables were prepared on Saturday and only a minimum of cooking was done next day. Church, 2½-3 miles distant, was attended if it was the day for a visiting clergyman, and a certain amount of visiting between families enjoyed.

In many ways, Jessie was timid and the change to pioneer farming must have tried her courage to the full. First there was the loneliness as there were no near neighbours, and then there were the terrifying things like snakes, crawly spiders, possums and even the koalas who looked so cuddly in daytime but made such awful noises at night. Snakes were her greatest fear. One evening as she and Ted were lying on the grass in the cool of the evening, after a hot day, a snake crawled over her outstretched arm, almost reducing her to hysteria. Later, there was the experience of opening a drawer of a cupboard, near where her eldest baby, Tot, was sleeping, to find a snake curled up inside. Perhaps the most traumatic experience was finding a large snake in the wash house and having to watch it for over an hour before the men came home to kill it. Looking back to childhood, I have memories of our mother turning down the covering on our beds very carefully to make sure no snakes had hidden themselves there as there was a nest of them under the house. As these reptiles gradually came out looking for food, they were killed but our parents were never sure if they had the last one. No wonder long snakekiller sticks were strategically placed all around the house and garden.

Often Jessie was not well and caring for her growing family taxed her strength. Later in life she was often forced to give in and spend time on the sofa but the excuse was always "only a bad headache."

In 1919, when the 1914-18 war was over, she and Ted went to Melbourne to meet the boat bringing home her youngest brother, Dick. However the reunion never took place. Jessie had a bad haemorrhage and was taken to hospital and did not recover sufficiently to undergo operation. She died on 9-6-1919, while Dick was still on his ship in the Bay. Today, the complaint from which Jessie suffered would be diagnosed as a duodenal ulcer.

"PINE GROVE"

As stated earlier, when Ted and Jessie were married, Pine Grove consisted of only two rooms- a bedroom and a livingroom. A bark kitchen was added but later burnt down. When this happened, it was decided to build a proper one and the new room was built on to the back of the living room, making use of the present chimney, and the new large kitchen became the living room. At the same time a verandah was built across the front. For the moment, that was sufficient but, as time went on and the family grew, more space was needed so a new and still larger kitchen was built and the old one became a bedroom. For many years the Middle Creek schoolteacher was always housed at Heesom's and this became her room. Eventually, I can remember, it even boasted a carpet square while other rooms were linoleum covered - no cover in the kitchen.

On the other side of a passageway three more bedrooms were built. Finally a wash house was added at the back of the kitchen and a back verandah built to tidy things up.

Water was always a problem so an underground tank was built to take the overflow from the house and when the wash house was added, Ted showed his ingenuity by installing a pump and copper. This square copper-stand of brick stood about 4 feet high and all water had to be lifted up into it but it was an improvement on boiling clothes in a kerosene tin on the kitchen fire or on an open fire outside. And the trough! It was easily 3 feet long by 1½ feet wide, made of sheet tin set in a frame and with a hand-

THE HEESOM FAMILY (cont).

-turned wringer !! - such affluence! Fired by enthusiasm, a bath was now built in a similar fashion in the back bedroom. The sheets of tin were joined along the base of the bath with studs about the size of a halfpenny and these left their imprints on the seats of the bathers but that in no way took from the luxury of a full bath. In the beginning, water was heated in four gallon kerosene tins on the kitchen fire and carried to the bath. When a fountain was added and one could have more water, life was indeed good. What did it matter if the one lot of water had to bathe various members of the family in turn? Don't think you could have a bath every night either. Once or sometimes twice a week was all the water supply would allow.

Pine Grove was always a house of hospitality and many a young girl or man learnt to dance over the rough boards of that kitchen floor to the music supplied by Dad on his concertina, someone on a mouth organ, or even a musician with comb and tissue paper.

As funds became more plentiful a piano was bought and Mary (Tot) and Edith learnt to play a little - enough to struggle through the accompaniment of hymns and popular songs sung by groups of visitors and home folk.

Everybody could ride a horse and Edith and Tot rode off with their boy friends to dances with their good dresses hitched up around their waists on top of their divided riding skirts. Many a time they danced the night through, returning home in time to milk the cows before going off for a sleep.

Mum and Dad went out more sedately in the buggy with Paddy and Bessie, the well matched pair of black ponies. The younger members of the family rode these ponies to school 2½-3 miles distant if they (the ponies) were near enough to catch in the morning.

Looking back, there were many times when life on the farm was not easy but one can be nostalgic about those days when joys were simple and home was really HOME.

.....

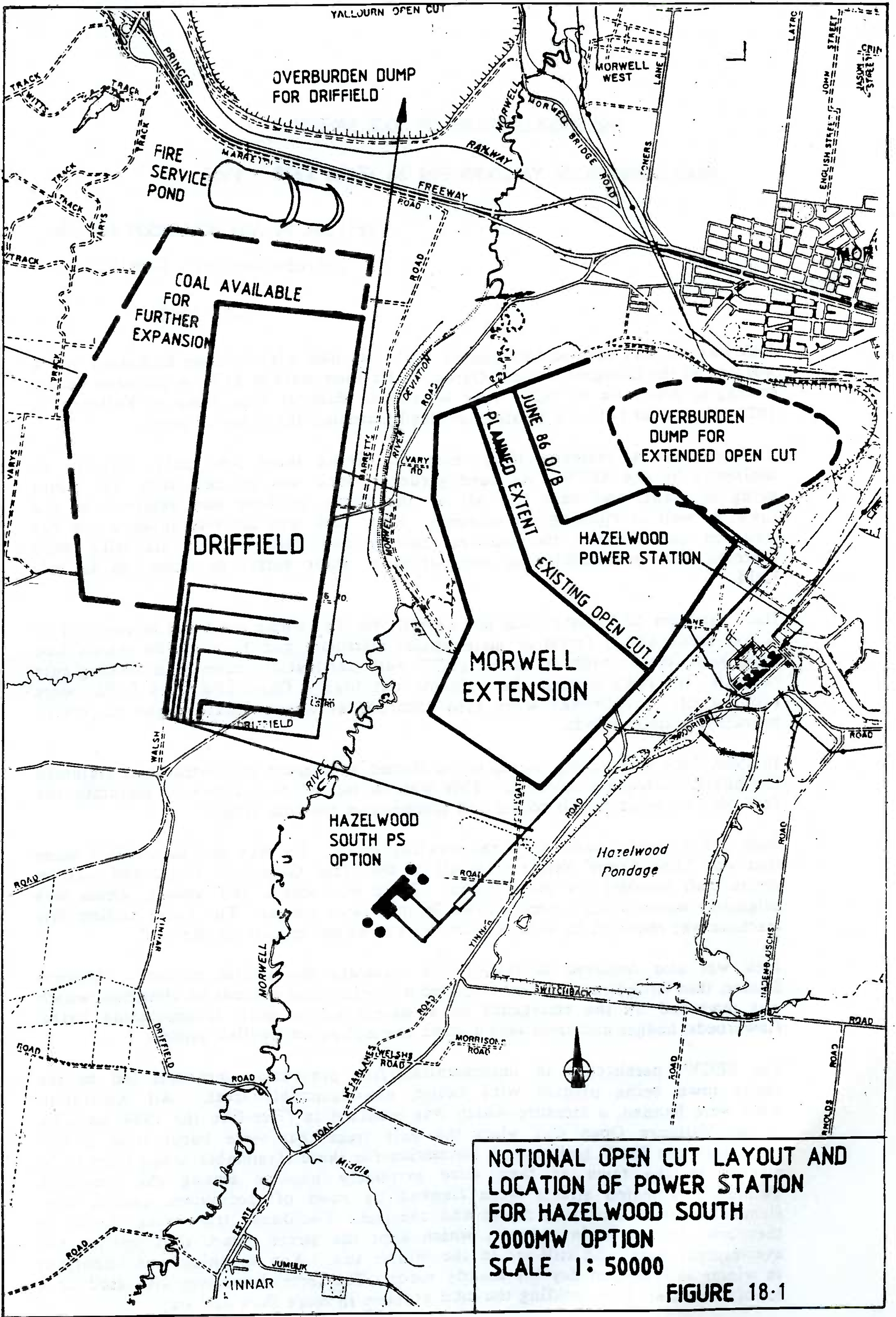
AS IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

The map opposite represents history as it might have been. It is history now, but many will still remember an S.E.C. plan to build many new power stations here in the Latrobe Valley.

The Driffield/Hazelwood South development was a serious option ten years ago. (Of course, today such a development is a figment of the S.E.C.V's imagination.)

Members will realise just how much of our historical heritage would disappear if the above development did proceed. We have lost a lot with the expansion of the Morwell Open cut - site of Maryvale Homestead and the threatened site of the Hazelwood Homestead - and any further S.E.C. expansion would "eat up" more.

History is being recorded constantly and the once-planned S.E.C.V. expansion is now history.



7.

THE RECOLLECTIONS OF JOCK LAWSON

HEAD GARDENER OF YALLOURN FOR 38 YEARS 1928 - 1966

Written by ANN HOLLENSON for the
Latrobe Regional Commission

July 1988

Jock Lawson was born in Scotland in 1901. He took night classes in Botany while working at the Glasgow Botanic Gardens. He then worked at Kew Gardens before coming to Australia in 1927. Jock worked in Ballarat then came to Yallourn in 1928. He was to hold the position of Head Gardener there for 38 years.

Yallourn was a company town; everyone living there was paid, directly or indirectly by the SECV. As head gardener, Jock was no exception, his duties being to plant, and care for, all of the parks, gardens and reserves in the town, as well as running the nursery. Also, Jock was actively involved in the Yallourn and District Horticultural Society and both he and his wife were awarded life memberships in recognition of their active participation in this field.

Head gardener of Yallourn was not a small job. The whole town was surrounded by ti tree scrub and a forest of stringybark, messmate and fern gullies which had to be kept free of rubbish, as the SECV were particularly careful in making sure that all fire risks around the valuable but highly flammable coal fields were eliminated. Firebreaks were also cleared, at approximate right angles to prevalent summer winds.

In 1930, Jock was among others to be elected as trustees to control and maintain the public recreation reserves. This was on top of his duties to maintain the four playing ovals, tennis courts and croquet and bowling greens.

Jock had a special interest in the bowling green. He was on the 1937-38 team that won "The Argus" shield from all of the other Gippsland clubs, and was an active club member for many years. There was also a golf course, which was originally mown using a horse-drawn 36 inch lawn mower. The horse pulling this machine was required to wear leather shoes so as not to pull up the turf.

Jock was also required to layout and maintain the public gardens. Monash Square, then Broadway Gardens required a considerable amount of attention, which was rewarded by the emergence of a stately public park incorporating paths, flowerbeds, hedges and trees into a scene resembling an English garden.

The SECV's persistence in implementing fire prevention measures led to the entire town being planted with exotic, non-flammable trees. All Australian trees were banned, a measure which was justified in fires like the 1944 bushfire in the Yallourn Open Cut when the only trees that were burnt were a few cypresses - the SECV had made a concession for these flammable hedge trees to be planted in the town as they were extremely popular among the residents. Yallourn's unsealed streets were flanked by rows of deciduous, exotic, non-flammable trees, including plums and cherries. Deciduous trees were chosen as they provided shade in summer, which kept the street damp, thus settling the ever-present dust, and still let in the winter sun. Any sunshine was important in winter as it helped dry the muddy roads. The trees themselves also used up a lot of the water, thus tackling the mud problem in more than one way.

THE RECOLLECTIONS OF JOCK LAWSON (cont).

While the trees in the streets were planted in regular rows, in the parks, to retain a natural look, the trees were clumped and planted in drifts. Irregular banks of shrubs and flowers were also used in the parks to produce a stunning effect. Most species of shrubs and flowers were used to help beautify the town.

Local residents were also expected to keep their own private gardens in good order. Sir John Monash, the chairman of the SECV during Yallourn's formative years, believed that individual residents owed it to the rest of the community to see that their house and garden did not become an eyesore, and to keep their property tidy and pleasing to look upon. The SECV provided good soil, brought up from the Latrobe River flats, gravel, timber edgings and stable manure as

well as twenty shrubs, hedge plants or trees, for the establishment of new gardens. Hedges were very important because there were few fences. Thus, many beautiful gardens emerged from the original stiff clay overburden that Yallourn was built on. The Yallourn and District Horticultural Society encouraged resident's gardening abilities through Horticultural Shows, held twice a year and by awarding prizes to the best kept gardens. Jock Lawson remembers wandering around Yallourn every March marking each garden with a score out of 100 points.

Yallourn resident's water supply was pumped out of the Latrobe River to a reservoir on the north-east side of the town. The power station depended upon a pure water supply as many of its components would be corroded by dirty water. Therefore, Yallourn's water was filtered and pure, the best in the region, and the town residents watered their gardens with it. Most watering throughout the town was achieved using sprinklers and hoses. Only Monash Square and Broadway had built-in "disappearing" sprinklers to water the gardens there.

Jock Lawson enjoyed the challenge of developing gardens from the original infertile clay. He felt that the beauty of Yallourn was the private gardens, which he had helped to flourish, and the overall personality of the residents. He felt Yallourn was a wonderful town to live in, for many reasons. Perhaps it was that most of the residents were very intelligent, well trained tradesmen. Or maybe it was the fact that everyone knew nearly everyone else in the town, or the high morality amongst the residents. Jock, and many other people, believed Yallourn was a special town, a close knit community of people all working together with the same goal and the same community spirit.

Yet, in 1961, the SECV decided that Yallourn would have to be demolished, as the valuable coal bed it was built on was needed for mining. Although the residents were dismayed, there was little they could do about the situation, especially when in 1971, an inquiry confirmed and approved of the SECV's decision. The people held protest meetings, to no avail, and the SECV produced exceptional arguments for their case, although these were often disbelieved by the residents. During the early 1970's the town was gradually demolished, the beautiful garden town the residents had worked so hard for. Only the memories remain, fading away until they too will have disappeared.