

Greensborough Historical Society Inc.

# Newsletter

Edition 23, September 2016

Incorporation No. **A0054430X**  
ABN **64 318 435 402**



## President's Report

Another year almost at an end and time to take stock of the development and future direction of Greensborough Historical Society.

Our membership has steadily increased and retention of existing members gratifying because you are the Society for whom the Committee works and without you we would be a rudder without a boat so if you would like our programme to include something that you believe is missing we would like to hear about it.

Besides membership we still need the support of higher authorities and we are fortunate enough to have received an annual Heritage Grant from Nillumbik Shire Council that provides internet access to our History Resource Centre so that members and visitors can research our local history and personal genealogy for which we are most grateful. This connection also allows us to download our research onto Museum Victoria's "Victorian Collections" web site allowing a wider public access and for which we were again nominated for an award for our contribution, our Archivist Sue Ballantyne and her team are congratulated for their continued effort.

Greensborough Chamber of Commerce has supported us since our inception and continues to do so likewise the support from Banyule City Council and Greensborough RSL is much appreciated and we thank them all for that. Our thanks must go to the Diamond Valley Learning Centre and the Greenhills Neighbourhood Centre for their support and use of their facilities where we are always welcome.

We encourage members to attend the History Resource Centre on our weekly Thursdays and on our open days when you can join us for a cuppa and we can help you with research that you may be involved in.

Our aim to create a greater awareness of our diverse and interesting history is ongoing through talks to schools and community groups as well as our yearly display at the Greensborough Shopping Centre thanks to the Diamond Valley Community Support Centre.

I wish to thank each member of the Committee and our Thursday research team for their ongoing work towards making this a progressive and successful Society and thank you our members for your support and encouragement over the past 12 months.

We all look forward to the coming year and whatever challenges and successes it may bring.

Thank You all,  
Noel

<b>Committee 2016/17</b>
--------------------------

<b>President</b>	Noel Withers 94354513	<b>Vice President</b>	Peter Van Eeken 94358715
<b>Secretary</b>	Norm Colvin 94352903	<b>Treasurer</b>	John Gibson 94350097

**Committee Members:**

Sue Ballantyne   Suzanne Brenkovich   Anne Paul   Marilyn Smith

<b>Contact the Greensborough Historical Society</b>
---

Web Site:     [www.greensboroughhistorical.org.au](http://www.greensboroughhistorical.org.au)

Email:   [info@greensboroughhistorical.org.au](mailto:info@greensboroughhistorical.org.au)

By Post:        Greensborough Historical Society Inc.  
4 Jenna Close, Greensborough 3088.

In Person:     **Resource Centre**  
34 Glenauburn Road (off Para Road), Lower Plenty  
Open Thursdays from 10.00am to 3.00pm  
Visitors welcome

<b>Meeting dates and times for 2016</b>
---

*New members and visitors are most welcome to join us at our meetings.*

Committee meetings are generally held at 7.00pm on the third Wednesday of each month. Venue: Resource Centre.

The Resource Centre will be open on the second Saturday of each month for research into your family or the local area. All welcome!

Date	Day	Time	Activity	Venue
30/09/16	Friday	1.15 pm	Annual General Meeting	Greenhills        Neighbourhood Centre
08/10/16	Saturday	1.00 pm	<b>Open day HRC</b>	History Resource Centre
29/10/16	Saturday	1.15 pm	Heritage Meeting	History Resource Centre
12/11/16	Saturday	1.00 pm	<b>Open day HRC</b>	History Resource Centre
25/11/16	Friday	1.15 pm	SGM, Christmas Meeting	Greenhills        Neighbourhood Centre

**Dates for 2017 will be published in the December 2016 Newsletter and on the GHS website.**

**Editor's Note:** Articles and photos for inclusion in the Newsletter are always welcome and can be sent to Sue via email at [sueballantyne2010@hotmail.com](mailto:sueballantyne2010@hotmail.com)

## **'Earlier days in Greensborough'**

**by Jean Luxford as told to John Gibson**

People have settled in Greensborough for several reasons, frequently for business opportunities, and this was the case with our family. My father, Wallace Luxford, and Mr (John) Cecil Jessop had been friends in the First World War. Both were involved in a concert party called 'The Anzac Coves'. Mr Jessop was the secretary, and Dad, the electrician. Others acted, dressed as clowns. The group even performed at Buckingham Palace!



*The Anzac Coves, 14 June 1918, Cecil Jessop top left, Wallace Luxford top right.*

My father met my mother, Isabel Waugh, in England during the War, I think through my aunt. She worked in the box office of a London theatre. Mr Jessop, perhaps as secretary of 'The Anzac Coves' needed to have some dealing with the theatre and met her in that way. Mr Jessop was already engaged to a lady called Kate Robinson whom he married when he returned to Australia. He said to my aunt, *'Why don't we go to the theatre? You bring your sister and I'll bring my friend.'*

His friend was my father. The sister was my mother. They liked each other and she was willing to come out here.

They were married in England after the War, in July 1919. They left for Australia in December of

that year and arrived in Melbourne in February 1920.



*Wallace and Isabel Luxford (third and fourth from right) heading to Australia on the Port Napier in December 1919.*

They lived in my grandfather's house in Abbotsford. I was born in East Melbourne while my parents were living in Abbotsford.



*Isabel Luxford with daughter Jean in the early 1920s in Clark Street, Abbotsford.*

### **Childhood memories**

We came to Greensborough in 1926 at the invitation of Mr Jessop. He had already established an estate agency in Greensborough. As my father was an electrician, Mr Jessop suggested that as the electricity had come through in the early 1920s there would be plenty of work and there was a house for us to rent in Main Street. So we came and both my brother

Keith and sister Margaret were born while we lived here.



*The Luxford home in Main Street, Greensborough, rented from Mr Jessop. Chemist Warehouse is now located there.*



*Jean's brother, Keith Luxford in their backyard about 1929. Mr Jessop's Greensborough office can be seen in the right rear. It was located on the corner of Main Street and Grimshaw Street, where the pest exterminator business operates in 2016.*



*All Saints Anglican Church kindergarten group in the vicarage garden in 1930. Jean is in the third*

*row, with white ribbons in her hair. Keith is at the right of the front row, looking away.*



*Cecil Jessop driving his car, next his wife Kate, then Isabel Luxford holding daughter Jean, about 1926.*

Things were good at first but the Depression of the 1930s brought hardship to many families including ours. Some government assistance was provided, known as 'Sustenance', but we didn't receive this. A playground rhyme of the time reflects the hard times.

*We're on the Susso now,  
We can't afford a cow,  
We live in a tent,  
We pay no rent,  
We're on the Susso now.*

An alternate version of the Susso rhyme was:

*We're on the Susso now,  
We can't afford a cow,  
We live in a ditch,  
We'll never be rich,  
We're on the Susso now.*

During the Depression I used to see men going up to Mr Jessop's office at certain times. They seemed to have bags with them and I'm not sure, but I think there must have been some sort of food distribution to people. We could have probably done with it, but my mother wouldn't. I don't know how it was allocated, I think to people in strained circumstances. People were



hard up in Greensborough in those days. I can remember children going to school without any shoes in the Depression.

Keith and Margaret went to the Greensborough State School. I never went there. I was sent off to Ivanhoe Grammar as a very small child but after about two years I had to leave because of the Depression then I went to another little school at Heidelberg called Coreen to Grade 6. Then I went to Eltham High for two years and to University High for three years.

My mother became active in various organizations in the Anglican Church in Main Street and my father was the organist there for several years.



*All Saints Anglican Church, Plant Stall Ladies, 1935, from left Jean Luxford, Doreen Olly, Margaret Cordner, Mrs Harry Ryan, Miss Cox - known as 'Queenie'.*

The Poulters lived next to us. One stray cat had eight kittens in the box thorn bush between our house and the Poulter's house. The Poulters had two children, Ray, who was contemporary with my sister, and Lorraine, who became Mrs Coates and has only recently died.



*Jean Luxford in father Wallace's arms in their Main Street backyard, with the partly built Poulter home behind.*

The Poulters were related to the Roys. Mrs Roy's lovely Victorian house, which was in Main Street, is long gone. Leslie Hooper was brought up in the Roy house by her mother and father. She had a brother, Keith.

In 1932 or 1934 the Plenty River flooded. I remember as a child standing on Greensborough Station and seeing Poulter Reserve inundated. A house further along in Poulter Avenue was partly submerged. In Main Street, a lady from a house near the Plenty River reported that her piano was standing in 1-2 inches of water.

In 1935 the Anglican vicarage was occupied by the Binns family with whom I was friendly. There were three children who were corresponding in age with us. Keith was friendly with Greg, I was friendly with Ruth and Margaret was friendly with Phyllis. When I was about 13 we'd go for walks on a Sunday afternoon. As the Ryans had established a butcher's shop and dwelling in Main Street, Nancy Ryan was our friend too.

For entertainment, apart from playing sport, there were other ways of enjoyment. We gathered wild flowers – spider orchids, cowslip orchids, nodding greenhoods, chocolate flowers and egg and bacon. I remember going for walks,

gathering blackberries, and there were bonfires on Guy Fawkes Day. You could buy many kinds of sweets, some even for a halfpenny. There were comics and collections of footballer cards.

Besides playground games like marbles and hopping, there were skipping rhymes too:

*All in together  
This cold weather  
I saw Jack  
Peeping through a crack  
Shoot! Bang! Fire!  
And you all ran out.*

This was another popular rhyme amongst children:

*Giddy giddy gout  
Your shirt's hanging out  
Five miles in  
And six miles out*

The circus came to Greensborough in the 1930s but we didn't go to it. It always pitched its tent in Grimshaw Street and had cages for its animals. I think the men from circus used to come down and catch yabbies out of Starling's Pond. I don't know if they ate them or whether they fed them to some of the animals.

### Three places of interest

Starling's Pond was where the former swimming pool was located and where Watermarc is now. That was below the house we lived in. Mr Starling lived in Flintoff Street and owned the land. I remember old Mr Starling. He was white haired when I knew him. His garden in Flintoff Street had a fountain in it. He used to sit outside the back of his house, in a sunny spot.

It was probably Mr Starling who planted that whole row of quince trees that grew along one side and beyond it. They were old trees but fruitful. Mature, neglected, they bloomed each year. The boys from the State School used to come down and get 'quangers' as they called them to eat and, yes, we took some too.



*Keith Luxford in the family backyard in January 1950. Mr Starling's row of quince trees is in the middle distance. Grimshaw Street is at the right rear.*



*Another view of Keith in the Luxford backyard about 1950, shows the Cordner home at the right rear, the Splatt home in the centre, and the Stopford home at centre left.*

**Editor's note: Jean's complete tale of growing up in Greensborough will be included in our next volume of stories.**

## Thomas Mill Dig, Mernda



At our July 2016 meeting, Brandi Bugh, archaeologist with Heritage Victoria spoke on the archaeological dig at Thomas Mill, Mernda.

The site was established as a mill in 1854 when Moses Thomas, a qualified engineer, returned from the goldfields with a vision for a mill one mile upstream from the Carome Mill.

Powered by steam, his mill was operating a year later. Water power was cheaper, so Thomas dammed the river to ensure a steady flow and the mill continued to operate until 1863 when the dam was washed away during a storm.

In 2015, a team from Heritage Victoria completed an archaeological dig on the site, with community engagement from students of Morang South Primary School and Mill Park Secondary College.

Thank to Brandi for an interesting insight into modern archaeology.

---

## A Latvian Family in Greensborough

*Atis Lejins' story of life in Greensborough continues...*

I am sure the answers lie in Australia. After all, I grew up there, from the age of seven to seventeen, in the innocent fifties, when Bill Haley and the Comets exploded onto the music scene with their hit song 'Rock Around the Clock', and us kids all stood in long lines at the movie theatre to see Elvis Presley in 'Jail House Rock'. I promptly bought a pair of blue suede shoes. I can remember everything as if it all happened only yesterday. This is my story...

It was a very fine, hot, Australian summer's day seven years after the end of the Second World War. The hot North wind had turned the green leaves of the lilac bushes black in the garden of our home in the Melbourne suburb of Greensborough and the dust lifted behind the cows as they walked languidly across the paddocks in the bend of the Plenty River. What just a few weeks earlier had been lush green pastures thriving on the sediment deposited each year by the flooding river had now turned into a dust bowl, covered with patches of dried brown and yellow grass still holding out in the hope the rain would soon come.

I was thirteen and my little sister, Aija was two years younger when we burst into the kitchen of the old house built by Greensborough's first settler, Mr. William Poulter, and froze in our tracks when we saw our mother crying. My brother Aivars was older than us and was out most of the time with his friends. My sister and I were always running in and out regardless of the heat; every day was exciting as there was plenty to do by the river and on the steep hill, covered with trees and blackberry bushes on the other side. Our great joy was the canoe built by my brother from tin, tar and wood. The canoe leaked but we had an old, tin cup to bail the water out and so could paddle a long way in the murky waters, navigating past fallen trees and

scooting over shallow shoals playing Cowboys and Indians.

I had a real bow and several arrows, made by my father, which had been handed down to me from my brother. I always took the side of the Indians who, against all odds, defended their land from the encroaching white settlers and their soldiers, who spoke in forked tongues. Only much later did I realize why I adopted this attitude.

We had never seen our mother cry before and were terrified as we clutched at her side, crying ourselves. What had happened? Between the tears she pointed to a letter lying on the kitchen table and sobbed that her mother had died in Germany.



**ATIS CELEBRATING HIS BIRTHDAY WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS AT THE POULTER AVENUE HOUSE**

Our house, which we rented, cost us hardly anything. I think it was a few shillings a month. It was so cheap because there was no electricity. Mr. Pope, the landlord, who lived across the meadow and tilled his land with a great big horse and plough, was just glad to have somebody living in it. It consisted of two parts. The original part had two rooms made from massive stones, mud and straw built by Mr. Poulter sometime in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The thick, brown stones kept both rooms cool in the summer but much wood was needed for the primitive fireplace in the main room to keep it warm in the winter. The road where we lived was named in his honour and was proudly called Poulter Avenue, although

it was just a gravelly dirt track with potholes where two cars would have had difficulty passing each other. It didn't matter, it was a dead-end road and precious few cars found their way to it. The one-armed postman rode a bike.

I don't know when the two additional rooms made of wooden boards were added to the two original rooms. Then there was the partly enclosed veranda, and the kitchen. The sink had one tap with cold running water, and it tasted delicious. I guess there were no chemicals mixed in the water. Our family practically lived in the kitchen where a tall kerosene lamp with a wick and glass cylinder hidden under a huge lampshade stood in the middle of a big table and lit up the whole kitchen with a warm, bright light. An iron stove stood a few feet away by the outside wall where my mother cooked our food. I chopped the wood for the stove and the fireplace. This cost us nothing, as we gathered broken branches and sometimes whole logs from the river after the yearly floods had subsided.

We also grew much of our own food. The potatoes lasted until the next spring. In summer I lugged our cucumbers and sometimes tomatoes up the hill, opposite the hill where we played, to the local fruit and vegetable shop on the main road and was given a handful of coins in return from the owner's pocket. Our cucumbers were much better than those delivered by truck from the vegetable market. My father had been a farmer in Latvia before he became a teacher. Us three kids spent a lot of time weeding the garden, which must have helped the vegetables grow fat and juicy.



**PHOTO OF THE POULTER AVE HOUSE TAKEN BY ATIS**





ATIS (FAR RIGHT) AND FAMILY WITH ONE OF THEIR COWS

Old man Pope built a fence around our house and garden and soon the apple trees and gooseberry bushes recovered from the predations of the cows. We had two cows, sometimes three, so we had free milk, cheese, cream and butter. I had the job of turning the handle of the Alfa Laval milk separator. Later, I helped my brother milk the cows. Nothing was more delicious than a cup of frothy, warm, rich, milk straight from the bucket! We also had free eggs and chicken meat. I fed the forty or so hens and when visitors came it was my job to catch a couple, chop off their heads on the block of wood under the big weeping willow tree, and pluck them clean before I presented them to my mother. My father selected the best eggs and sold them at Eltham High School where he taught mathematics.

But having visitors, old friends from the refugee camps who were now also living in Melbourne, placed another obligation on me. I had to trek up the hill to Green's Hotel with a huge, empty canvas bag which the bartender stacked full with brown bottles of beer for the money my father gave me. It was harder going downhill as I had to be careful not to break any of the bottles.

We washed our clothes in a small shed which had a huge tin drum inside where we heated the water and then used a new shiny bucket to pour it into an old tub. It was almost like a sauna in there or what Latvians call a 'pirts'.

My mother only started working after we had finished our primary education at the little red brick school in Greensborough and I had started to take the train to Heidelberg Junior Technical School in 1955. That was four years before my grandfather died and that meant he could have lived with us for almost a decade.

But us kids were somewhat different from the rest. The three of us were the only so called 'new Australians' attending the little red brick country school. In the beginning, when I ate my sandwiches all the other kids stood around in a semi-circle watching me, wide-eyed. I was eating black, rye bread that had a crust on it. The bread they ate was pure white, soft like cotton, and to my surprise they threw away the crust because it was a mite harder.



Back: Trevor Elliott; R. 7; Bill Hult; Gavin Nutter; Les King; Keith Searle; Gary Partington.  
2nd Back: Peter Amos; Raie Collyer; Carol Green; Margaret Finney; Elaine Foad; Rosely Dunlop; Lynette Fonata; Mr Jennings; Geoff Taylor.  
Seated: Robert Kirkwood; Wesley Connell; Edwin Hay; John Skingle; Atis Lejins; Doug Coombes; Barry Polkinghorne.  
2nd Front: Graham Watson; Alan (Butch) Cunningham; David Vickers; Tom Malcolm; George Henderson; John Hall; Barry Wasley  
Cyril (Buddy) Dempster; John Clements.  
Front: Ken Carlson; Dorothy Curran; Belinda Mathwin; Nessie Watson; Heather Laing; Dawn Cooper; John Archer.

GREENSBOROUGH SCHOOL GRADE 6 1954

My sister and I were the only children to perform at adult gatherings. Our mother had taught us simple Latvian folkdances and we became a huge success with all the other mothers. There were hardly any fathers because these events took place during the day. There was only one other performer, my friend David, who was dressed in a kilt and played the bagpipes. His father owned the Chemist shop, Vickers, but their name didn't sound very Scottish to me. There was no "Mac" in front of it. His parents were the ones who rescued us from the one room where the five of us lived in Mentone for the first year after we arrived in Australia. Mr Vickers picked us up in his old brown Model T Ford and drove us to the old

house by the Plenty River. The ride seemed to take forever, it was very hot, and I became car sick. I had never travelled in a car before.



*Atis and his family left Greensborough in 1960 for America where he completed his schooling and attended College. After a varied career, he returned to Latvia following the restoration of independence in 1991 and was elected to its Parliament in 2010. Atis is in contact with GHS and has shared photos and other stories of the life of a refugee family in Greensborough in the 1950s. His full story will be available on the GHS website in October.*

---

## From the Archives

Many thanks to those members and supporters who continue to donate items to our collection. Recently June Hall donated another painting by her late husband Doug Hall, "Oldstead Farm".

Peter Simmenauer continues his research into the ownership of land around Watsonia including the Black family. Dawn Bennetts and Marilyn Smith have interviewed members Gloria Stevens and Lesley Hooper and their stories will appear in later Newsletters. John Gibson interviewed Jean Luxford (part of Jean's story in this Newsletter). Wonderful photos accompany each of the stories.

Merilyn Mullavey is compiling our 'future history' from local newspapers and continues her work on the origin of street names.

Peter Van Eeken is busy compiling the GHS archives into an in-house database searchable by Location and Date. Editing of the information on Victorian Collections is progressing as

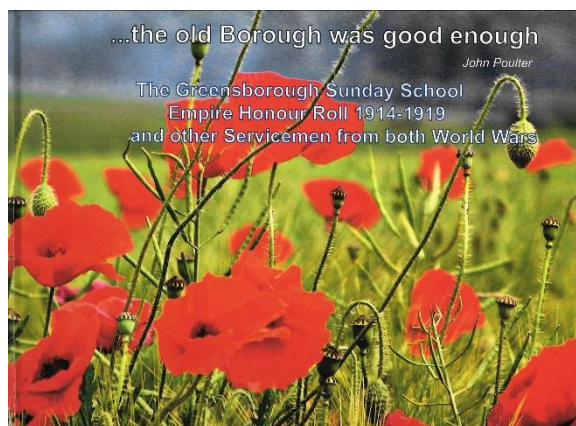
cataloguing of new items continues. GHS has now contributed over 2600 entries to Victorian Collections.

At the Resource Centre, the Bookshelves have undergone some reorganisation. Peter Simmenauer has compiled booklists of our major collections: Local History, Australian History and Military History. These lists will be published with the next few Newsletters, but if you would like a full copy emailed to you, please contact Sue. [sueballantyne2010@hotmail.com](mailto:sueballantyne2010@hotmail.com)

Members are able to borrow books from the collection so if you see something you'd like to read, call in to the Resource Centre any Thursday and we'll be happy to help.

**Sue Ballantyne, Archivist.**

**Our latest donation:** On September 30<sup>th</sup>, Bryan Henderson generously donated a copy of his compilation on The Greensborough Sunday School Empire Honour Roll and other Servicemen from both Wars, titled "...the old Borough was good enough".



The book will be available at the Resource Centre from mid-October.

Congratulations to Bryan on his excellent work.

<p><b>Printing of this Newsletter supplied courtesy of Colin Brooks MP</b></p>
--