

SOME FACTS ABOUT CONCORD

Told by Mr. Bert Stirrat at his home in Mortlake

My mother and father and their three sons arrived from Scotland in 1885 and came by ferry to Bayview Wharf Road, now (Burwood Road, Hen & Chicken Bay). Three more sons were born here.

I'm the youngest of the family. All the others are gone now.

I was born in Mortlake in 1892, at the Post Office run by my mother, where we lived till I was seven years old. My brother Jim took over the Post Office for twelve months then we came to live here and I've lived here ever since - seventy-one years.

I was married fifty-one years ago and brought my wife here. She's here today.

My eldest brother Jim later became Concord's first Postman. He held the position forty-five years. He was well known around Concord and Mortlake. He used to ride on horseback to Burwood at six o'clock in the morning, pick up the mail and bring it back to Concord to be sorted. He then delivered mail to Cabarita, Mortlake, Concord West and as far as Rhodes.

Of course he'd ride a long way from one house to another. He had a Piebald horse which was well known around Mortlake.

I remember in the old days, years ago, when the Mornington Hotel was where the M.S.S. is today. It was run by A.T. Gale and after that I think it was Mr Priddle who took it over. There were no houses further down then.

Across the street from the Pub were two storey houses and a butcher's shop; one had a bootmaker. Further round the corner was a barber's shop and a draper. Behind those shops was a bus depot and stables for horse drawn buses and the horses, run by Favelle. The Gas Company owns all that land now. Down the bottom of Emily Street an old Concordite and gardener, Mr Lee, used to live.

Coming back towards the Holders the offices of the Gas Co used to face Tennyson Road, there was a bull nose verandah at the front and tall pine trees.

Further down were a couple of two storey places, on the corner of Lake Street. Next door was another butcher. We'd go down Lake Street towards Mort Street Wharf and the ferries, come to the river with nice sandy beaches, rocks, and trees.

Mother used to take unsold papers back to the Herald Office. In the olden days on Eight Hour Day the banner was picked at the Mortlake Pub. Marchers would go to the Gas Works Gates and be addressed by the Manager then catch the Ferry (free return trip) which would take them to Kent Street Gas Works and they'd go on to the procession. That was a big day for Mortlake.

Coming back to Mortlake, near the Wharf, was a boatshed owned by Benny Fitman, who used to row for Grammar School. Dick Arnst and Archie Priddle also trained there.

On top of the hill was the Palace Hotel with lots of rooms and a big balcony. Out at Green Point used to be a big hall, one of the famous dance halls of those days. Picnics were held there every holiday. The same Correy's Gardens. Both served by ferries. My 21st birthday was kept up at the Mortlake.

It's now all factories on Green Point. There was no punt there in those days.

Coming back this way were Bracey's Baths and further along Ashton's Baths, and up to the end of the Bay were all orchards. Many quinces and pears we got along near the river. The owners had all gone in my young days.

There were many orchards around here years ago - Adams, Ashes, Garners and others, like Cox on the corner of Cabarita Road and Phillip Street.

We had to walk to school. An old weatherboard place behind the present school and the infants, about half way. An incinerator now marks the spot. We used to pump the water from a big well then. Mr. Eggins was Head Master in my day. We used to play cricket in front on gravel road, and sometimes Zoellers the carriers used to cut across the corner with loads of coke.

Coming back again to Mortlake there was a big stone hall called the Pig and Whistle. Two houses on one side, two semi detached (still there). The Pig and Whistle was pulled down to widen the road, which now runs right through from Tennyson Road to the Punt.

The road didn't come to Edwin Street till they pulled down a couple of houses and shifted another. The road goes straight through now.

Where Concord Golf Links is today used to be a big bush. Many a barrow load of wood I brought home for the fire. A man named Merrit used to look after it. Boundary Rider I think you'd call him. I think they also used to put police horses in there to spell them.

From here towards Mortlake were two or three wells were kids used to play. Further over was a quarry where they used to get sandstone bricks. I remember once in our schooldays, one of my mates, Teddy Chambers dived in, hit his head on a protruding tramline and split it open. Walkers Bush is today's Golf Links. I did some caddying then

I remember there was a dam where Denison Street meets Mortlake Street. Some lady, I can't think of her name, was drowned there. At the top end of Phillip Street, where the speed boat races start now, used to be called Connel's Point. Round Cabarita Gardens where there was a pleasure ground, I remember as kids we used to go to the gardens on the opposite side of the road and chase the turkeys. A man used to raise and kill them for various functions that were held there.

In the old days Bill Solomon had a barber's shop down towards Mortlake Wharf. He also had billiard tables. Later these tables were taken away and we used to hold dances there.

After the war I was secretary of a Cheerio Club. We had picnics in summer and dances in the winter. In later years Bill Solomon shifted to the top of Edwin Street and had his salon up there.

Phil Solomon, contracted to dig-out the foundations for tunnels, also foundations for new houses that were built in the Gas Works, as well as the big holder. They took out all the rock for that No.3 holder. (That was the Solomon family.)

(Provided by D.E. Younger - 4th March, 1971)

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