

George Henwood - 14th September 1982.

Mr. Henwood formerly had a Hardware Store in Station Street, Fairfield.

Did you build the store?

No, actually I took over a store that was originally P. G. Collins, I started as a school lad from school with P.G. Collins. In those days there were 3 hardware stores in Station Street. Bryant, south of the railway, A. E. Brown alongside the Parish, St. Paul's Parish and P.G. Collins who took over a business of A. E. Roff an ex R.A.N. man.

Roff?

Yes, Roff, R O F F. I then worked with P. G. Collins for 18 years until the war intervened. I joined the army, came back and acquired his business. With that I then carried on the business for another 25½ years, so that was a total of 43½ years in Station Street. But in that time I had seen the terrific changes, you have probably seen it, too.

Yes.

Not actually only in Station Street, but going right back to the early days 1922, the main business in Fairfield was done just south and north of the railway line. Do you recall that?

State Savings Bank was around in Railway Place side, Trembath the Chemist over on the corner of Station Street, and there was a Hay and Collins on the opposite corner Station Street there and Railway Place. Clacks Economic stores were on the corner north of the railway where the Commonwealth bank is now.

Now what's that name?

Clacks - C L A C K S. Economic Stores, Drapers.

Oh yes.

And there was F.G. Smith the Drapers in Station Street, 2 big drapers. Breaking away from Hardware and Drapery well, virtually, those days there was practically a grocer on every corner in the district. I can remember the names, if you'd like

Yes I would.

Well Ainsworth had a grocery store on the corner of Wingrove Street and Arthur Street.

Ainsworth?

Ainsworth. A.V. Cutler had a store on the corner of Gillies Street and Duncan Street. There was another grocery store on Station Street, run by George Duffus, that is where the Fruit Shop is now, adjoining St. Paul's. Annie's sister run the Milk Bar adjoining.

HAY + CORN STORE

What's that name? Duffus

Duffus, D U F F U S, Duffus.

That milk bar was taken over by Kerwins,

GEORGE HENWOOD

Yes, I remember Kerwins.

Kerwins run it for many years, through the family, using the Kerwin name.

Now the dates that you are talking about previous to Kerwins, that would be in the early 1920's.

I would say around about the 1922 period 23 period. I can't go further back than that. Although I'm older than that, but I came to Fairfield in 1922 and so to speak I've spent all my like in the district.

Yes. We were just talking about dippers and coppers, now that's interesting. Let's talk about that then. The copper was the big copper.

The copper boiler and a cast iron frame or a rolled metal frame with a length of flue going out through the wash-house ceiling, stoked with wood or chips, leaves, anything. Going back prior to coppers, they were known as sawyers

Sawyers?

S A W Y E R S,

That's the same sort of a name as a saw man, a saw milling man, isn't it. A Sawyer.

Yes, but it SAWYERS, one stops at R and the other contains the S.

Oh yes.

But even the army they still use the word sawyer.

Oh, that was a big copper was it?

That's a copper, about a 20 gallon copper. You know, a rolled metal frame, not a cost iron frame, a rolled metal frame. All things have gone out of fashion, today you'll find, speaking of hardware trade or the ironmongery trade, you will find that where you had mission grates, and bricquette grates a few years ago they are coming back again now.

What was that first grate you mentioned, mission grate?

Mission grate.

What was that, to put your wood in.

Yes.

How did it get that name I wonder?

I don't know the actual origination of the name mission but it was known as mission grates, an open fire grate, basket grates. They went right out of fashion. I replace one here only 3 months ago. I paid about 285 28/6 for the first one I bought, I paid \$40. for the same thing.

When did you pay \$14. for?

\$40.00

\$40.00 When did you pay \$40.00

GEORGE HENWOOD:

2 months ago.

2 months ago and you used to sell it for

For 285, 28/6

28/6, yes

When you look at a lot of these things it is hard to reconcile the prices that were charged, how people could get a living out of it.

Yes, that's right.

You had cheap rental, you had cheap wages, when I say cheap, they weren't cheap but proportionally the wages then

How much do you think proportionally the wage was with the rent? How much would people have been earning and they were paying perhaps 10/- a week rent.

They were not earning more than 3 pounds, the equivalent to \$6.

Yes, \$6.

Everything being equal I think you were better off in those days.

Do you?

You never had as much actual money to play with but you were virtually better off. Today how far could you go on 1 hour's wage, that's in comparison with 60 years ago. \$4.00 an hour is the minimum pay today, it was in that time 60 years ago, 4 pounds per week. I myself, I worked 56 hours a week managing 3 stores and got 4 pounds 1/-. That's \$8.10. Now today the minimum of that would be round about \$500.

That's right.

There's 250 pounds. Its hard to balance things out but I do fear for the young people today, although they are earning big money they are spending big money.

They expect more, they expect to get more, but then again a lot of people I've heard say Oh, they want their washing machines straight away, but what else can you wash in if you haven't got a washing machine.

There's no copper, there are no troughs, no double troughs to put into.

That's right, you have to have that, you have to have a refrigerator if you don't want your food to go bad because where can you get ice delivered, no. You see they are not really luxuries, are they?

Crappers, Crappers here in Station Street still deliver ice.

To homes around do they?

Yes, not so much in this district mainly around Fitzroy, Carlton I understand.

They still deliver?

Still deliver.

GEORGE HENWOOD

To private homes?

To private homes.

I didn't know that.

Fitzroy Carlton area.

I didn't know that. It would be expensive now.

40¢ a bag or 60¢ a block. When you get a block of ice in those days it 10¢ 1/-.

Well that was fairly expensive because you'd go through 2 or 3 blocks a week.

3 calls a week.

Yes, that was a fair bit out of that small wage.

Yes, 3 calls, 2 small blocks and one double block over a week. When we talk to the younger ones at home and they can't believe what did go on. But you'd go down to the green grocer and get 40 pounds of potatoes for a 1/- . 2½ lbs. of beans for sixpence. About 4 lbs. peas for sixpence. You can't expect great things with great wages,

A lot of people did lose a lot.

* They lost a lot, they were over committed then. They couldn't meet their commitments.

You must have met a lot of people in your shop during the depression that were in hard times.

Oh yes, I struck a lot of that, a lot of that, in fact I struck a bit of it myself. For one period there.

Yes, tell me about that.

In so far as I was one of 5 in my immediate household and there were periods during the depression when I could only get a day and a half a week which had to cover 5. It was no hand-out like it is today.

Well you didn't get money in those days, but you got orders.

You got about, you had to do a bit of work.

Yes that's right. Did you, you had to do work to get some money?

For the sustenance, you had to work for it. They built the Boulevard here on sustenance work.

Yes, but you didn't have to work to get the tickets to go to the butchers

No, that was your entitlement, you still had to produce work along the line, but you still got those vouchers.

Yes, that's right.

I had a brother and a father both worked together in the Sheet Metal

GEORGE HENWOOD

Trade at South Melbourne, and the brother had a motor bike and a side-car and away they'd go every morning and sit on the doorstep looking for a job. They couldn't get any sustenance hand-out or anything at all because I was earning, at that time, 30/- over a 2 week period. Getting a day and a half over a two week period, not regularly that way but there were times when I was getting that.

You only got the sustenance when there was no wage at all coming into the house?

That's it.

I didn't know that.

If there was income coming into the house at all you got nothing. All told 5 in the immediate family, mother, father, sister and brother and myself and my mother's mother had her brother with her also in the same household, but that 30/- that I got one fortnight I got a full week and a part week, that had to carry over the whole family. So times were never meant to be easy.

In one way the shop which I actually bought out is where Sutherlands the drapers is now and that was originally run by a grocer, a chap named Young, I couldn't give you his Christian name, but he was a Young, and Perc. Collins build that place and

So it wasn't a hardware store when you bought it?

No, it was a hardware when I bought it, but originally it was a grocery.

It was built as a ~~grocery~~ store?

Yes, that was in 1938.

Yes, in 1938.

The Fairfield dispensary was built in 1937/1938.

I suppose the Depression made it hard for you with the business.

Oh well, we had our tough times but there were many bright times even so in the Depression. I can recall the Brass Bands playing in Station Street on a Friday night.

Which bands would these be?

The Heidelberg City used to play on a Friday night

Did they?

Yes, trading was then to 10 o'clock on Friday night.

10 o'clock?

Yes 10 o'clock on a Friday night,

Not 9,

No, not 9 10 o'clock. Not for a great period but it was 10 o'clock.

GEORGE HENWOOD

How long did that go on do you think, 10 o'clock?

About 12 months, 10 o'clock, then back to 9 o'clock. Then of course it was brought back to 6 o'clock and now they are bringing it on to late opening.

Where used the bands stand? Where were they?

They used to play along Station Street on both sides, and at the particular time I'm speaking about I was in the old A.E. Brown shop which was alongside the Fairfield Church of England Hall. They used to come there and play there up till 9 o'clock, and at 9 o'clock the rush from the band would come into the store and when you should be getting away at 10 o'clock you were getting away at 11 o'clock.

Oh really.

Yes. In those times it was far different in the general feeling of business, if you get what I mean by this, but there was not pressurising, but you did have salesmanship, that you have not got today. I recall buying from overseas 30 piece utility sets, they were just selling to the public out of the case, you never opened them to check them. You'd take it away and if it was broken bring the part back and I'll give you another one. A free and easy attitude with sales. There's a lot of things you can recall back, I think it may have been hard at that particular time but as compared to today it was quite easy. We used to buy cups 60 dozen in a crate and sell them in a couple of days, they were tuppence each. What can you get for any part of that today.

Have you got part of the old dispensary part^{ic}ularly.

No, I haven't, no, nobody's talked much about the old dispensary hall.

Well the Fairfield dispensary was built by the Friendly Society that is the combined Friendly Society, started around about the 1937 period and opened 19th January 1938. Ted Bennett one of the members, he was Vice President of the A.N.A. was one of the officials there at the opening and Oscar Sheriff's daughter was the President of the A.W.A. in those days, she's named there on the plaque. Griffiths who was Secretary of M.U.I.I.O.F. is another one on the plaque. That was built on a property there it was owned by, let me think of his name now, Valentine, he was an employee of the Heidelberg City Council in those days, as a street cleaner and a rubbish remover, had his horse and drays and an old cottage there and going back to the A.N.A. if you want some information on the A.N.A., the A.N.A. Friendly Society was formed in 1920 by 5 members who transferred from Collingwood and formed a branch in Fairfield. Oscar Sheriff, he was the original secretary, Oscar Sheriff ran the sadlery business and an estate agent in Fairfield at that time and he carried on up to his death after serving 24 years with the A.N.A.

Then the next secretary was Bill Holmes and he carried on for 20 years and the present secretary is Norm Hector who has now served 22 years.

They are long running secretaries.

Yes, they have all run a long time. Last year in about March of last year we entertained 3 of the old original members at a dinner down here at the Jika Jika, one of them, Bert Burgess, he is now 96 years of age.

GEORGE HENWOOD.

Tom Blakely is 94 years of age and you may have seen in the Press last week, 3 original servicemen, a photo of 3 at a Reunion. Bill Gothard he is one of the foundation members of the A.N.A. and one that we entertained at dinner. Celebrate 60 years. No its hard to put it all down in correct rotation. Along Heidelberg Road, well, there was shopping from the Fairfield Park right along to Darebin, but that's all went by the board.

Yes, there must have been quite a little shopping area there.

Oh, it was a very disturbed or distributed shopping area, but some of the business were long standing. Harris the butcher had his butchery on the corner of Station Street, you recall that one.

I remember Harry the butcher.

Well he opened that business in Station Street, November of 1921. There was a mention of a Mr. Clarke, again I can't remember the Christian name. There was Stephens, the newsagency in Heidelberg Road in the early days, which was later transferred to Railway Place, that became Daff and Stone. Then there was Mrs. Vicary who had a newsagents in Station Street, that is on part of that buildings which now is the National Stores building, Tuckerbag.

Yes, Tuckerbag.

Shoe shop, in those early days there were 2 shoe shops, Walker, that's Walkers in Station Street Now.

Yes they have been there a long time.

Yes, they are the most original business in Fairfield.

Yes, they would be.

I don't know the actual date, and I've asked Bill the actual date of the establishment of that business but he can't tell me. I went to school with Bill, prior to that his father and mother ran a business on the opposite side of the road, adjoining the State Savings Bank, and he

Another shoe shop?

Another shoe shop, he had 2 moves into that present shop where they are now, he had 2 moves in between. But they have been well established for 64 years I would say.

Get back to the days when they had circuses playing in Station Street,

Circus?

Circus.

Oh yes, there used to be one on the corner of View and Alphington, I remember.

Circuses played there where the Elderly Citizens are now. Just north of the State Savings Bank.

Oh, in Station Street.

GEORGE HENWOOD.

Yes, in Station Street,

I was thinking of the one in Heidelberg Road, in latter years.

Yes, in Station Street.

That would be

Wood's property, Woods lived in Arthur Street, adjoining the Post Office, have you got anything on the Post office.

No.

Well, at 1922 how long much before I could not say, but the Fairfield Post office was situated in Station Street, half way between Heidelberg Road and the railway. Adjoining the Post office was a funeral Parlor. H. R. Lewis, Funeral Parlor. Do you know Fitzgerald's old business there, the one that's closed, they just recently pulled the verandahs off it. Just up north from the doctor's.

I think I know where you mean, now.

Adjoining Fitzgeralds. There was Banford the signwriter just adjoining them. I know it has been reported in the press by one of the signwriters he put 2 programmes in, one on Miss Doris Butcher, the pianist, you probably read that one.

Yes, I was, go on. So what were you saying about the signwriters?

Noel Brining was a signwriter. W. T. Banford was also a signwriter in Station Street in those days. And up to about 1946 I think he passed on, he was a pretty old man but he still carried on with his signwriting. From Station Street. Speaking of the other shoe shop, the other shoe shop was on the corner of Station Street and Heidelberg road, opposite the hotel, run by a Jack Carter. He was a shoe retailer and also a shoe maker and a sadler. That's where that vacant allotment is there. Adjoining that was the United Kingdom Cycle works.

What corner was that?

Corner of Station Street, south corner, south west corner,

Station Street and?

Heidelberg Road, south west corner.

Yes, yes.

Junkers had a motor cycle works along side the pub, later Junkers became nominees of the Grandview Hotel. You probably heard that along the line somewhere. I dont know if you've got any other questions I might be able to answer you.

Anything to tell me about your days at Fairfield State School?

Not really, I started at the Fairfield State School in the 5th grade and continued on to the 8th grade, but in that period Fairfield was a very overcrowded school, and the Break.....? school was the Westgarth Central.

GEORGE HENWOOD.

Fairfield North and then Alphington, they were breakaway schools to absorb some of the pupils from Fairfield. That occurred in the 6th grade, that would be 1923. Getting back to another point there when we first came to Fairfield and I'll speak conjointly Northcote, was really vast open paddocks. Stewart & Davies built just about half of Northcote and half of Alphington.

Stewart & Davies?

Stewart & Davies. They were the main builders.

They were the actual builders?

They were the main builders, they built from say, that Waterloo Road, which is at the foot of Bastings Street Hill right through to Victoria Road, then they carried on and continued on from Fulham Road right along to Alphington Station, Kelvin Road, Yarrana Road, and that area

Did they have a lot of men working for them?

I dont know of a great number they had working for them, I only knew one man, Tom Armstrong, he was the foreman for Stewart & Davies, I knew him fairly well, as a kid we used to help gather with our billy carts, and pick up the blocks after school for firewood. I mentioned earlier there was a grocery shop on practically every 400 yards and in that particular time, I'm speaking, there were 3 dairy produce stores in Station Street.

Three were there?

Three.

Three, I've heard of the Bon Accord.

The Bon Accord was a fabulous place but a Mrs. Thomas and her daughter Rose, run a beef and smallgoods shop in Station Street, that is where now just adjoining Allywells, and then there was Lennox Bros. they run a dairy produce store, where the Hairdresser is there alongside Winn's Pharmacy. Mrs. Laneson had a homemade cake shop there in the same building prior to that.

This is a very ticklish subject I think, I think the youth of today that are unemployed virtually do not want to work and as for the point of saying they've nothing to do, if they want to do something, there is plenty they can do. Socially and work wise. I, myself, I belonged to many things in my life and I'm still associated with many things, but there always comes a time when you have got to taper off. But in the early days of Fairfield when we were young, we used to take on cycling Fairfield Amateur Cycling. My brother and I and a few of our cobbles on a Saturday afternoon, we would go racing or just a ride, or training run or something like that. Sunday morning we'd do the same, hop on a bike and go down to Frankston for a run on Sunday morning before breakfast. These things today, the young people will not do that type of thing.

Do you think its different then now, what about all the unemployed in the Depression. Do you think they could have got work if they'd wanted to?

No, it was a different thing altogether.

Why is it different?

GEORGE HENWOOD.

I think it was different altogether. Firstly, there was not the general population that there is today, in the Depression years.