

NEWSLETTER

Ringwood in the 1890s

Charles Parker was an early resident of Ringwood and served in WWI. Here is part of his story about the 1890s.

Halfway between Ringwood and Ringwood East, Olly Pratt had a butchery. At East Ringwood Herry's store and bakery and with it another small shop selling haberdashery comprised the commercial activities of the area. Scattered homes dotted the hillside and, as far as Oban Road, along what was called then Anderson's Creek Road, there were, at the turn of the century, the families of Anderson, Kennedy, Falconer, Unsworth, Pollard, Porteous, Hone, Parker, Dickson, Williams along Wonga Road, Mackinlay, McDermott, Murphy, French, Paris, McAlpin and Ferguson. Along the road to Warrandyte there were the Hann, Kennedy, Milne, Tortice, Campbell and Hussey families. Most were engaged in fruit growing with wood carting, by some, as a side line.

After the turn of the century, settlement increased slowly as people found there was peace and quiet to be had on cheap blocks of land which could be bought by the acre. Many a dis-used house in the boom stricken suburbs of Melbourne found a resting place on a 10-acre block.

On a visit back to old Ringwood one could pick out quite a few of the transplanted homes which sheltered the new settlers of that period. Along Bedford Rd. on the way to Bayswater, quite a few railway men had their homes. Memory falters as to many of the families but Dawson, Kraft, Roberts, Graham, Wadeson and Savage come to mind. Further along the road the Blood families had orchards and later on were business men and councillors, in the Municipality as 'twas called.

RINGWOOD'S HALLS

NEXT MEETING

TUESDAY 8PM, 27 AUGUST 2013

Russ Haines will give a presentation on the early history of Ringwood and its halls, that became the focal point of many organisations, concerts and events. They were the life-blood of the community, some say an era that has now been lost with the focus on a shopping centre.

The stationmaster was a Mr Ryan in a uniform calculated to inspire admiration in the local urchins. It was a period when uniforms meant full employment and they were really venerated. The amenities enjoyed by the populace could quite easily be said to be non-existent outside of the Post Office Service. No mail delivery, no paper delivery, no telephones, even at the Post Office, a doubtful railway telegraph service.



No sanitary service, no sewer, no doctor, dentist, hospital, chemist, street lighting, electricity, library, organised sport, public park nor swimming except surreptitiously in someone's dam. No water service and no organised community effort to interest people in their district and cater for the young people.

Peace and quiet were attributes now seemingly lost forever. The only noise at night was of the lonely mopoke, the lowing of a cow or the clippity clop of a passing horse and that was infrequently. Everyone knew the gait of his neighbour's horse, or the peculiar noise made by the vehicle, such as a tip dray, wagon or spring cart.

A motor car was unknown, a great blessing indeed and such things as lung cancer did not intrude until the advent of the curse of the road. Strange sentiments, but the car has taken from Ringwood and a thousand places like it, the enjoyment of local travel. To go to the Yarra at Warrandyte was an experience. Along the way one observed the orchards, the bushland, the birds and the scenery at leisure. Today you are there, having seen nothing, found nothing and no place left to discover, except perhaps a car park or a search to find privacy.

What grieves the returning native most of all is the destruction of the orchards and the views from the hilltops. A sea of houses even with the trees surrounding them leaves one appalled when the vistas which we of the nineties enjoyed are remembered. On a clear day the smoke arising from the scattered chimneys, the green paddock, with cattle grazing contentedly alongside of the orderly rows of apple, pear and plum trees, filled one with content and left an indelible picture, recurring to the mind of the wanderer in quiet moments of the day. Gone too, is the quiet and gone too is the leisurely day to day existence of those who tilled the orchards even though the days were lonely.

Of living conditions many no doubt in that period following the financial disaster of 1893, suffered grievous want and no amount of scenery or beauty filled empty stomachs. Mostly, however, they had a cow and poultry. Meat was cheap, but money was scarce. A butchers cutting cart came once a week and the problem of keeping meat days. Corned meat was a staple diet. Happily most people had fruit trees or if they did not, fruit was very cheap. Windfalls could be had for the picking up. Fish was rarely seen, but altogether the diet, though scanty in variety, was nevertheless in most family's pantries.

To the survivors of the nineties, the present day hustle and bustle seems pointless. Happiness has not been increased with modern amenities and the children of this age live in latent fear of the future. We of the nineties did not have that fear, as the world as we knew it was relatively at peace. One could cross a road without fear and though they were dusty, the fumes from cars did not pollute the air nor did madly driven death-dealing juggernauts kill and maim the poor pedestrian or the playing children.

The clear cold of moonlight winter nights, the quiet long, summer days together with the wide open spaces made life a peaceful episode in this rural setting.

Admittedly the lovely setting did not and could not make up for the lack of amenities, the poverty occasioned by the financial ; fiasco, but nevertheless progress as it is called has destroyed forever in a short half century nearly all the loveliness that nature in the unmemorial past had so lavishly endowed the hill and dale surrounding the quiet peaceful Ringwood of the later half of last century and there seems to be no 'Gray' to write a further elegy.



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COMMITTEE Ian Austin, Lois Aders, Pam O'Connor, Steve McGoldrick, Terry Ahern

Supper Roster

August Pam Baragwanath & Beryl
September Bev & Lyndon McKeon
October Peter Fry
November Pat Guest & Sandra Smart

Those on roster need to bring some milk and a couple of plates. Thanks to the various members who bring additional cakes or biscuits, or add to the raffle prizes.