

# Things Past

Newsletter 78

August 2014

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

PO Box 289 Mt Evelyn VIC 3796 A0051327F



## Dates for your diary

'Uncovered: The Yarra Ranges Collection', Saturday 2 August – Sunday 2 November 2014, The Box Gallery, Yarra Ranges Regional Museum, Castella Street Lilydale.

Launch of Mt Evelyn RSL's new book *A Stretcher Bearer's War*, Saturday 16 August, 2.00pm Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre, 39-41 Castella Street Lilydale.

HISTORY GROUP AGM followed by general meeting, Monday 18 August, 7.30pm Hardy House, 49 Birmingham Road.

## Len Polkinghorne OAM (1923-2014)

Mt Evelyn RSL members were saddened by the passing of an esteemed colleague, Len Polkinghorne OAM.

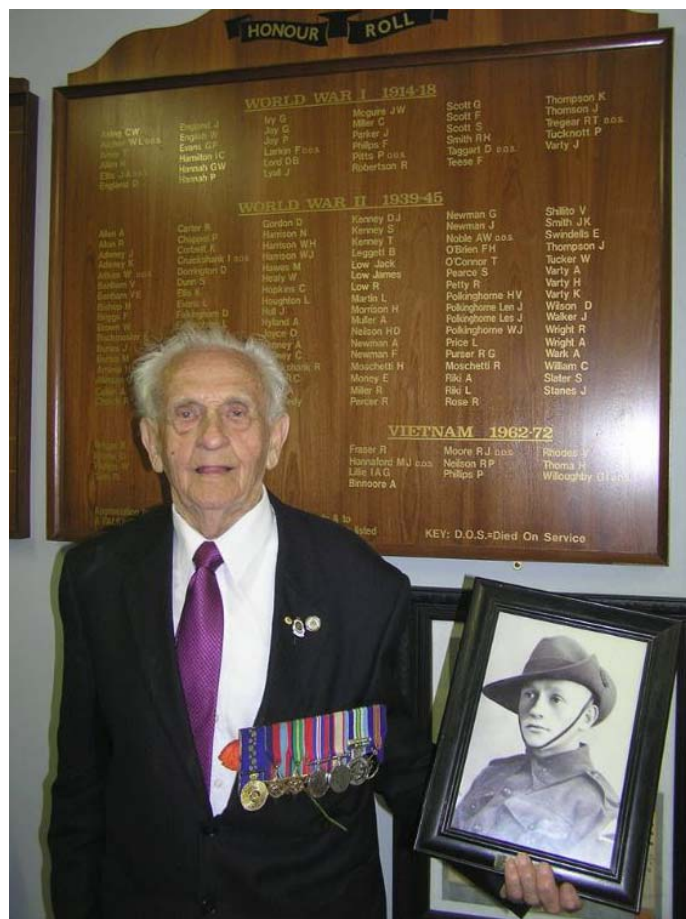
Leonard James Polkinghorne was born 6 May 1923 at Woods Point, where his father worked as a miner.

When the gold ran out there, the family left Woods Point and over the next few years they lived a fairly nomadic existence. His father tried to get work wherever he could and was forced to go rabbit trapping in the bush whenever he couldn't.

In 1927 the family settled in Mt Evelyn when his father got a job working on the Silvan Dam. Len and his siblings attended Mt Evelyn State School. Len's father started up the first school band and paid for their instruments with money he made from building a tennis court with pick and shovel. Len remembered marching up and down Bailey Road in bare feet, practising with the band.

During their time in Mt Evelyn his family lived in a number of houses including one on Billy Goat Hill. In the holidays Len would help the family out by working on local farms and by picking strawberries at Silvan.

During World War II Len enlisted in the army and was allotted to the 2<sup>nd</sup>/ 17<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Battery. He was lucky in a way because many of those who enlisted around the same time ended up as prisoners of war of the Japanese.



Above, Len Polkinghorne holds a photo of himself in World War II uniform in front of the Mt Evelyn RSL Honour Board.

At one time Len tried to transfer to his cousin's unit but was unsuccessful. In the end he talked his cousin into coming into his section. The unit he tried to transfer to was eventually sent to Malaya and nearly all were captured.

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Len's unit however was sent to New Guinea and had the important job of defending Port Moresby from Japanese air attacks. In 1942 this was a daily occurrence. On one occasion he witnessed the ship the 'Mac Dui' being sunk by Japanese bombers in the harbour. He would later go on to see action in Milne Bay, Buna and some of the islands in the Pacific. His two brothers, Harold and Les, also served in uniform during World War II.

In the years after the war Len found it difficult to adjust to civilian life and suffered much both physically and mentally. He moved to Ringwood, married and raised a family. During this time he became a member of the Ringwood RSL.

In the late 1970s Len retired from working life and moved to Mooroolbark. After his retirement he became more active with the Ringwood RSL and was charged by the idea of helping his fellow veterans. He took on the role of 'welfare officer' and 'pensions officer' and did an extraordinary amount of work for the welfare of his comrades in the RSL. He also played the trumpet at commemorative services for many years.

Len was active in passing on the heritage to future generations. He created a museum for the Ringwood RSL displaying the military memorabilia for the members and the general public, he regularly spoke to schools and was guest speaker at the Mt Evelyn Remembrance Day service in 2012. He led a campaign that stopped the Department of Transport from removing the Ringwood War Memorial. Another role he undertook was to perform the RSL service at the funerals of ex-servicemen and women. Len estimated he had done this at over 300 funerals.

For his dedication to his fellow veterans he was made a life member of the RSL in 2001 and inducted into the RSL Hall of Fame in 2007. He was awarded a Centenary Medal in 2001 and the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2008. Len passed away on 29 June 2014, aged 91. He is survived by his wife Thelma, his seven children, his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Len's name appears on the Mt Evelyn Honour Board and the Shire of Lillydale World War II Honour Board. He was the last survivor of Mt Evelyn's World War II volunteers.

**Anthony McAleer**

## **Shaws in Clancy Road**

Lyn Frost writes that one of her relatives was living in Clancy Road Mt Evelyn in 1943. His name was Albert Roberts Shaw. Mavis Jean (née Richardson) and John William Shaw were living at the same address. Shaw's occupation was given as Poultry Farmer.

Albert and his wife Mavis rented the property from Mavis' father, William Henry Richardson. They developed it into a thriving business with 6000 laying hens. Lyn would love to know exactly where the property was in Clancy Road and whether anyone remembers the Shaws.

William Richardson and his daughter were related to the McCombs of Lillydale. James Henry McComb, Shire Engineer in the early 1900s, surveyed the route of the Water Race. The family history is told in *Frankston Pioneers, The McComb Family* by Ruth Bradbury.

## **Miss Snowball's house**

A community housing development has been proposed for 8 Snowball Avenue. Miss Mary Snowball, who was Postmistress from 1913 to 1933, ran the Post Office from a room or enclosed verandah of her house. The house is probably one of the oldest in Mt Evelyn but it has been much altered. The proposed development would retain the existing house and add a new dwelling beside it.

Neighbours are concerned about the threat to 18 mature trees in the garden. Most are cypresses or other conifers. There is also a camellia, thought to be 100 years old, that was the pride and joy of the late Mr Sampson, the previous owner.

## **Top of the Town**

We have heard rumours that the shop 'Top of the Town', opposite the end of Wray Crescent, is to be demolished to make way for a two storey medical surgery. The shop was formerly a bakery and more recently sold pet supplies. Very few of the old shops from the inter-war period are now left in Mt Evelyn.

## **Aqueduct bike trail**

Disagreement over use of the Aqueduct reserve by mountain bikers has been resolved. Both sides have agreed to a bike track beside the Aqueduct Trail, possibly inside the aqueduct formation itself. This will avoid re-opening the informal tracks through the bush above and below the trail.

# The Gregarious Flower Farming Marshalls of McKillop Road

## 1. Tina Marshall (1903 – 1991)

**Jimmy Marshall (James Watt Marshall 1929-2012, alleged descendant from the inventor of the steam engine), was a well known flower farmer from McKillop in the 1960s to 1980s. He was interviewed in August 1996 and furnished us with a colourful memoir of his parents, as well as access to about thirty years of the small diaries kept by his mother Christina.**

Christina Marshall (nee Robinson) was born in 1903 at Koondrook on the Murray River, later moving to Dundonnell in the Western District of Victoria, where her family had an 800 acre sheep and cattle farm. She met her husband John 'Jock' Marshall, a migrant from the north of England, when he was working with the 'sussos' on the roads and camping in the area. Jock applied for land through the Closer Settlement Board and was allocated land in McKillop Road, Mt Evelyn, after they married in 1926. Here they began a farm and had some ultimate success growing flowers such as peonies and gladioli and raised their two sons, Harry and James.

Tina, as she was known, read her Bible given to her when she married every night until in her later life it was battered and dog eared. She also kept a private diary of her work, her visitors and some significant world events in pocket sized diaries, a week to an opening. Jim said, 'We knew that she was keeping something ... these last 20, 30 years. I didn't know till I found the pieces. They were scattered everywhere, in all sorts of places. Every night she used to sit down ... and she'd remember her diary, and she'd go and get it and write something in it. We never knew what she was writing.'

The structure of entries in the diaries was very similar. Each entry would start with the number of hours work Tina had completed on farm work, most often bunching gladioli (sometimes for up to 12 hours), then name family members and others who visited, phone calls made or received, special baking or preserving completed and often finish in later years with an entry concerning health, deaths and funerals of local people. Interspersed were items of world significance, often relating to the Royal Family, Australian sporting success and the space race. Some items are of interest to the Mt Evelyn community, as they concern,



**Jock Marshall (at left) and Tina (behind him) with friends at their home in McKillop Road, 1926. Photo courtesy Joan Marshall.**

for example, the artist Ernest Buckmaster, Sir Douglas Nicholls, the grocer's family (the Lillies), some women associated with the establishment of the Mt Evelyn kindergarten and some well known local identities from the 1960s. Three to five separate visits from family and friends was a normal daily occurrence.

**20 November 1962** Pastor Nicholls spoke at Guild meeting. 80+ there.

**25 December 1962 (Christmas Day)**

Misses Daniel, Mr Gear, Mrs Archer, Mr Wright here for dinner and all the family.

**31 January 1964** Very hot day. Fire started 1.30 Harry's place (son). Hard fight to save it. Lester Poole and Coopers houses burnt, also Jack. Fire Brigade good. Jim, Joan, Christine (son and daughter in law, granddaughter) Koolmees and Powells here for evening. Fire burned nearly to shed. Bush burned out.

**27 March 1964** Mr. Buckmaster (artist) came for dahlias to paint.

**8 November 1964** Had Mr and Mrs Grassby and children from the migrant camp.

**25 December 1964** Margaret and Harry and children, Mrs Archer, Bob Wright and Katy here for Christmas dinner.

**10 April 1966** Did flowers for Wendy Lillie's wedding. Went to Church. Minister did not turn up.

**27 July 1966** Went into Evelyn, backed into lady's car. She yelled. Reported to police.

**1 October 1966** Mr and Mrs Buckmaster came out. Left paintings with Harry to pick one for himself.

**9 December 1966** Went to Miss C Daniel's funeral. Only Jim, myself, Joyce Evans and Gilda Bisset there.

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**15 December 1966** Aggie came out. Went to see Mrs McDonald and Colin.

**17 December 1966** Went and got Mrs McDonald and bought her up here for afternoon tea while Sheila, Lucy, and Mrs Olney cleaned her house out.

**25 December 1966** Went to Christmas service 8 o'clock. Church nearly full. 14 for dinner. A very hot day. Bob Wright, Mrs Archer and Koolmees for evening.

**25 January 1967** Mr Buckmaster put glass on painting of me.

**10 December 1967** Did 70 Christmas cards.

**19 February 1968** John went divining. A big fire in the Dandenongs.

**24 December 1968** Many singing at carols in Evelyn.

**28 June 1969** Ian Lillie is home from Vietnam.

The home they established was humble and without electricity until the 1970s, but it was a welcoming house and visitors were frequent. Lacking a car and with regular farm work to attend to, in the early years, Tina and Jock's own freedom to visit was circumscribed, but not totally prevented by any means. Jim said, 'We used to go there every Sunday. Everybody up there of a Sunday night ... sitting around the piano and having scones and meat with pickles and sauce. Sunday night's tea was cold meat and scones and we'd have a musical evening. The house always had music.'

'Doing the house out' was quite a major event noted in her diary. 'She'd mop, she'd vacuum

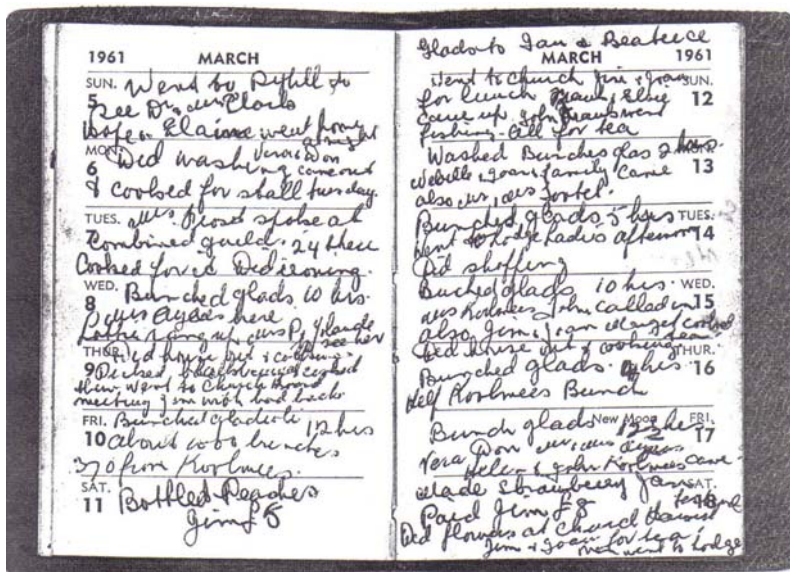
the whole place and she'd sweep it, tidy it, dust it ... the whole place. She'd go through the whole place like a cyclone.'

Christmas was very important. Tina made many Christmas cakes months beforehand. 'They went all over the place. One or two for Christmas and one for New Year, but she also gave them to all the relatives.' Tina Marshall also provided Christmas dinner for extras.

'There were always people staying up there. Family always came for Christmas. Old Joe Yarker was an old character who lived on the corner of Hunter and Lewis Roads. He'd been there since the 1930s. He came out and lived with old Mr Jasper in McKillop Road for a while then moved up to a shack and lived up there. He was a drunken old boozier who'd go away on the Friday and get back on the train of a Saturday at Mt Evelyn and would bash up anyone who was in the town. (Charlie Stubbs used to fight him.) He was a nice old character if you got to know him but everybody hated him because he was an old drunk. He eventually gave up the drink and every Christmas I would take him around a Christmas dinner. He would never come to our house and have a meal, but every Christmas Mum would make an extra plate and I would take the meal around to old Joe, to his hut. He'd say, "You shouldn't! I don't want this!" but he'd eat it all up and thank you later on.

The family also hosted people from the migrant hostels, remembering, perhaps, Jock's own migrant experience. Some South Africans who were at Bonegilla Migrant Hostel, being the

only English speakers amongst a lot of Italians and other 'foreigners', 'were in a bad way'. The Minister heard about them and asked us specifically to take them because they thought we would be able to get on with them, so we did. ... We took them for the day and we entertained them. We took them around and showed them the area, all that sort of thing ... just showed them a bit of courtesy.' The relationship survived a generation, with Jim's family continuing the visits.



Above, two pages from Mrs Tina Marshall's diary, 1961.

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Religious or humanitarian charity appeared to be a central part of her character and in spite of some appearances, she was quite ecumenical. One of Tina Marshall's closest friends was Mrs O'Connor from the Post Office. 'They were great friends but they used to pick at each other: "You great bigoted Catholic!"; "You bigoted Protestant!", but they were terrific friends.'

Tina's son, Jimmy, stressed her generosity. 'She gave everything away. You couldn't do anything about it. Pounds of stuff from the farm used to go to stalls for all the different Church groups. Everything would go. It didn't matter who it was. If they came out and there was a fête on for the Catholic Church or the such and such Church ....' In fact when she won a \$10,000 Tatts 'scratchie' she had bought at Mt Evelyn, it had all gone six months later when it might have been useful to replace the broken refrigerator. She had spent a couple of hundred dollars reupholstering the couch and the rest she gave away to children, sisters and cousins.

Tina's diary noted almost weekly visits by 'Aggie' who was often given lunch and then driven back to Mt Evelyn, but on one occasion picked some of the blackberries growing on the farm for Tina. Well known identity 'Aggie' (Agnes Binnore, *Tracks to Trails* pp. 97-98) was always out at the farm, scrounging stuff to give away, to sell and to give to the Children's Hospital. 'She was a wonderful person Aggie, but she was a darn nuisance, because once she got her claws in, she was forever there, botting, scrounging stuff. Wanting this and wanting that. She got too greedy in some cases. You had to tell her, "You've had enough this week, or month", or "You're not getting any more" because she'd run you broke. Not money. She'd take anything other than money. At the farm she'd be asking for a bag of spuds, for tomatoes or these sorts of thing. But you gave it to her because you knew she was giving it, I think it was to the Children's Hospital.'

Tina was also a committed donator to the Red Cross Blood Bank following the Second World War. 'She gave 80 or 90 pints of blood. She used to go down to Melbourne every month or six weeks to give a pint of blood. She gave a tremendous amount of blood.' She had badges acknowledging this.

Tina read widely and in later life became very enthusiastic about bowls. Jim said, 'Mum's life was friends and parties and the bowls. The bowls was a wonderful thing for Mum. She played bowls like she was playing for sheep stations, oh, she had to win!' She was very upset when dropped to a lower grade team.

In early years to get around Tina relied on walking and an old pushbike that was very difficult to push. For her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday the family secretly clubbed together to buy her a brand new bicycle. On her birthday when she woke up no-one said a thing, which distressed her greatly. 'She was crying because no-one had remembered her birthday. She walked out into the kitchen and there was her gift-wrapped pushbike. Well, you've never seen anything like it. Mum cried and laughed, cried and laughed.'

Later, when she was 58 or 60 Tina finally got her driver's licence, a mixed blessing according to son Jim. 'How she ever got a licence, I'll never know.' Her diary lists quite a number of small accidents and car replacements. She wouldn't give up her licence. Three times the police came and said, "For God's sake, get your mother off the road." She'd driven out of McKillop Road straight in front of the traffic and three times the police nearly ran into her ... I drove out one morning a bit late, and there was Mum's car, tipped over on its side in the gutter, over at Bishops (garage). I thought, "Where's Mum?" I looked in the car. No sign of Mum. I went to Reg and said, "What happened to Mum? Has the ambulance taken her away?" He said, "No, she got out of the car and said, Fix the car up for me, boys, I'm going to the bowls (it was World Day of Bowls at Mentone.) Jim got the insurance company to make it a write-off so she couldn't drive it again. She didn't talk to him for six months! The car was her life. Before she had that she was stuck at home and visitors had to come to her. With the car she was forever going out.' Jim Marshall's memories and the diaries introduce us to a most sociable and generous resident of Mt Evelyn, a valued member of the Country Women's Association, the Church Guild and, later, the Senior Citizens Club and Bowling circles.

**Janice Newton**

#### **Museum collection online**

View the Yarra Ranges Regional Museum collection online: [www.yrrmuseumcollection.com](http://www.yrrmuseumcollection.com)

## Subdivision plans online

Recently we had a request for subdivision plans from Mitarm Close. The enquirer wanted historic plans of the area to decorate his house. Not having any maps of the immediate area, we suggested alternative sources including the State Library (SLV).

Without knowing the name of the subdivision, our enquirer was able to locate the plan at right by searching the catalogue under Maps for Fernhill (the nearest main road) + "Mt Evelyn". This could be a useful tool for anyone researching the history of their property.

Russ Haines mentioned in a recent email regarding online plans: SLV, National Archives (NAA) and NLA (Trove) are good resources to chase up your local land sales brochures but don't forget the wonderful collection at Melbourne University: <https://digitised-collections.unimelb.edu.au/>



Above, plan of the Fernhill Estate subdivision, Mt Evelyn. State Library Collection.

### The Lion Seats multiply!

I met with today with Mr Ken Reed, Captain of the Mount Evelyn CFA. Ken is a long term resident of Mount Evelyn, past Council employee, past Councillor of the Shire of Lillydale. He remembers there were several of [the Lion Seats] in Mount Evelyn.

One in front of the old post office on the bank opposite Snowball Avenue (which we know of). Two on either side of the Avenue of Honour at the York Road end and in front of the old CFA building. Two at the outside entrance of the old railway station. One on the corner of York & Hereford Road, near the current bus shelter. One at the Mimosa tea gardens, near Olinda Creek – early 1950s. **Maria McCarthy**

### Archival Access

Mark Grealy publishes the newsletter *Archival Access* about locating the various types of records held at the Public Record Office. Mark has now placed the back issues on his blog: <http://www.archivalaccessvictoria.com/apps/blog/> In his latest issue, Mark mentions Australian History podcasts, available free from the Latrobe University website: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/podcasts> or via iTunesU App on your smartphone.

Recent programs include: Classical Commemoration of ANZACS; The Melbourne Homefront in WWI; Indigenous Archaeology

of Ned's Corner; Striking it Rich in the Goldfields; Women of the Eureka Rebellion. Older programs (unsorted) are archived at: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/podcasts/archive>

### From Kev's rain gauge

Rainfall for July 2014 for Mt Evelyn, McKillop, Melbourne and the Melbourne average.\*

Mt Ev	McK	Melb	Melb Av
101.2mm	135.9mm	19.2mm	47.7mm

The McKillop reading for May 2014 was 65.5mm

\* McKillop readings courtesy Jean Edwards. Melbourne figures Bureau of Meteorology: <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/data/>

**Kevin Phillips**

### Contact us

As a courtesy, please address any issues with the content of *Things Past* to the Editor.

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