

I'm talking to Mrs. Jean Phillips, (38 Lucerne Crescent, Alphington) and her father was the painter - William Beckworth McInnes.

William Beckworth^{Beckwith} McInnes was born at St. Kilda, Victoria, on the 18th of May, 1889. He was a third generation Australian. His grandfather on his mother's side, was William Beckworth, who came to Australia on a sailing ship and joined the Police Force.

As a Farrier he was interested in horses and he knew so much about them that he was created a Vet and chose all the horses for the ^{Brodie} Bear War.

He married Agnes Brody and had a large family - 10 of them.

It was a daughter, Alice, who married Malcolm McInnes, his father, whose ancestors came from ^{Island} they owned an island in the Hebrides off Scotland. He was an Inspector of Stores in the Victorian Railways.

Malcolm's father was Neil McInnes, married to Katherine Black and they had a farm at Elaine in Victoria.

William Beckworth McInnes painted fine portraits of Agnes ^{Brodie} Brody Beckworth and William Beckworth which are now in the possession of the Police Academy, either in Town or Glen Waverley.

There were three children in Malcolm's family - Neil, ^{Flora} Chlora and William Beckworth^{with}. W.B. always had a bad heart and was not expected to live beyond the age of seven. Later, while in hospital as a boy, because of his heart, he was advised by his doctor to go to the National Gallery School of Fine Art. His father was not a wealthy man, but he was allowed to go as he was not able to do any hard physical work. He joined the drawing school in 1903 and graduated to the painting classes in 1904. He was unsuccessful in the scholarship competitions of 1901 and 1911, but in 1912 held a successful exhibition and with that money and financed by his father, he went to Europe in 1912, where he stayed over two years painting many landscapes in England, Scotland, France, Spain, Tangier and Morocco.

I was told that your father donated a painting to the Alphington State School, is that right?

Yes.

And, what was it, do you know, a landscape - Have you any idea what it was?

I have an idea it's a portrait. - Malcolm his eldest son

A portrait - do you know of whom?

I've got an idea, but I'm not certain, that it was my brother.

Your brother? And, ah, what year would that have been donated, would it be in the '30's?

Well it could have been.

I was told that 'um, he spoke to one of the members of the Mothers' Club and told her that he was going to present it, and I think she took it as a personal gift. Why she would've I don't know.

Do you think it was ever hanging in the School?

Oh, I don't think so.

No.

Now tell me about Major Lay all about that.

When I was a girl Major Lay had the old lucerne farmhouse, a very old farm place that had bars on the windows to keep the blacks out.

Is that what they were supposed to be therefor, were they, to keep the blacks out?

Yes, that's what I was told and, in those days, Major Lay lived there and had a dairy farm, but he leased some of the land to the Chinese for market gardens on the Darebin Creek area, where the practice fairway is now and the bottom of this hill, up to where the dyke is to keep the flood waters out. In those days most the foods were delivered. We had old Wing Lee, a Chinese, used to come around in a horse and cart and bring our fruit and vegetables, and he'd be a long time coming back after the order because he'd be having a puff on his opium pipe in the meantime. Then there was Grenace the grocer who had an old bluestone place up in Heidelberg Road; that's where the Red Rooster is now, and there was a hay and corn store there. They used to deliver. And Page's sawmill was on the corner where the Ampol service station is. And, during those pre-car days, we used to have a governess cart and my mother used to go to Clifton Hill in it with several of us on board to shop for other things. I can remember once the cartwheels got caught in the old cable tram lines and we nearly tipped up.

Now what's, what was the, a governess cart?

Yes. A governess cart was a little cart, it was beautifully made and had seats along either side, some fancy wrought iron work on the front where the reins came and steps and a little doorway at the back. We used to go to Clifton Hill for some of the shopping items. Of course, later, we had cars but that was the early car.

What year would that be do you think? Round about 1925?

Another interesting thing in those days, the river was a lot cleaner and we used to go swimming down there. Both my mother and I learnt to swim there and later the rest of. Alphington Swimming Club, in those days, was a lively place. They used to have beautiful carnivals there, with clowns and greasy poles, races, demonstrations by diving experts and water polo, and there were lots of gay canoes with coloured pushers and sunshades. All together it was quite a gay place because, in those days, people wouldn't be going out in cars for trips either.

Ah, Rens place, next door, had beautiful gardens that used to win garden competitions. That's now owned by A.P.M. and the house and gardens have gone. The 1934 floods came almost to the floor level of their house. All around here was a huge lake. Over the other side there was a floating boathouse at Willesmere where there were lots of canoes for hire and, another place we used to swim was at Sandy Bend. When my children were young they learnt to swim there, that's part of Lay's property. We used to occasionally see a platypus down there but where the platypus was seen is now filled in since the freeway was built, the whole loop~~s~~ vanished.

And, Mr. Allen, who had a woodyard in Alphington used to bring his big dray for the Sunday School picnics on Cup Day and we all used to get on board those to go to Eastern Hill, Eaglemont Hill rather, or Watsonia. And then there was Tres Gothic's house down where the Parade School now is. That had lovely gardens with peacocks and it was a beautiful area right down to the creek.

In those days we used to see a lot of chicory in the nature strips with its pretty blue flowers. I don't know what the origin of that was. Then we used to keep silkworms, most children did and my nanna used to take me up to the Darebin Parklands, in those days called Rockbeare Park to get mulberry leaves for them and my husband, when he was a boy, used to live in the old house up there.

At Rockbeare Park did he?

Yes. He'd often *talk* about that and before the quarry was made, there used to be an orchard up there belonging to the Adams'.

What did they used to grow?

They used to grow fruit trees.

Yeah, what sort of fruit, do you know?

As far as I know it was apples but I wouldn't be sure about that. Then they found the ground was too stoney and they used it for stone.

Was that actually on the quarry site?

Yes.

Whitchers places, where were they?

Ah, oh three doors along now, but it's not like it used to be.

Is that a name *Whitchers* is it?

Yes. *Whitchers*. Well that used to be a beautiful old home. It would have comprised about four blocks, right up to my parents' place. Beautifully laid out gardens with a circular drive, with a recessed gateway, an aviary, all beautiful flowers and palms and a great big lawn and summer house each end of it. *used as a croquet lawn*

Now, your parents' house - what number in Lucerne Crescent was that?

That's 54. Well then later my father bought the block from Whitchers that had the *croquet* lawn. Whitchers moved the summer houses *because* he needed another studio because by that time my mother was painting and the two of them couldn't fit into the one.

Did your mother make a name for herself in the painting world as well?

Oh yes, during the War years. Yes, during the War years she did very well, she sold most of her work really. I'm a bit hazy about that but I'm, I know there was another farm here that was later taken over by the Golf Club, because they originally only had nine holes and then they got the extra, but Elizabeth Patterson's grandfather, Claude Patterson owned it, I think, and later she stayed there for a while before they subdivided it all.

And what sort of farms mainly were they?

Ford

Cows.

Oh, all dairy farms?

You say early on that your father had the bad heart, tell me when he died.

Well his bad heart was always a problem but towards the end he got very ill and he was in hospital for a while, I'm not sure how long, but he was only 50 when he died. That was in 1939, about November, and then just three weeks after that my brother, that's the eldest of the boys, was in the Air Force, he was killed in a plane crash in Sydney. Malcolm

Um, whereabouts did father paint all these people?

Mostly at 52. Lucerne Crescent, except when Bernard Hall died and he took over the directorship of the gallery and the painting school, and then he had Bernard Hall's big studio in at the National Gallery; he painted a few portraits there.

So you must have met a lot of very famous people when you were a young girl at your home.

Oh yes, there were always people.

Is there any particular people that impressed you a lot at that age?

Well I can't remember very clearly because, as kids, we were kept out of the studio. My mother used to go in and take in afternoon teas to them and have a talk during their rests to break the sessions.

Jean has a catalogue here for an exhibition of art at the Banyule Gallery. Now, tell me about some of the artists.

Well there were five artists from Heidelberg because this area used to be Heidelberg in those days. Murray Griffin, Klueen Harcourt, Norman McGeorge, W. B. McInnes and M. Napierwaller. ^{Crewin}

Now where did you say Napierwaller lived?

Napierwaller lived just across the creek, just about opposite the lucerne farm. He had the property that came right down to the Darebin Creek. His wife still lives there. She's his second wife.

Were there any of these other local people

Well Norman McGeorge lived over there too. He had a river frontage property in the area that they used to call Ferry Hills and he had a flat bottomed boat, a punt, that he used to put deck chairs on and sometimes his easle and his paints and paint river scenes from his boat.

Oh, did he - well now there was a very large population of people who were artists in those days in this area, weren't there, a lot of artists?

Yes, I suppose really for the number of people, there were. ^{Clewin} ~~Kluen~~ Harcourt lived in Glennard Drive, that's off Lower Heidelberg Road. During 1933 my father and mother and the three eldest children planned a trip to England and Europe and it was about that time that he saw Brett Young, a Director of the Castlemaine Gallery who

We got as far as where Brett Young wanted to take advantage of the trip.

Well Brett Young wanted a portrait of the Duke of York at the Castlemaine Gallery as they have quite a lot of McInnes's work there and he arranged for him to paint a portrait over there, it cramped our style a bit about going to Europe because it meant staying in London to arrange sittings and we had a studio in St. John's Wood and the Duke of York used to come there for his sittings and once or twice, I think the Duchess came to have a look at the portrait. The people who owned the studio went overseas for the summer for a holiday, I think in Europe or somewhere, so we were able to get the studio.

So that was George VI when he was Duke of York

And the Duchess of York

Yes, and how many sittings, how long did you have to stay in that studio?

Well, we were away about **6** months, of course it ~~takes~~, used to take 5 weeks for the ship to go over in those days, and I remember we had a short trip to Scotland and a trip to Paris. Other than that we were in London all the time.

How long would they sit at a time, when they came, did they stay there for an hour or more?

I couldn't say, probably a couple of hours, with rest periods in between.

And your father would work in between sittings at the portrait, would he?

Yes, he would work on the costume and back-grounds and so on.

You say he painted the Duchess too. Did he -

Not over there.

Not over there.

Afterwards when he came back.

She must have come to Australia, did she.

I don't think it was from live sittings.

Oh, I see, from a photograph.

Perhaps, I can remember the dress that my mother made for it, it was a copy of one of hers. I'll have to go up to Castlemaine to see it.

Is it at Castlemaine?

If its anywhere it would be there.

Oh yes.