

Memories of Long Ago

I was born in Perth in April 1941. This of course was during the early years of WW2. My family lived in a rented house, at No. 58 Canning Highway, two doors south of Gloucester St. That whole corner was later occupied by a petrol service station, which is now an Ultra Tune car repair business. My parents were Horace and Marie Stevens. My paternal Grandparents, Ernest and Harriet Stevens, lived opposite us, on the southern corner of Taylor Street, at No. 53. That house, which was built by my grandfather and his two sons, Ernest Jnr, and my Dad, in 1929, still stands there today. After my grandfather died in 1956, my grandmother still lived there for a few more years, then in January 1969, she sold it to the Barrow Linton Estate Agency, and moved to a unit at 16A. Mackie St. So initially, that house became the office of the Estate agency that bought it, but later became offices for a Pest control company. Some changes have been made though, to the front of the house. What was once the front verandah has been closed off, and glass panels installed. There is no indication of its occupancy today

The Stevens family migrated to Western Australia in December 1925 aboard the S.S Jervis Bay, a ship that covered herself with glory, doing convoy duty, in WW2, as an armed Merchant Cruiser. She was sunk, defending a convoy against the German battleship, the "Admiral Scheer". When they first migrated, they were a family of seven. Mother, Father, with two sons and three daughters. A fourth daughter was born, in Australia, on St Patrick's day 1930, and subsequently became known as Pattie, from that day to this, despite her given name being Violet. They came to W.A, from the London areas of Camberwell and Peckham. My grandfather Ernest was a bus driver in London, and because of his very small stature, served as a Despatch Rider, in France, during WW.1. Here in W.A., he worked as a gardener, at the South Perth Zoo. In WW2 my father, his brother, one maternal and two paternal uncles served in the R.A.A.F.

It is important to note here, that both the Canning Highway, and Mill Point road were originally known by different names. Canning Highway was originally called Fremantle Road, and Mill Point road was known as Suburban Road. My father once wrote that they originally lived in Berwick Street, and then moved to Mackie St. In 1928 they moved again to No. 71 Fremantle Rd. (Canning Highway).and the electoral records of the day, confirm that. Which puts it almost opposite Berwick Street. Grandfather apparently had purchased some quarter acre blocks of land,

up near Temple St in the "Park", which he bought for fifteen pound each. But it was later discovered, that someone had made a mistake in boundaries, and had built a house partly over at least one of them. The easiest solution for all concerned, was for Granddad to sell the land to them, and he then bought the land at the corner of Taylor St and Canning Highway. The first mention of them, at that address, in the electoral records, is in 1954. But I think that it is distinctly possible, that they had never changed their electoral record, because those records show, their eldest son, Ernest Henry, lived at that address in 1931. Which leads me to believe that my Grandparents did also, because I remember them being there. And we moved away from the Vic Park area in 1951

My parents were married in St Peters Church in Leonard St., on the 28th of October 1933, and had their wedding reception, in the then, Victoria Park Library hall. My father was a French Polisher by trade, and worked for one of Perth's great old department stores, Boan's Ltd. Boan's had a furniture factory in Bennett St. East Perth, and that was where he worked. He always rode a push bike to work, across the causeway. I remember him saying, that those Tram lines on the bridges, were a trap for cyclists, because if you weren't careful, and your front wheel dropped into the rut of the tramlines, you generally ended up falling off, in front of oncoming traffic.

My maternal Grandparents Harry and Maria Nield, with their two eldest daughters, and my maternal Great Grandparents, Fred and Lily Rawson, migrated to Western Australia, aboard the S.S. Gothic. Arriving here in late January 1913. My mother, at the time, was only a babe in arms, having been born in April, the previous year. They came from the Macclesfield area of Cheshire. My mother was born at Salford near Manchester, England. The early W.A. electoral records, shows them as living in Randall St North Perth, before they all moved to Garland St, Victoria Park. around 1915. There are inscriptions for both my maternal, and my paternal grandparents, on the Welcome Walls at the Fremantle Maritime Museum, that records their arrival in Western Australia .

So in about 1934, my maternal grandparents left the district, and moved to Ascot Rd, Rivervale, north of the railway line. But where the Grandparents house was however, is now under part of the Polly Farmer Freeway. In those days the Red

Castle Brewery was on the corner of Ascot Rd., later to become the Great Eastern Highway of today, and Kitchener Avenue. Immediately below, and on the south side of the railway line where the railway line crossed Ascot Rd, there was an extremely dangerous level crossing, on the crest of a hill. Not an under pass like there is today. This crossing, as cars increased in size and power, became the scene of many serious accidents.

My maternal Great Grandfather Frederick Rawson, also served in the Great War, but as part of the Australian Forces. He was also originally a member of the Manchester Police Force. He died in Garland St in 1929. Fred was reported in the newspapers of the day, as having fallen into a drain in Garland St., and broken his neck. I tend to think, that a few beers might have also been involved. A copy of his Death Certificate that we have, makes for interesting reading. For according to the dates thereon, he died on the 13th of the month, was buried on the 16th, and was last seen alive on the 17th. Re-Incarnated perhaps? Lily Rawson also moved to Rivervale, in 1934.

Next door to us at 60 Canning Highway, lived an old widower, named Alexander Mackie, who my family fondly referred to as "Mac". It seems that Alexander, or Mac, as we called him, was born in Boxhill, Victoria. At one time in his life, he had been a racecourse Bookmaker. Old "Mac" was then, a professional fisherman, who netted fish in the Swan River, for sale to the local market. "Mac" owned both the blocks, at 60 and 62 Canning highway, where the Christadelphian church hall now stands. In those days the minimum standard block was pretty small, though I reckon, "Mac's" two blocks, were at least a quarter acre each, or bigger.

No.62 was largely a vacant block. I think Mac used it to string his fishing nets, to repair them. Most of those old Swan River fishermen, did their own repairs, for the nets in those days, were made of cord, not mono filament nylon like today. Mac also allowed us local kids, to build our Guy Fawkes night Bonfire, on this vacant block

I say " Guy Fawkes night", because that was what it was called in those days. Not, as it is generally referred to these days, as "Cracker Night". It 's origins were based, on the attempt of a fellow by that name, to blow up the English House of Parliament with Gunpowder. Nowadays I tend to sympathise with him. But why we celebrated such a criminal act, beats me. All that I can assume, is that because most of our population, at that time, were of a lower class, British origin, that

they saw it as a rebellion against the Authoritarian Rule, of the upper classes. So I guess it was a bit like our own Ned Kelly !

In the fence between our two houses, some of the wooden pickets, had been removed, to allow easy access, between the two houses. Because Mac was a widower, when he was "crook", my mum used to take care of him. He was treated more like an elderly relative, than just a neighbour. On his house block, at No. 60, he also had a large Chook yard, and he used to raise his own chickens. Mac was also very friendly, with the local produce merchant, named Ned Harrold. Ned's Produce and Grain store was located at the lower end of the "Park", on the corner of Armagh St. and Albany Highway. I guess that that was where he got his "chook" food from. "Mac" often went duck shooting, out beyond Cannington, and so owned a 12 gauge Shot gun. I recall that there was a time, when he found that a cat had got into his chicken rearing shed, and killed a whole lot of his, recently hatched chickens. Needless to say that cat's life, ended right there and then, by virtue of what I shall call, "Rule 12 " (gauge that is!).

My main boyhood friend of that era, was a boy by the name of Ken Herbert, who lived in Armagh St. The Herbert property backed onto old Mac's vacant block, and we generally passed through gaps in the fences of both, when we were getting up to any nefarious activity together. On the fence line of Ken's place we had a cubby house built, and under it, we had dug out a secret chamber which none, at least I think that was the case, of our parents knew about. But now I wonder about that. The entrance to the below ground chamber, was through the floor of the cubby. All our boyhood treasures were stored there.

The earliest of my memories, is of spending time in Princess Margaret Children's Hospital, recovering from the onset of Meningitis, when I was about 4 years old. I recovered from that early set back, and the nearby Swan River became a favourite haunt of mine. In those days after WW2, the land on the river side of Canning Highway and Mill point road, from Taylor Street to Manning Point, in South Perth, was largely scrub and swamp. However, my neighbourhood mates and I, came to know those swamps like the back of our hands. We knew all the paths and byways through it, and had secret and hidden places in it.

Like most small boys of that era, we all had our "Gings" or Slingshots, Shanghai's, call them what you will. The law frowned upon them, but they were an integral part of any small boys life, despite that. Although most people would now castigate us for it, we hunted birds with them, among the scrubby trees along the river foreshore. Alternately we roamed the river banks, with bags of Lilac or Castor Oil berries, shooting them into the two main Jellyfish, that infested the river, during the summer season. We would walk along the Limestone retaining walls, wait till they broke surface, then we'd "let them have it". It was not uncommon to see a great, big brown, "Man-O War", with dozens of berries imbedded in it.

Another favourite lark, was to hide under the Castor Oil Bushes, in a vacant block, on the river side of the highway. Next door to an old fellow named Rosser, who grew roses. In those days, the tram conductors generally rode on the front step of the Trams, ready to alight and collect the fares, of the prospective passengers. Well dare I say it, as a tram passed us, we would "let fly" with our Shanghai's, shooting Castor Oil Berries at the conductor. If the tram stopped, and the conductor tried to catch us, we would melt into the aforementioned scrub and swamp lands. None of them ever stood the slightest chance of catching us. Although it might be said that we were little rat bags, it was all done in fun, and we never ever really hurt anyone. What can I say, except that "Boys will be Boys"!

In my defence though, I must say that unlike some of today's kids, we never wantonly destroyed, or defaced public property, created disturbances, or use bad language carelessly, and in public. We did not hang around in gangs as such. And we were never "bored", we made our own fun, there was always something interesting to do. There were no TV's , computers, or x-boxes, with violent video games to command our attention, or corrupt our minds either.

But over and above that, my family spent a lot of time during summer, fishing in one form or another, along the banks of the river, and on the old wooden bridges, of the Causeway. My father spent many hours, fishing from all the Causeway Bridges, but favoured the last bridge on the Perth side, the most. This bridge was locally known as the Hump back. Whereas the two bridges on the Victoria P ark side were of relatively straight, flat constructions, The Humpback rose high over the main boat channel, some what like the iron work above the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

There were originally three bridges, across the Swan at this point in time, and there were actually two distinct Islands, side by side in the river. I don't ever recall the western one, having a recognised name as such, but it was far smaller than Heirisson Island. So the river then, had three channels, and consequently there were three bridges, to allow access to the "sticks", on the Victoria Park side of the river. When the new Causeway bridges were built, in the 1950's, the boat channel on the Western side of the river, was filled in, and the crossing reduced to just two bridges, to and from one island. The channel that remained on the Perth side, then became the main boat channel,

for river craft, after dredging. The spoil from that dredging, being pumped onto the land on the Perth side, where Coleman's boat shed once stood, and is now a car park.

Those three wooden bridges not only carried vehicular traffic, they also carried the water mains, from Canning Dam, over the river and into the city. As a small boy, I too, often fished from these bridges. Access to the bridge pylons, at water level, was basically via the pipeline supports, on the southern side of the bridges. One climbed by virtue of cross beams, down to the bracing struts at water level, under the bridges. I have distinct memories of being under the "Humpback", when trams passed overhead. It was very disconcerting to see some of the structure actually moving with the vibrations, caused by the passing of the trams. In fact, one could actually hear some of the piles, sinking into the mud, and when the tram had passed on, the accompanying sucking sound, as the pylon came back up again, to it's normal position

Many a Saturday and Sunday afternoon, was spent on the river bank, between the Causeway and Taylor Street, fishing for the Blue Manna crabs, from the limestone retaining walls, with drop nets. Those were the days, when Crabs were large and plentiful. It was not uncommon to catch a "Bluey", that measure 36 inches from claw to claw, and 7" – 8" across the carapace. And the female crabs were always returned to the water. Rarely were they eaten. Not when the "Bluey's" were so plentiful. I can remember one humorous incident, where my mother had just thrown a drop net, back into the water, when a Dolphin rose up, exactly at that point, and inhaled as they do. It gave my mother, one hell of a fright. It is quite reasonable to say, that the Swan River in those days, helped my

parents to supplement the families food expenses, tremendously. Particularly during the depression years.

The river provided a real bounty, in those days My father caught Bream and Mulloway, also known as Kingfish or "Kingies", from the bridges. From the shore, we caught Trumpeters, Tarwhine, Pilchards, Roach, Yellowtail, Garfish and Cobblers. The garfish we caught in the weedy shallows, using a bit of fishing line, tied to a length of bamboo, with a cork float, and a tiny hook, attached to the other. We used a flour dough mixture, as bait for them. For the rest we dug blood worms out of the river mud. They were a most universal bait. Right through into my later life, I always went digging in the river for bloodworms, to use as bait for most fish. We found that the Trumpeters, made ideal crab bait. Due to their small scales and tough skin, they tended to last longer.

Mulloway have a particularly pungent smell about them. My mother had a very keen sense of smell, and could not stand the smell of them. Most times, before my father had even opened the front gate, my mother knew that he had caught one, and would yell out , "Don't bring that "B' thing in here". So any Mulloway caught, were always banished to the back yard, for cleaning, scaling and filleting, with Mac's chooks enjoying the spoils.

The sloping shores of Heirisson Island, were where most people went prawning at night. They used a drag net, which two people pulled through the water, near the waters edge. Usually you dragged the net along in water, that varied from knee to chest deep. By this I mean, that the person on the shore side of the net, was probably in water up to their knees, whilst the fellow on the outside, could be in water up to his chest. After wading along for about 50 – 100 metres, the net was pulled up onto the shore, and emptied out.

As well as river prawns, there would always be a Cobbler or two, along with the odd crab, a pile of small fish which we called "Gobbleguts", along with other varieties of small fish, and tiny black rock crabs. These prawning parties, occurred mainly on a Saturday night, because the men did not have to go to work the next day. In a lot of cases, a fire would be lit, and the catch cooked, and partially consumed, right there on the beach, using river water and one of those old square, four gallon, Kerosene tins.

And I might add, as was the custom of the day, quite a few beers would be consumed as well. Which, consequently was to my benefit, in that there were usually many discarded empty bottles to be had. Being a resourceful lad, and as my family wasn't affluent enough to dole out lots of "Pocket money", these prawning parties provided me with another source of income for pocket money. Every Sunday morning in summer, I would take my trusty Billy cart, and scour Heirisson Island and around the McCallum Park tennis courts, for discarded beer, or cool drink bottles. Beer bottles were worth one half penny each, and cool drink bottles, considerably more.

One Saturday morning, I set off down to the river, with my trusty Billy Cart, to scrounge for bottles. Where Taylor Street petered out into just a dirt track, I started to find a trail of coins. Pennies, Threepences, Sixpences, plus one and two Shilling pieces. By the time I had reached the river, I had picked up a total of about 32 shillings worth of the various coins. I thought all my Christmases had come at once. I was rich! Particularly, if you consider that I would have had to collect over 750 beer bottles, to make that sort of money. But alas, I had to give it all back. It seems that a car, had crashed into the back of the milk man's cart, during the early hours, and the horse had taken fright and bolted. The nights takings, to that point, were in a Billy Can, hanging on the back of the cart. The wild actions of the bolting horse, and the bouncing cart, had spilt the money far and wide. But over and above that, the odd coin or two was often found, near a pile of empty beer bottles, where some drunk had lain down, and it had fallen out of his pocket. That I could keep, as the owner was unknown..

In those days bread and milk, were delivered direct to the houses, by horse and cart. The milk was delivered, in bulk, in the cool of the night. There were no bottled, or cartons of milk, in those early days. That was to come in the future. Milk was only available to the milk men, in 10 gallon Cans. In today's terms that is about 48-50 litres.

The householder generally left a Billy Can out, with a note saying how much milk was required, and also the necessary cash to pay for it. That night, the milkman would come along, and from the milk can on his cart, ladle into your Billy Can, the amount required, and of course collect the cash. Which, as I have said above, was usually put into a spare Billy can, hanging in the back of his cart. Bread was delivered in much the same way, except during the day light hours. The horses that pulled these carts, invariably knew where to stop and start, for every delivery

on the Milk man, or Bread carters round. These fellows, while delivering their wares, simply ran back and forth to the cart, for more bread or milk, and the horses automatically, with no guidance, kept pace with them along the whole route.

Bottled milk began to appear in the late 1940', early 1950's. Although the initial bottles were round, Browne's Dairy later used a square bottle with a gold foil seal. I think that this was because square bottles fitted into the crates better. Masters Dairy continued to use variations of the round bottle. Their seal was silver with a blue central stripe. Browne's dairy processing plant, was located in Charles St ,North Perth, and Masters in Stirling Highway Claremont. I do recall that there was another brand around that time, known as Peter's, and was probably an off shoot of the Peter's Ice Cream company. I know that they had a plant down in Brunswick Junction, which may have been their milk plant, but I do not know that for sure.

In those days refrigerators and freezers were unheard of, so to keep your perishable foods cool, an Ice chest was used. You can liken an Ice Chest, to the "Esky" of today. The Ice chest, was rather like a small cabinet, about 3 – 4 feet high by about 2 wide, and roughly the same deep. It was made up of two compartments. The lower one contained shelving, and had a door to access the goods stored therein. The top section had a lid and a compartment which contained a metal tub, with a suitable drain pipe. This was where the ice was placed. The blocks of ice were about 15 inches long by maybe 9-10 inches square. The "Ice man", called on a regular basis, to renew your melted ice. He used a truck with an insulated cabin on the back. In summer we kids, often begged for ice chips to suck on.

There was of course, no supermarkets in those days, so grocery shopping was done at a nearby Grocery store Mostly all items were "booked up", and paid for on the next payday. As a matter of course, most of these shops were located on a street corner, although there were exceptions to that rule. There were two, one either side of us in Canning Highway. One on the southern corner of Berwick St, where McDonalds now stands, and the other on the other side of the highway, practically opposite Washington St. My family, basically used the one at Berwick St, which was run by a family called Jones. The other shop opposite Washington

It was initially owned by a family named Bird, who later sold it to the Wright family.

In those days the grocer, stocked most things in bulk, and such items, as Salt, Sugar, Flour, Rice and Biscuits etc, were ladled or placed into brown paper bags and weighed, generally by the pound. That's roughly half a kilogram, in today's decimal world. Products like Jams, came in tins and was mainly the IXL brand. Only things like Tomato Sauce, Vinegar and Cordials, came in glass bottles. Even in hardware stores nails, staples etc were sold by the pound, and weighed out according to the customers requirements. I can recall one hilarious incident, when one of my sisters, was sent up to Jones's shop, to buy a pound of sugar. It seems mum had long suspected Mr Jones, of giving short weight, by keeping his fingers on the scales, when weighing goods. So Mum's instructions to my sister were, to "Make sure that he keeps his fingers off the scales, so that he doesn't weigh them too". Consequently when asked what she wanted, my sister replied " One pound of sugar please, and Mum said for you to not weigh your bloody fingers as well "!!!! Kids, they will drop you in it, every time!

The Wright's daughter, whose name was Connie, had a husband called Tom. Tom was a swimming and diving instructor for the Royal Australian Navy. Tom taught me how to swim. After giving me the basics, his method was simple. He threw me out beyond my depth, and I had to swim back ashore, with Tom standing by, just in case I looked like becoming crab bait. Tom also had a unique way of catching crabs, He would walk along the wall until he saw a crab, then he simply dived in, and caught it by hand. This was a method that I employed later in my life, but from a boat, in Cockburn Sound .

On the same side of the highway, a few houses north of that shop, lived a Scotch family, named McIntosh, whose son played the bagpipes. It was not uncommon of an evening to hear the wail of those pipes, drifting over the neighbour hood. In the early evening, on a calm Summer's night, down by the river, it was quite something, to listen to the skirl of those pipes. Although there were some, who thought it very tiresome, I rather liked it. I might also add here, that around that time, I also had a maternal Aunt and Uncle, Harold and Winifred Wilkinson, and two cousins, who lived opposite the McIntosh's, on the corner of Washington St. and Canning highway.

The Wilkinson's eventually moved to No. 5 Moorgate St. East Vic Park, behind the East Vic Park Primary School.. In 1959, they sold the Moorgate St house to my eldest sister, and built a new home in Esperance St. From there, they subsequently moved to Halls Head in Mandurah, where they had bought and ran, a School Bus service. During School holidays, they also ran tours for the local Mandurah seniors.

The main Tram depot, known as the "Car Barn", was located right at the bottom end of Adelaide Terrace, just west of the river. That site was later to become the main headquarters of the Perth Metropolitan Transport Trust or MTT for short. Some of the early Tram drivers lived in our part of Canning Highway. Of these, I can recall the names of two, Arthur Prattley, who lived towards the Causeway from us, and Snowy Jennings who lived up towards Berwick St.

Raphael Park was only a short distance from our house, up Gloucester St , and several sports were played on it, such as Soccer, Rugby, Baseball, Cricket and of course Australian Rules foot ball. Because it was then, as it still is today, customary to have a drink after the game, whatever code you played, this was another place for me to search for empty bottles..

Our little neighbourhood, in the 1940's, was also home to a youngster, who in his later years was to achieve fame in World Yachting, by winning Gold medals at the Paralympics. He also won the Admiral's Cup, and was involved with Alan Bond's challenges, and subsequent defence of the America's Cup. Noel Robins, actually born David Noel Robins, in his early years, lived in a large old house, on the corner of Armagh and Gloucester Streets, opposite Raphael Park. Noel achieved all this, despite suffering a spinal injury, in a car accident in 1956, when he was 21years old. For these and all his other achievements, Noel was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (O.A.M.). He was to become, what one would say, one of Victoria Parks most famous sons. Noel was killed, as the result of another car accident, in South Perth, in 2003.

My father, in his younger days, being of English descent, was a keen Soccer player, for a Victoria Park team. He subsequently coached the Balmoral Rangers team, up until the Korean War in 1950. He later became a referee, in that same sporting code. The Korean War, basically caused the Balmoral Rangers club, to fall into recess, as a large number of it's players joined up to fight in that conflict. He

also played Lawn Bowls, with the Victoria Park Bowling Club. And had a mate in the bowling club, whose name, as I remember it , was Barney Francis.

I started my school days at the Victoria Park Primary School. The school in those days, was basically on the corner of Cargill St. and Albany Highway. But there was a sandy back area, that led out onto Geddes St. which we used going to and from it. The route which I walked to school most days in the cooler months, was up Gloucester St to Raphael Park, diagonally across the park to Geddes St, then down to the back entrance of the school yard.

In the Magpie nesting season, this was altered slightly to, across the park to Colombo St, down Colombo to Hordern St, up Hordern to Geddes, then into the school. This was because the magpies always seemed to have their nest somewhere in the southeast corner of the park, and this alternate route took us further away from that. We generally carried sticks as a deterrent, though it was not always the complete safeguard against being swooped by them. But it did afford one a means of protecting oneself against their depredations. They were tricky damn blighters, they would come at you low down across the grass, blending in with the back ground of trees and houses behind them. The first you knew about their presence, was when they swooped you.

In Hordern St between Geddes and Cargill, I remember a great, big grey gas tank. Which I guess was a type of reservoir for the Gas supply to Perth's southern suburbs. That too, like a lot of other landmark buildings, has since disappeared. I would assume that the Natural Gas, piped from the North West, made it redundant.

Of my first days of schooling, I don't have any startling recollections. There are very few names that I can recall. The names Niner, Nairn, Rigg and Walsh flit through my brain, but outside that, nothing that sticks. I never was a great scholar, and though I consider, at 74 years old, my memory for other detail is still quite good, I find that lack of constant association with others, tends to blur my memory of names.

In those days Picture Theatres, usually only screened films at night. There was however, a Saturday afternoon matinee screening specially for kids, and this meant those old time favourites, of the western brigade, like Tom Mix, Hopalong

Cassidy, Roy Rogers, and various other Western Heroes. Tarzan and Buck Rogers, also made the screens too, along with other films, suitable for kids, like "Lassie come home", and "Black Beauty" etc. Living where we did, we had the choice of two such theatres. The Broadway, up near Harper Street, in Albany Highway, or the Hurlingham, on the top of the "Hurlingham Hill", in Canning Highway, South Perth. My sisters and I often went to one, or the other on a Saturday afternoon. The Savoy up at Mint St. was just too far to go, so we never went there.

It was council practice in the early days too, to have a laneway, between rows of houses. This was because all the toilets (Dunnies) were originally located, on the rear fence lines. These "Dunnies" were also referred to as "Thunder Boxes", for obvious reasons. Thus, a laneway was required to give the "Night Carters", access to the Toilet Cans of each "Dunny". Each Dunny, being equipped with a flap, at the rear, which the "Night Carters", would lift, to remove and replace the toilet "can". This "can" could be likened to a very large boiling pot, about the size of a 40 litre rubbish bin. And like a boiling pot, had handles on two sides. A lid was attached, and when the "can" was sealed and secure, it would be lifted onto a flat bed truck, and stacked for transport to a Sewerage treatment plant. From memory lane, there was an early form of such a treatment plant, on the river foreshore, about where the new Perth Stadium will be. The area was known locally then, as the "Filter Beds".

"Night Carting" was a literally a "shitty" job, and the butt of many a joke. A common one was "What has 24 cylinders and Flies? Answer : A Night Cart! It was so named, because the contents of the "Dunny Cans", was often referred to as "Night Soil". Which to me, is an anomaly, because the "Dunny" was seldom used at night. Mainly because of the possibility, of "RedBacks on the toilet seat". With the advent of Septic Tanks and Sewerage extensions, the back fence Dunny, became a thing of the past.

I say Sewerage extensions, because although our Canning Highway house, was connected to sewerage at that time, there were parts, further in the back blocks, that had yet, to be connected to it. There was a Sewerage treatment plant down near the Causeway, between Hordern and Washington Streets. If my memory serves me correctly, it was on a large block of land, at the corner of Hordern and Armagh streets. The outfall from this went straight into the river close by. It was not uncommon to see small lumps of human faeces, floating in the river, near the

outfall. Something which today, would have caused a fair bit of public indignation. Mostly then, it was just ignored, but often references to "Blind Mullet" were made.

I can also recall an Army Drill Hall being built in Washington St, between Armagh St. and Canning Highway at a later date. The aforementioned Sewerage plant was located behind it, in the area of land, bordered by Canning Highway, Washington, Hordern, and Armagh Streets. Other large buildings that rose up in my sky line, above the river, were the Red Castle Brewery, the Swan Cement works, and the James Hardy Asbestos factory, both in Rivervale. These two were on the high ground above the river, immediately south of the Railway line.

I have always wondered, if the people who bought, or live in the town houses, that grace those two sites today, have any idea of what contaminants are possibly in the soil beneath their homes. On the river flats below James Hardy's Asbestos factory, was a great big clay pit, filled with salty water. I know that there were Bream and Mullet in it. I guess that, in the floods of 1927 and 1930, this pit was inundated by the Swan River, and that is how the fish came to be in there. I recall my father saying that the cement works originally used the oyster shells, that were plentiful in the Swan at that time, in their cement making process. Later, I think that they resorted to using limestone instead, when the shell supply began to dwindle.

In 1951, when I was 10 years old, there came a great upheaval in our lives. Our rental home at 58 Canning Highway was sold and we were forced to move to Allawah Grove, between the Airport and the South Guildford Cemetery. Allawah Grove was originally a WW2 Army Camp, converted to, and used as emergency housing, by the then State Housing Commission.

In later years, I became a Telephone Technician for the Post Master General's Department (P.M.G.), and I found myself working in the Victoria Park Telephone Exchange, which is on the corner of Teague and Axon Streets. I was a member of it's staff, from when I was transferred there in 1966, till I gained further promotion in 1981, and moved to the South Perth Exchange in Angelo St. Although the majority of my duties in the latter times were confined to maintaining the Exchange equipment, I did spend some of my early days there, on outside duties, fixing subscribers telephones. Thus renewing my acquaintance

with the Victoria Park district. Though I still had maternal relatives who lived in Nottingham St East Vic Park, at the Jarrah Rd end.

My bachelor uncle, Frank Nield, lived there in the 1960's, with his younger sister Gladys, and her husband Charlie Benson. Frank, when he lived in Rivervale, delivered bread in the 1950's from a horse and cart, in the Orrong Rd area of Rivervale, for a bakery in Hawkesburn Rd Rivervale. Eventually the business was taken over by the Corlett Brothers of Belmont, and they too initially used the horse and cart method of delivery, until the horses were phased out, when motor vehicles replaced them at a later date. Unfortunately for the "Bread Carter" a motor vehicle did not, automatically move along by their own volition, like the horses did.

Both Charlie and Frank, belonged to the Dart Club of the Victoria Park Hotel, on the corner of State St. I have a cutting from a local newspaper that gives a player profile on Frank. It has a humorous opening paragraph, which says, "that when he joined the club, in the 1960's, he could not throw a dart out of sight, in a London Fog!" But it seems that he overcame that deficiency and became club captain. He served on the club's committee, and also in 1985, was made a life member of the Victoria Park Darts Club. Frank died in 1988, after a long battle with stomach cancer

Les Stevens

The addendum attached is copy of a file that I have in my computer that may be of interest to the reader. I cannot recall how I came by this photo or the information below it, but I have vague feelings that I wrote it, after a period of research, for pertinent details to explain the picture. If not then I acknowledge its original author. This page is not part of any Entry to the competition and is attached purely as something of a historical nature for the library

Attachment



XXXX **Clear run on the Causeway** XXXX (Circa late

1800's)

The Causeway crosses the Swan River from East to West. The City of Perth, being on the Western bank, and the suburb of Victoria Park on the East. The original wooden bridges, spanned three channels of the river, passing over Heirisson, and one other small Island, later to become part of the western bank. Both of these Island contained mudflats, from where you could scoop net Blue Manna Crabs, Spear Cobblers, or dig Blood Worms for bait

In the early 1900's a few itinerants, were to be found, camped on these islands. From 1920 to the late 1930's, the place resembled a slum area, with many humpies and shacks, housing the desperate unemployed, and the occasional alcoholic, throughout the depression years.

It took three years to build the original rickety structure. It was opened for traffic in 1843, and was then known as the Perth Bridge. In June 1862, the river flooded so badly, that the bridge was under more than seven feet of water. In 1867, a second Bridge was built, using convict labour. The river crossing had been patched up, and or replaced several times, until the present structure was opened for traffic, just north of the old site in 1952. It took four years to build. Prior to that, there were three Bridges spanning bank to bank, across the three river channels. The western most having a high hump to allow the passage of river craft.

On the left of the photograph, you can see the pipelines, that carried water into the City, from Canning Dam. It was from these pipelines, or similar ones, that you could gain access to the bridge pylons, to fish. Heirisson Island, and Perth city are in the background. The first Tram crossed the Causeway in 1905, and the last tram to use the bridge, did so when Tram service finally closed down, in the 1950's. Houses were built in Victoria Park, for the Tram Drivers, because it was close to the "Carbarn" depot, on the western bank of the river.

Foreword

This story is written as a minor history of my family and a record of the early years of our lives, in those parts of Victoria Park, closest to the Swan River. You may deduce from the dates given, that I am approaching 74 years of age, but despite that I have no impediments to my memory. There may be small incidents that I may have temporarily forgotten, but the bulk of the story, is quite factual, with absolutely no embellishments or flights of fancy. Though even in the best of families, people tend to see things differently. As I am aware that descendants of my Great Grandfather, Fred Rawson, tell many varied versions of his death, in Garland St. Even the report in the newspaper, of the finding of his body, tells a different story, than his death certificate. Which says he died of Cardiac failure. Now I am not a student of medicine, but I am fully aware that if you die, for

whatever reason, your heart stops beating. Hence Cardiac Failure? It seems to me, that the post mortem report, was exceedingly vague and off hand. Though the media is not averse to printing their own variation of the truth.