

Greensborough Historical Society Inc.

# Newsletter

Edition 22, June 2016

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



## President's Report

The recent passing of Society member Ida Brown is a reminder that every one of us is a part of our local history and Ida was no exception. Anyone reading Ida's story in our book "As I Recall" can see the life she had and how fond she was of the Burra. Ida will be sadly missed and our thoughts are with her family. So we encourage everyone to record their life experiences so that our children, grandchildren and those that follow can appreciate how life was all those years ago.

I'm pleased to welcome to the Society, Jack and Joan Griffiths who lived in Greenwood Street, Briar Hill from 1962 and are full of information such as Greenwood Street was intended to be Hillcrest Avenue, so there is another piece of info we hadn't previously got. Greensborough Chamber of Commerce has renewed its corporate subscription for the next 5 years which we are most grateful for and appreciate its support over the past 6 years.

Philip Anderson of Monash University has been looking into the varied history of Edward Bernard Green who of course subdivided the Greensborough Township and naturally named it after himself as you did in the 1850s. Philip has also been researching the history of Green's house in St Kilda originally called Barham (Eliza Green's Maiden name) now called Eildon. Philip runs guided tours through the building telling of the building's history and that of E. B. Green. He has offered to do a private tour of the house for us if we are interested, as an alternative to joining one of his regular tours that can be rather crowded and I would be interested in hearing from those who would be interested in taking up his offer so that we can consider a date, transport and eating arrangements.

Our May meeting at Ellis Cottage, home to the Nillumbik Historical Society was most enjoyable and it was great to see its collection of photographs and memorabilia in the Barn and the well restored cottage. President Ron Gordon made us most welcome and I thank him for his time and hospitality and look forward to returning the favour in the New Year.

Our Show & Tell meeting in June saw some interesting items presented and stories told, Gary Partington didn't bring anything this time as the semitrailer wasn't available but there is always next time.

Latvian parliamentarian Atis Lejins continues to correspond with us telling of his fond memories of living in Greensborough in the 1950s and is happy for us to publish his story.

All the Best for Now

Noel

## Committee 2015/16

**President** Noel Withers 94354513      **Vice President** Sue Ballantyne 94395454

**Secretary** Norm Colvin 94352903      **Treasurer** John Gibson 94350097

### Committee Members

June Hall                  Anne Paul                  Marilyn Smith                  Peter Van Eeken

## Contact the Greensborough Historical Society

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

## Meeting dates and times for 2016

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

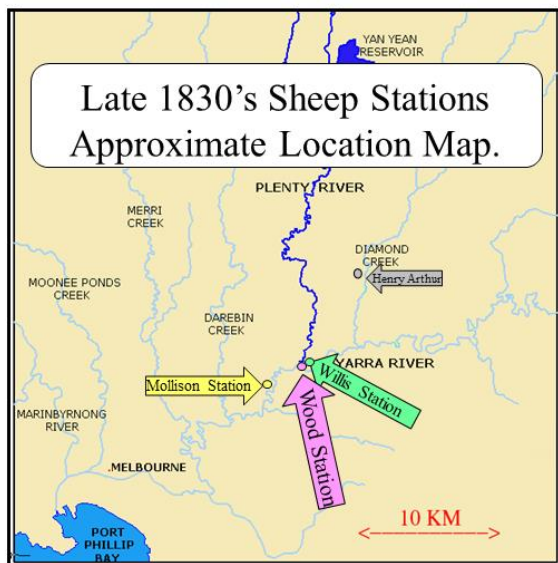
Committee meetings are generally held at 7.00pm on the third Wednesday of each month. Venue: Resource Centre.

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
09/07/16	Saturday	1.00 pm	<b>Open day</b>	History Resource Centre
29/07/16	Friday	1.15 pm	Special General Meeting	Greenhills Neighbourhood Centre
13/08/16	Saturday	1.00 pm	<b>Open day</b>	History Resource Centre
27/08/16	Saturday	1.15 pm	Forum	Diamond Valley Learning Centre
10/09/16	Saturday	1.00 pm	<b>Open day HRC</b>	History Resource Centre
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

*Society Committee member **Peter Van Eeken** researched the history of Montmorency and Lower Plenty and presented the following at a Society meeting in March 2016.*

## **The Early Squatters of Lower Plenty and Montmorency 1836 to 1840**



On 28/3/1837 Governor Bourke passed through Mollison's and Wood's Stations, noting good stands of Stringy Bark, Box and Mountain Ash. His description is suggestive of why the future Montmorency Farm was so named due to the thick expanse of tree growth along the Plenty River which Joseph Tice Gellibrand so named in February 1836. The name "Montmorency" was first used in March 1840 when the land was advertised for sale (and sold to Stuart Donaldson who later became the first Premier of N.S.W. on 6/6/1856). Perhaps the name was used so as to entice prospective purchasers, suggesting the land was beautifully and thickly forested

as that of town Montmorency, on the outskirts of the city of Paris of those times.

The title of this talk is a slight misnomer as 'Lower Plenty', 'Montmorency' and 'Heidelberg' were terms not in use until 1840 at the earliest. Governor Bourke's log entry on 28/3/1837 draws one's curiosity and fascination to think back to those early times and understand more of the goings-on and footsteps of the first European feet to walk around the area of the confluence of the Yarra and Plenty Rivers. This area was traversed by the early surveyors Robert Hoddle who requested his draftsman Thomas Henry Nutt to survey the Plenty River in February 1838. However, it was before Governor Bourke and the later surveyors, that the land was explored and utilized by squatters Henry Arthur, Alexander Mollison, John Wood and members of the Willis Family.

It was in June 1835 that some surmise John Batman signed a treaty with a group of some 45 aborigines about 4 miles or so upstream on the Plenty River, up from its confluence with the Yarra. Joseph Tice Gellibrand (one of Batman's confederate members of the infamous Port Phillip Association) was lured to and named the **Plenty River** in mid-February 1836, due to the fact it had the largest flow of water of any tributary into the Yarra. Another of Batman's Port Phillip Association confederates, Henry Arthur, arranged for Batman to land some sheep at Port Phillip on 30/8/1835. John Batman landed some 2,500 sheep on that day, a portion of which belonged to Henry Arthur and his business associate Michael Connolly. It can be presumed Arthur assigned some convicts (or ex-convicts) to take his sheep to his allotted Port Phillip Association Land

Portion 8, where he established a sheep run that he held until 1841. Arthur did not set foot on Port Phillip until February 1836 which is indicative of the role of convicts or ex-convicts, who were the real establishers of the Port Phillip District in the first 12 months after Batman signed his "Treaty" of 6/6/1835. Arthur built a homestead overlooking the future Diamond Creek Township in today's Challenger Street. Sources are few and scarce and depending on what you read, Arthur and Connolly ran between 100 and 1,000 sheep on the station. It was after Arthur sold his run in 1841 that the then **Arthur's Creek** tributary became more commonly regarded and referred to as part of the larger **Diamond Creek**. Arthur was declared a bankrupt in 1843 and died in Longford Tasmania on 9/6/1848.

On 5/6/1837 Thomas Walker (a major and future land owner in Heidelberg): "proceeded on Friday afternoon on an excursion up the Yarra Yarra. We were accompanied by **Mr. Edward Willis** (son of Mr. A. Willis, of Wanstead, Van Dieman's Land) to whom I was introduced by Mr. McIntyre, of Willis, McIntyre and Co., Sydney. It came to rain shortly after we left, and night also closing in, we did not get so far as we intended, but had to stop for the night at a settler's **Mr. Mollison's**, where we slept on the floor before the fire, but with cloaks and blankets enough to keep us warm, so that I never slept more soundly. I think no class of people live in a rougher way than many of the settlers do here at present. **Mr. M.** is erecting a hut, which will be well enough when finished, but in the meantime it is open and comfortless; no furniture has he except a bench or stool, a broken cup or two, tin panicans, a couple of knives and

forks, and a plate or two". (*Taken from Walker's self-published article of 1838 "A Month in the Bush of Australia" Page 50ff*). Later, various books and authors had trouble specifically identifying who this **Mr. MOLLISON**, referred to by both Bourke and Walker, was. It is only by reading an article in the supplement of the Argus of 3/6/1945 (Page 20s) that one can read a quote of Alexander Mollison in his 1842 letter to his sister Jane in London: "Five years ago I first landed on the banks of the river Yarra-Yarra and found only half a house and some tents, and it was nearly two years later when the town allotments were sold and people began to build." It is this letter that proves **Alexander Mollison** was the Mollison encountered by Bourke and Walker. It also makes one wonder who built the half house and tents that were left behind on the Yarra Yarra? Was it Mr. Henry Arthur or his band of unknown hired help? One will never know and if it was, why did they leave them behind abandoned? At the very end of 1837 Mollison moves overland to take ownership of his newly acquired Colliban Station near Woodend. Leaving the Yarra Yarra he writes to his sister Jane: "My party consists of 30 men and a superintendent or overseer, besides two native black boys. We have with us five thousand sheep, 600 horned cattle, 20 horses, two little pigs, and 40 working bullocks, besides an infinite number and variety of dogs. So you see there are enough of us to enliven the solitude of the forests and to astonish the poor natives and the kangaroos. Our provisions and baggage are carried by four bullock drays and two horse carts." With such a retinue it gives some indication why Robert Walker was able to sleep soundly before Mollison's fire some six months earlier.

Captain William Wood, of 'Snakebanks', Van Diemen's Land, wrote to the Colonial Secretary on 20th May 1836: "I take the liberty of representing to you that finding great difficulty in procuring land for my family (seven sons in number) in this Colony, I have sent one of my sons (J. N. Wood) to Port Phillip with a flock of sheep, and that whenever it may please His Excellency the Governor of New South Wales to allow land to be sold there, he is ready to bid for it, or to become a renter, or to submit to any other plan or regulations that may be determined on by him." **John Nicholas Wood** spent his first months in the Port Phillip Colony on the Werribee River under the guidance of the Wedge Family. He was present at the first public meeting for the colony's temporary method of government on 1/6/1836. This meeting was at John Batman's house with John Faulkner also in attendance. The meeting agreed to place a 5 shilling bounty per head on wild dogs and that it be illegal to teach the aborigines to use firearms. In the next month, Wood led a party along the Werribee River to search for the murderer of a Mr. Frank and his employee that had taken place. It was this incident that led Governor Bourke to send down William Lonsdale to head an enquiry into the death, an enquiry that established a Melbourne template for later enquiries. Around this time Wood established his sheep run on the east bank of the Plenty River at its confluence with the Yarra. James Willis (on 8/6/1837) stated Wood's to be "*a good natured little fellow though his manners are not the most refined.*"

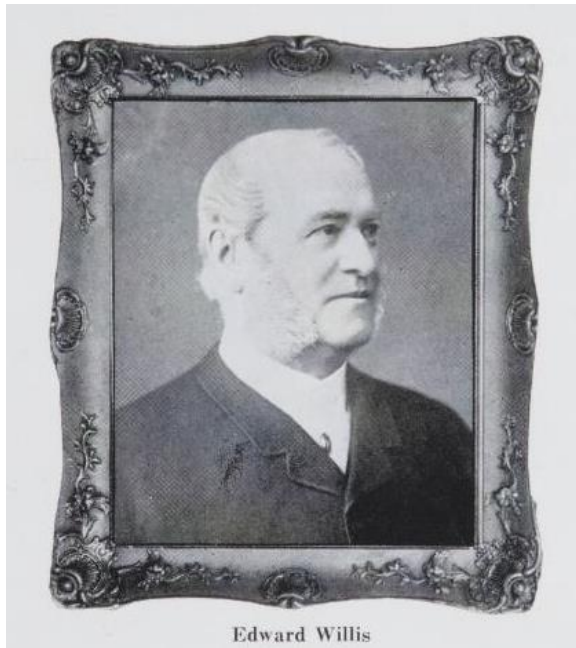
Six weeks later, Woods was to be instrumental in saving Willis's life when James had contracted a life threatening

infection. On the 18<sup>th</sup> April 1837, it was Old Tom, a shepherd of Wood's, who assisted the Willis brothers in moving into the Plenty River some two miles upstream from the Yarra. Wood was to buy a half acre of land in Melbourne on 1/6/1837 and was to become an overseer for Mr. Ebdon. In early 1838, six escaped convicts, in an armed raid on the station of **Mr. John Wood**, took flour, meat and a small double-barrelled pistol. These 'bushrangers' were convicted of also stealing Mr. Farkner's boat from the Yarra Yarra and some 100 years later, the Greensborough resident, Mr. Partington, was to allude to the above when he once stated: "**The Montmorency forests were the hideouts of the local bushranger population.**"

*The Melbourne Court Register of 11<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1838* shows Mr. Wood's complaint before William Lonsdale Esquire toward a John Cronan on the 8<sup>th</sup> inst., at Melbourne who did allow an entire horse of inferior breed to go at large in the town. Cited in the *Port Phillip Gazette on Wednesday May 8<sup>th</sup> 1839, Page 2*, is this advertisement: "To Let: One Thousand and Six Acres of good Grazing Land, on the Darebin Rivulet, about twelve miles from Melbourne. For particulars apply to Mr. John Wood." In 1839 John Wood was secretary to a committee organising horse races near Melbourne. There is scant or no indication of John Wood's activities in the 1840s until you read the article in *The Sydney Morning Herald 16<sup>th</sup> April 1850 Page 2*. Here it informs the reader of the death of John Nicholas Woods in Sydney after visiting friends and a ten-day drinking bout. He died owing a publican some £40 to £50 in debts. "Died, on the 20<sup>th</sup> ultimo, at the residence of Mr. A. Layard, Sydney, JOHN N. WOOD,

second son of Captain William Wood, of Hawkrigde, Snake Banks, Van Diemen's Land." Hobart Colonial Times 14/9/1849 Page 2.

The last of our squatter arrivals set camp behind the now Lower Plenty Hotel on



18/4/1837. They were **Edward, James and Arthur Willis** who made immediate acquaintance and assistance from John Wood, their neighbour. The four were eager to assist each other and explore the Plenty River northwards, noting the thick forests in the process. It was James who was to bestow history with his wonderful three-month account of life along the Plenty River. He always loved his visits to the settlement (ie: Melbourne) to catch up with mail and gossip. His final account of his time on the Plenty is via a letter to be found in *'The Willis Papers'* held at the State Library. On 24/3/1839, as he was leaving the area (having notice to 'quit' due to the imminent land sales) he warns the reader about the possibility of taking his hut: "I'd scarce recommend you. For the fleas will soon make

it prodigiously clean. That their bloody attacks are not meant to befriend you. This useful bit of information mind is given gratis. For the thriving squatter to the flea good bait is".

Arthur Willis did not last long on the Plenty having "tasted enough of the pleasures of squatting". Arthur was older than the two Willis Brothers (he was their uncle) and had many and varied business and company interests in London, Sydney, Hobart, New Zealand and now Melbourne, being one of the first agents to send a wool ship direct from Melbourne to London (on 15/1/1839). Arthur had his son managing affairs in London and was very successful in establishing and linking numerous business pursuits between London and the colonies. He was a director of the Port Phillip Bank too. After spending a decade in the colonies, he returned to London (with two servants) on the ship William Jardine on 1/2/1845. His brother Richard had already preceded him sailing back to their Wanstead ancestral home in February 1839. Arthur would have known the parents of John Wood, along with Stuart Donaldson, who later bought Montmorenci. John Wood's mother, Marie Hyacinthe Genevieve de GOUGES, was an extremely beautiful woman and her family very high up in the French Royal Courts. One wonders if this link has any association with the creation of the name Montmorenci, but such will remain a mystery to ever changing folders of history.

It is **Edward Willis** who will be forever looked on as a somewhat father figure of sheep in the local area, and more especially in Geelong where he and James settled in the early 1840s.



In association with Captain Charles Swanton, Edward was to establish 'Koolomurt', one of the finest merino studs in Victoria. He tried his hand at other business enterprises, such as wool broking and coal, was on local Geelong boards of the Anglican Church, Infirmary and Benevolent Asylum. He also presided at sessions of the Geelong Police Courts. Edward sent his sons to be educated in England where he himself returned in 1894 to retire, dying a year later on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1895. His brother James was to become Geelong's first town treasurer and work as a Court Clerk and Warden before dying on 28/3/1873 at his home 'Euroa Cottage' Punt Road, South Yarra.

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### **The origins of local street names**

Do you know the origin of your street name? If you can help, please contact Marilyn Mullavey. Marilyn and Helen Bryant have been researching the origins of street names throughout Greensborough and surrounding suburbs.

The following streets are close together, and have 'girls' names. We'd love to know whose family the streets were named after. Doris Street; Teresa Street; Adeline Street; Ester Street. Any hints??

And not a girl's name but a mystery: Beewar Street.

If you have any clues, contact GHS via email and we will pass the information to Marilyn.

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### **Vale Ida Brown**

*As Noel mentioned on page 1, Society member Ida Brown sadly passed away recently. In 2011 Ida shared her story with June Hall and a section of her story is re-published here as we remember Ida.*



*Ida England, age 21*

[My Grandparents] came ... to Greensborough and bought a large block in William Street. It ran from where we lived down to Hawkins Paddock.

There were yellow box trees on the block and he proceeded to cut some of them down. The stumps from those trees

became the stumps for his house, he built the house on top of the stumps. I used to play under the house amongst those stumps. He built a four roomed house and when it became too small for the family he built another big room on the back. My grandfather divided the land into three blocks. Grandfather lived on the first block, Uncle Jack (married Florence Mills) had the second block and Uncle George the third block.

Their children, three boys (Jack, George and Walter) and my mother Lillian Louisa Richards, grew up here. Unfortunately, Walter died; he fell into a bonfire and was badly burned. My mother was married twice; her first marriage was to James Ernest Holt. They had two daughters Lillian (born 1916) and Louise (born 1920), who were my half-sisters. James died after being kicked in the head by a horse when Lillian was four years old.

My mother was married again to John England my father. She was in service at a boarding house in South Melbourne when

she met him. My brother Ted was born; he had brain damage as a result of a delayed birth and was lucky to be alive. I was born three years later in Carlton. I was three weeks old when the marriage broke down. Mum was alone with four children and she came to Greensborough to live with my grandmother.



*Ida, age 12*

I had a beautiful childhood, I was blissfully unaware of the family problems financial or other, I had doting cousins and uncles, being the youngest and with no father, I was totally spoilt. Nothing I could do was wrong (I think the same about myself today).

I went to school at Greensborough State School No. 2062, the best school in the world. At age seven, I can still remember my first day at school and Miss Ladd coming up to me and telling me what beautiful hair I had, I had it in "Shirley Temple" curls which my grandmother Louisa used to do for me. I had girl friends that I did everything with, they were Ruth Heavens, Margaret and Cath Roberts who were cousins. We went to primary school together and remained friends through our teenage years and kept in touch after we were married.

I loved Mrs Corder. When we couldn't meet in the hall for bible study, she would have us at her house, she had this enormous couch, six of us could sit on it, in a large room, with photos of the Corder boys on the mantelpiece. I didn't know until much later, when my family had no money and were down and out, Mrs Corder used to bring us food and clothing. She was a wonderful lady.

## A Message from Latvia

And to prove that the Society website is truly worldwide, we received a message via the website from former Burra boy, now Latvian parliamentarian, **Atis Lejins**. Born in Latvia during the Second World War, he studied and worked in Australia, the USA, and Sweden before returning to Latvia after the restoration of independence in 1991. He was elected to the Latvian parliament in October 2010.

Here is an excerpt from his story, which will be published in full in the September Newsletter.

"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...."

*The full story next Edition....*