

TALK : Mr. & Mrs. Dennis,
36 Walker Street,
NORTHCOTE. 3070.

15th November, 1983.

William Henry was the great-grandfather. He was the father of Sam Dennis and, I can't think what ~~the~~ ^{my} grandfather's name was.

Now, your husband's father was the great uncle?

Yes.

Sam Dennis and John Dennis' grandfather were brothers?

That's right. There were about six boys. There are two still living.

That's in which family?

That's John's father's brother's - there were six boys, there's two of them still living.

Elsie Dennis, my sister, has got more documented evidence, proof and all this business; she's gone into it rather deeply, but even deeper still is my cousin who has gone to England and traced it all back as well. Jeanie Hart. Dad told me that this place next door, this bluestone place -

That would be No. 34?

Yes, was used as a Town Hall and they used to have garden parties down the back here and all that business. And this area that we're on here was all stables and that for the Council, and there was all cobblestones. Across the road where the house is burnt down - the vacant block - that was all cobblestones and was for horses and carts and drays and things like that, and they used to operate the quarry. The quarry was over here in Heidelberg Road, just right next to the Merri Creek bridge there, where the Park is, where the Yarra Park starts, right on Heidelberg Road, that was a bluestone quarry. They built the Rechabite Hall opposite the Town Hall in Westbourne Grove.

Who built that?

My grandfather. I think it's still there.

All this big family of Dennis', they all lived in Walker Street, did they?

Yes.

And what was their occupations, do you remember?

Well, great-grandfather was, oh they had a history in the Stone Masonry business. They were Stone Masons in England and they came out here and, I've got a half a bluestone block here somewhere, under the house I think it is, with, it's broken in half so only half the message is there. They've written a message on it. It's ah, "..... Dennis ^{ROSE} ~~rose~~ up the Merri 18"; and just over the railway line just up here, behind the first house, there's a depression and they cut the bluestone out of that depression to build this house next door.

← WEST OF TRAINLINE, NORTH OF GARGWAT ST, SOUTH OF WALKER ST

And then they went away to the gold rush and they made some money there, and they came back and they built the red brick part of it on the front. The bluestone was just a double-storey square.

If you walk out the back I can show you.

Ah, then he came back and then they started up, they went into quarries, most of them were in quarries, but I think Sam was something else. He was in the quarries with us.

They did a lot of road paving, didn't they, in the area.

Oh, most of the roads of Melbourne they paved.

You know, they had contracts for the Botanical Gardens and, what else, mainly a lot of - the Victoria Barracks, the Prison, a lot of Government work, and a lot of roads within the Northcote/Heidelberg area.

There's something about Greensborough Cemetery comes to mind. They owned all the houses right from the corner on the north side of Walker Street, from High Street down to the railway line and then they missed three houses on this side of the railway line, then they owned from there right down to the Creek, the houses right down to the Creek initially, and gradually they sold one off here and sold one off there, and just left the family homes.

Annie Dennis this is about?

Yes, the great auntie. She had a lot to do with the Methodist Church up in High Street, as well as the - she started that Creche, the Creche, I think it was

Named after her?

Yes. But she had a lot to do with that
She was Annie Matthews, I think, she married later in life.

Who, which Dennis did she marry?

She was a Dennis - oh she became Annie Matthews - oh I see.

So there were girls as well as boys in the family?

Yes. Just was her brother and that I don't know. My grandfather, ah, was getting on in years and he couldn't sort of keep the quarry going so he was gonna turn it over to the boys, but they were all, what would you call them, I suppose you'd call them larrikins. They didn't want to continue on with it, so he ended up buying quite a few farms and he put the boys on them and they failed, and they just went to various other things from there. But most of the farms, there was one at Beaconsfield, there was two at KULKYVIE, up Mildura way and, what's that part just west of Mildura?

Ah, a pub down on the Creek here, on the north side of the Creek on the west side of High Street that used to be frequented by ah, oh - Ned Kelly - I think it was in his day. I'm not terribly sure, I think it was Ned Kelly. In the early part of Ned Kelly's days, before he come completely notorious, the local policeman used to frequent down here;

..... it was a great gathering area, and later on they had the tramcars, you know in High Street, they had cable trams.

Do you remember the name of that pub?

I think it might have been called the Terminus, but I'm not sure. There is a Terminus Hotel there now, but it's on the south side of the Creek; but there was a pub where the Commission flats are, not where they're actually built, because the pub was right on the Creek, it used to back onto the Creek. It had a cellar opening onto the Creek. Virtually onto the banks of the Creek, so it was well down, you know.

What's the alleged story?

The alleged story is that they owned the land -

Dennis' owned the land where the Town Hall is now built?

Yes, where it's now built, and it was given to the Northcote City Council as a gift, you know, then the Town Hall was built on that land.

That story come down through the family, did it?

Yes.

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