

MEMORIES OF SHOREHAM

BY FIONA HASKER

My time living in Shoreham began at birth.

Before that, my parents and my grandparents had chosen Shoreham as the place to live, or in my grandparents' case, retire to.

My grandmother's cousins, Sibyl and Tony Hamilton also owned a beautiful property, Lyncroft, which was bounded by Punt Lane and Tucks Road. The house still stands, and interestingly enough, was the first domestic home designed by Roy Grounds, well known as the architect responsible for the Victorian Arts Gallery in St. Kilda Road.

Though my mother lived and was schooled in Sydney, she was lucky enough to spend her school holidays at Lyncroft riding her horse. That horse was finally buried under a tree just near what is now Lyncroft's tennis court that can be seen from Tucks Road just after Punt Lane. She loved her time in Shoreham and I suppose it was for these reasons that her parents later retired to Shoreham and built their own house, called Valle Pacis in 1939, also in Tucks Road a little closer to Shoreham. It still stands too. They had an Aberdeen Angus Stud there, and as young children we have happy memories of visiting our grandparents at the Royal Melbourne Show with their cattle. I always wanted to sleep in the hayloft above the little room allotted to competitors at the Showgrounds. I was never allowed.

In the meantime in approximately 1934, my father had moved to Shoreham to work at Tecnevin (bounded by Frankston/Flinders Road, Higgins Lane and Tucks road) for the then owner Major McGregor (Gregor) Knox. He built Tecnevin as his Summer house and my father managed the farm for him. Gregor decided Shoreham was not for him and Dad ended up buying Tecnevin. Gregor returned to Scotland and was later killed in a horse accident whilst hunting.

In due course, mum and dad met, married and we three children arrived. What had been Gregor's summer house became our family home. It only had one bedroom, so as the family grew, parts of the verandah were walled and windowed in to become our bedrooms. Besides our house, there were two other old homes only a few metres away. One was a lovely old wattle and daub house, so cool in the summer. I remember my grandparents staying there while visiting us. It had only a couple of rooms and unfortunately required more money than my parents had, to restore it. The ice chest was in one room, and I well remember the ice man delivering the huge block of ice weekly, especially over summer. Of course, no electricity. Eventually it was demolished. The other old house, also only one real room was rented to the Wurlods for some time. When they moved out, we children were allowed to have friends to sleep there. The room was large with a huge fireplace. Chains with hooks attached hung down the chimney so that water could be boiled over the fire or food cooked.

We children would go to the general store to buy some sweets for the midnight feast we planned to have while we lay in our sleeping bags on the floor telling jokes or scary stories as the fire crackled in the semi darkness. On one occasion I talked little brother Roderick into tip toeing past the window with a white sheet over him. It had the desired effect. A mixture of excitement and terror for my old school friends. This house too was eventually demolished except for two rooms that had been added to the back of it while the Wurlods rented it. They later became bedrooms for Catriona and me.

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Going back a little, pre the arrival of we three children, there was fear that Australia would be invaded from the coast. Hence West head was built along with many gun emplacements dug out in readiness for the invasion. They were mainly along the coast but there is one on Roderick's land. The gun was never placed in situ and it is now a pond.

During the war, Tecnevin was a dairy and taken over to supply our armed forces with milk. The creamery was on Roderick's block. Dad enlisted with the 13/19 Lighthorse Berwick 1939 and later the Armed Reconnaissance Squadron in 1941 where he gave continuous service until 1946. People were given tasks in the event of invasion. Mum was to be a drover. She and others were to move all the livestock north and inland. My grandfather was to be the last person over the Shoreham bridge. His job was to then blow it up. Quite amazing really.

Getting back to my childhood. We were pretty much able to free range wherever we liked all day so long as we returned before dark. As young children, we would walk to the beach and along the cliffs that were still covered with barbed wire towards Flinders. You can imagine how excited we were to discover tunnels behind the wire. Our imagination went wild as we played imaginary games and took candles into our hidey holes. At some stage we told dad what we had been up to, and were very disappointed when he banned us ever going there again. I think the Council was informed of the dangers and the tunnels were filled in and barbed wire taken away. There were a\ndangers for surfers at this time. Star pickets had been driven into the rocks all the way along the coast as another deterrent to landing. These were exposed at low tide and would be very nasty for a surfer to hit. Roderick tells me they were still there when he started surfing.

My school life began at Red Hill Consolidated the year it opened. It was brand new and, to us, huge. The little schools were closed and all the children bussed to Red Hill. I do not recall any children being taken to school by their parents. Very different to now. One thing I will never forget is the Shoreham school bus drama. While standing at the bottom of our drive waiting for the bus to come, we looked up towards the post office to watch it come down around the corner. To our complete astonishment it continued down the hill and over the side of the bridge into the creek. We could not believe our eyes and rushed home to report this to mum and dad. Fortunately, no one was badly hurt, and much to our disappointment, mum drove us to school. One of the few times this happened.

Shoreham had a tennis court from very early on. It was firstly gravel, then asphalt. It was where cars tend to park now. The courts here today were put in later and the original one was removed. For a few school holidays mum would drive Catriona and me to Rosebud for tennis lessons with Mr Fox. But by the time Roderick needed to learn, there were enough children in Shoreham who wished to play tennis for Mr Fox to teach them on the Shoreham court. He was an excellent teacher and we children were rather fascinated with him because he had contracted polio and had a severe limp. I don't think we could understand how he had total control of the ball and got every ball back.

Our farm was sheep. For some reason there were relatively few cattle at that time. Almost all of the Peninsula was sheep farming and more fat lamb breeding than fine wool sheep. Shoreham was sheep. Red Hill was apples. Flinders was fishing. How things have changed! Now you would be lucky to spot a sheep. It has become exclusive breeds of cattle, goats, alpacas, olives and grapes. My memories of life on our farm, which I must add I loved, was trudging up muddy, wet paddocks in

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gumboots with dad checking ewes had lambed successfully and carrying home cold wet lambs which needed warmth. They were put on hot water bottles in our kitchen and given a bottle of milk before reuniting them with their mother, not always an easy task. Because we ate lamb in one form or another seven days a week, 52 weeks of the year, a real treat was to swap a leg of lamb for a cray from a Flinders fisherman who was also equally tired of fish and crays every day. At that time crayfish were plentiful and cooked in a 44 gallon drum near the pier.

We all had ponies so we could travel quite widely during the weekends. My parents told me that they would not be driving me anywhere much, so the pony was to be my transport and entertainment. It was just that for many years. One of our holiday chores was to go to the post office to collect the mail, then on to the store to get the paper and maybe a few odd necessities on our ponies. We were very wary of Mrs Hitchcock in the post office. I don't think she ever did anything to us, but she was not very patient with children and we were pretty scared of her. Later her son Syd and his wife June ran the post office while daughter May and her husband Bill ran the general store a little further up the road.

Within the post office was the Shoreham Exchange, also run by Syd and June. This was manageable during the year, but it became very busy during the Christmas Holidays. Lots of mail to sort and many campers, holiday people and children at Camp Buxton, all trying to ring friends and family on the one public phone outside the post office. For a few Christmas holidays, my sister Catriona and I worked the phone part of the business connecting locals and interrupting conversations with "3 minutes. Are you extending?" The locals always rang us to tell us their movements so that, should anyone ring them, we could tell that person where they were, what they were doing, and when they would be home again.

When the Buxton subdivision was taking place, we took offence at the prospect of sharing OUR Shoreham with others, and rode our ponies through the estate pulling up all the surveyor pegs. I am amazed we got away with it. We thought the finger would be pointed our way very quickly. I guess the surveyors and/or council men did not ask any questions. Although it was not until 1950 that we got electricity, we were well served with the essentials. Bread was baked in Flinders and delivered to our gate. The Cairns ran the butchers shop in Flinders and the Edwards in Red Hill delivered fresh fruit and vegetables.

Our parents had quite a fun social life. Several of their friends built a table tennis table in their shearing sheds and more often than not, Friday or Saturday nights were spent playing table tennis and badminton. The Raws of Point Leo farm, (which mostly ran from Frankston/Flinders Road down Pt. Leo Road to the beach, and over to Coryule) and the Thompsons of Thompsons lane beside the Merricks Store, were often generous hosts. We all loved it. We, as children, were allowed to stay up late on those nights, and we also joined in with table tennis. Gene Raws was a very good cook, so waiting to see what came out for supper was always well worth the wait.

Other highlights still fresh in my memory are exciting times spent with the McCullochs' at the corner of Higgins Lane and Tucks Road. They had many friends in the art world, artists, actors and dancers. We were lucky enough to join famous people such as the New York Ballet, the Bolshoi Ballet and others relaxing at a picnic in the McCulloch's garden and pine forest. Alan McCulloch was a great story teller too, and we loved nothing better than sitting on the floor in front of him as he made up a

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story about us that was so funny. Another fond memory is the Christmas party given by the Hamiltons at Lyncroft for a number of years. They beautifully decorated a huge

Christmas tree; gave every child there a personalized little present and then a delicious sit down meal. The meal was held on the verandah that was enclosed with hay bales so we kept warm. There a very long trestle table groaning with children type food. Much more than your mother would have allowed. The Raws also held a Woolshed dance once a year for a few years. That was the climax of the year for us. Whole families were invited, so there was dancing, live music, food to die for, and ice cream for everyone.

During the summer holidays we walked to the beach and spent many, many hours lying on the sand talking, cooking ourselves in the sun and enjoying the extra company of friends who spent their school holidays at Shoreham. People would choose to come to Shoreham generally love it. A very good school friend of my father, married, had a family and brought them to Shoreham camping in the 50's. That family has had the same campsite for every year since then. Now their children and their children's children continue to use the same site.

I feel fortunate to have enjoyed such a happy childhood in Shoreham and lucky to be still here, if only as a weekender.