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**Mr. Harold Harless, 5 Rex Avenue, Alphington - 16th June, 1982**

We've been living here since 1913. My father built this house, Mr. William George Harless, in 1907. He was a builder by trade and he and a person by the name of Alf Byce built this house and it cost them 300 pound for material alone, that did not include labour. My father, being in the plastering and building line, he did not count that as a cost to the place.

When he completed the place they did not live in it at that time, as the land boom in America after the earthquake and the fire of San Francisco, trade was booming over there so my people went over there in 1907 and remained over there until 1913, when they returned home here. In the meantime, a Mr. Percival Wren occupied this place, he rented it for 6 years. When they returned we then came to live here.

In 1913 there were no electric light streets operating. The only lighting was gas light and the only lamp we had at the corner of Coate Avenue and Rex Avenue was a gas lamp, and the next light was at the corner up at Heidelberg Road. I can always recall the lamplighter coming around of a night on his bike with his long pole to light the gas lamp, and in the morning he would come around again and turn the gas off.

Mr. Harless, how old were you when you came to live here?

I was about 9 years of age, and I have lived here ever since then. The streets that are now in existence did not exist then. Fulham Road, which is now Chandler Highway, although it was called Fulham Road, never existed, it was just named. There was no road or anything and one house only I think in that street at that time.

That was Chandler Highway? When was the Outer Circle called the Outer Circle?

It was always known as the outer circle railway line and it was the old line that used to come from Fairfield over to Deepdene. I can recall after coming back from the United States, my parents and I came over to visit my relations next door, Mr. Street, and the only means of getting from Kew to Alphington would either be round through Hoddle Street up over Johnson Street bridge, or over through Heidelberg.

Burke Road then did not exist. I can recall one night we walked over to visit my uncle and auntie and we had to walk along the old outer circle line. The only illumination we had was a hurricane lamp and it was quite a hazardous trip, because there were many holes you could have fallen down on the way over. It was quite a weird sensation, as crossing the bridge in those days the footwalk was only loose planks, and every time you walked on them you could hear them clanking under your feet. You could have been hundreds of miles away up in some country district, there was not a light to be seen.

What year would that be?

That was in 1913. Well then of course war broke out then, in 1913, and we have lived here ever since. There are many streets in Alphington... for instance Perry Street south of the Railway line never existed. Some people by the name Keltons lived in a big blue stone house, that's now the Rest Home there. Yarraford Avenue was not constructed then, because a person by the name of Mr. Misken, he was a dealer in cattle, and he used to graze his cattle on the road south of Heidelberg Road where Yarraford Avenue is now.

Also Tower Avenue never existed then. Where Tower Avenue is now there used to be a pair of big wide gates and there used to be a winding path go down there over a little wooden bridge to the two-storey place at the bottom end of Tower Avenue and Margaret Grove, and in front of that used to be a loquat orchard, they used to grow loquats there.

Who lived in the big two-storey place, do you know?

I don't know who it was.

That's the big grey building at the bottom of Tower Avenue now, corner of Margaret Grove. You say it used to have a tower on it?

I think it used to have a bit of a tower on it, but I'm not too sure.

At the end of Rex Avenue, there used to be a beautiful brick two-storey home. That is now where the Australian Paper Mills have their research centre.

That's the same home isn't it?

No, that's another one. There's another home down there, that was built by Mr. and Mrs. Reid. That is now the offices of the A.P.M. Research Centre. Prior to that there used to be another big brick home right where the Research Centre is now. That was owned by Mr. Van Heens and he was the architect for St. Patrick's spires. When A.P.M. purchased that land they demolished the building and then erected their present day research centre.

They started off using Van Heens' house?

No, they never occupied it. As soon as they purchased the land from Mrs. Van Heens they decided to put their research centre there and they demolished the home.

There was a brick home this side which still exists, a two-storey home, built by Mr. Reid. That is now the offices for the Research Centre.

I can recall when A.P.M. decided to build where they are now, and I can always remember the first sod being turned, it was about the year 1919. When they built that area, right in the middle of where A.P.M. is now, down near their boiler house, used to be a very large ranch style black roofed house, a two-storey place. That was owned by Mr. Money Miller.

Prior to that, east of St. Elmo Road, which is now Latrobe Avenue, on the west side of that was all open land and they used to grow wheat crops on that area.

Of course the old identities of Latrobe Avenue were the Howards and Paisleys, he was the bulk milk cartage character, and on the corner used to be Williams jam factory. That's about that area.

What did Money Miller do?

I think he was connected with the racehorses, that's as far as I know. They demolished that building when the Mill extended and the Mill extended right over.

In approximately 1904 or 5, it was a nursery.

All this land here? How far did the nursery extend?

I would say from the outer circle railway line right down to where Van Heens<sup>5</sup> were, how far up I don't know, but there are still a few trees left here which were the original trees in the nursery. Next door is an Olive tree which must be over 100 years old, and in my block here there is a tall Norfolk Pine tree. That was a tall tree even at the time my father purchased the land.

There were numerous other trees, there were Elm trees, Moreton Bay fig trees and also Olive trees next door. The place was abounding with Quince trees down on the river bank, apple trees and pear trees. All part of the nursery.

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Mr. Blizzard from Perry Street, is that a relation to the Blizzards who used to live in Heidelberg Road?

That's correct, that's the father. During World War 1, the Blizzards weren't very popular then on account of having a German name.

They used to be on the corner of Arthur Street and Park Crescent. He used to do a lot of steambending for horsedrawn vehicles, shafts and so forth. In fact my father used to get some of his cart shafts bent there by Mr. Lee. That is now a rest home.

On the opposite corner were people by the name of McKennell. Their house is still there. I used to go to School with Geoff McKennell. This would perhaps be his grandmother who lives there now.

No, Jack McKennell, his wife lives there.

Geoff McKennell used to be in my class at school and I sometimes would come home and walk down with him while he had lunch and walk back to school with him.

In the early days when my father built here, in 1913 or 1914, no gutter or footpaths or roads were constructed in Fulham Avenue.

Fulham Avenue, which is now Rex Avenue.

My father and his brother-in-law, Mr. Street next door, they did all our own gutter kerbing at that time, and we've never had one put down since. The original kerbing is still there.

The old title goes to the middle of the River. That's still standing at the present moment, but if the place is ever sold or changed hands, a new Title will be issued and so much land will be taken from the water's edge up on to the land. All the houses around this district, including Chandler Highway, Rex Avenue and Coate Avenue, are owned by the Mill with the exception of my place here and perhaps two other houses.

There was a little thriving shopping centre at Alphington, but as the years went on poor old Alphington has died right out and it is now just a little sort of "Cinderella" area, mostly industrial shops. There used to be people by the name of Glenice's the grocers, and Martins the bakers, and Staffords used to have a little confectionery shop on the corner, but other than that Alphington never had a very large shopping area at all. Station Street used to not a bad shopping area, but it was nothing like what it is now.

You can tell me something about the old picture theatre.

In the old early days, I think it was about from 1916 onwards, the Fairfield Picture Theatre, which now does not exist, it used to be the only local theatre in the district. People opposite us by the name of Brown, they used to run that theatre and we would perhaps go to the pictures of a night there and wait till they shut the theatre up, and they would drive us home.

In latter years, the acoustics of that place were very good and any sound film that had a preview was always shown at the Fairfield Theatre because they got such a good sound on account of the acoustics.

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Coming back from the United States of America, I then attended the Fairfield State School. The Headmaster at that time was a Mr. Severe and later a Mr. McClean. I started in the second grade and it was Miss Edgoose's class and Miss Saxy, who was a very old identity, she was in charge of the infants. We used to have many students there, Mr. John Clapperson was the teacher of the 8th grade then, and other teachers we used to have were Mr. Frawley and Miss Grace, and Miss Grace used to have a terrible strap. She had a machine strap with a knot tied in the end of it, a sewing machine strap, and if you ever got the strap from her you knew it.

There was a little St. Andrews Presbyterian Church on Heidelberg Road. I attended that Church for a while until a friend of mine, Mr. Norm Woods who was Anglican, and we are Anglican, said why not come up to St. Jude's, Alphington. So from there I went up to St. Jude's. But St. Andrews Church in Heidelberg Road was moved from there up to its present site at the corner of Gillies Street and Duncan Street, the whole Church was moved. They took it over the old outer circle railway line, up Grange Road, along Wingrove Street. Later on it was burnt down.

It was burnt down when it was at Gillies Street?

That's right, and then they reconstructed the new Church, but in 1913 that Church was on Heidelberg Road.

Mrs. Rowan, she lived in Heidelberg Road practically right opposite Grange Road. She used to do a lot of laundry work, lived next door to where the Blizzards lived. She was there for a very long while, even after World War 1, it's about one of the last houses in existence there.

Then there was Sibthorpe's the dentist, he used to be my dentist.

He was there a long time, wasn't he?

Oakes used to run the general store and also Grenice's. Thomas Adams, he was another old identity of Alphington. They used to run Adams stone quarry just down the north side of the railway line, and his home now is also a convalescent or rest home for elderly people.

Where's that?

Just as you go down, right opposite the Tower Hotel on the left hand side.

The record 1934 flood was that high that it was 6 feet from the landing of the old outer circle bridge and it came about three quarters of the way up the bank at the rear of Rex Avenue. If it had come up much further it would have come up on to the level. That was when Cook's boatsheds, there was only about 18 inches of the two-storey roof showing at the top of the water.

In Alphington Street opposite, there was a house there and the flood just picked it up and took it away down the river.

The original Church of England was in Folk Street, Alphington which was behind Page's timber yard, and the Reverend Knox. I don't remember the Reverend Knox, Reverend Lee was the Minister when I used to go there, and it was from there that the present Anglican Church was built in Lowther Street.