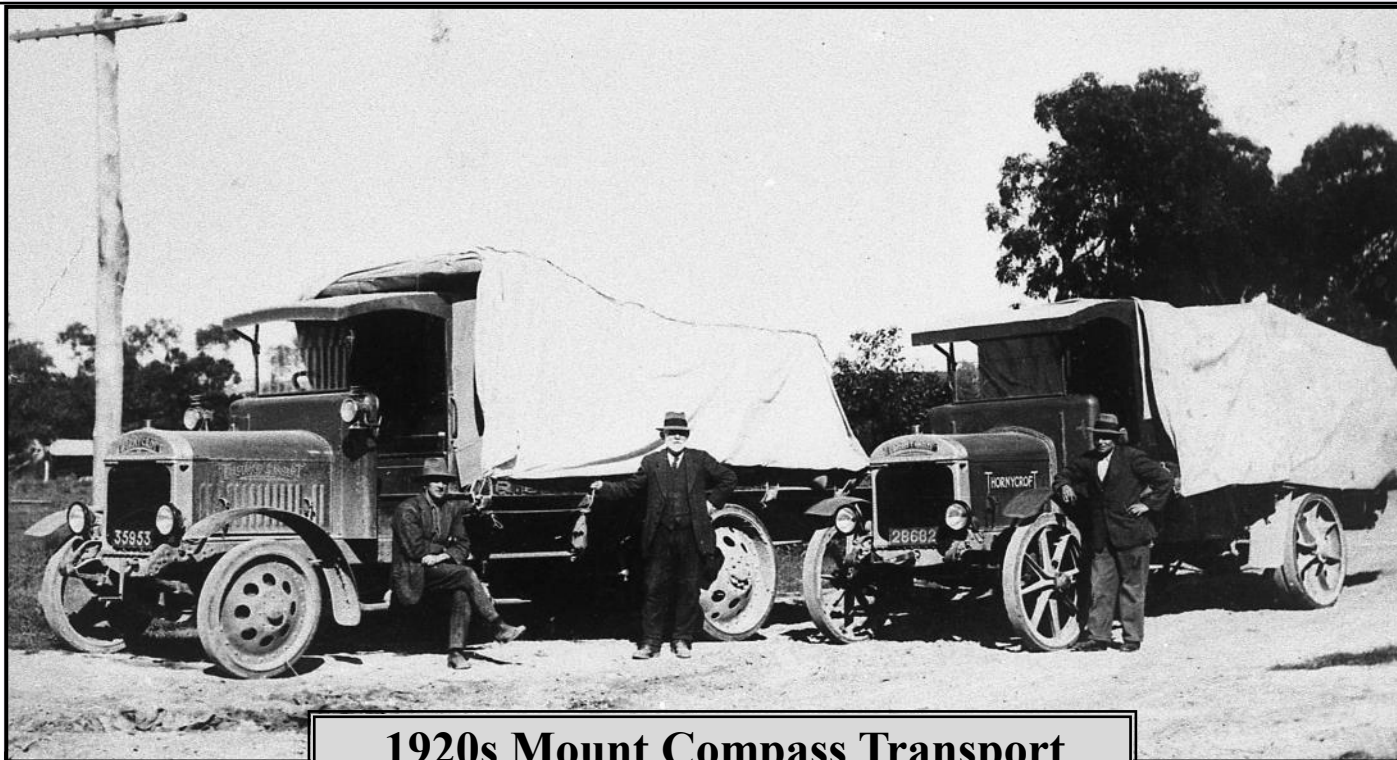


THE MOUNT COMPASS ARCHIVES

CHRONICLE

A FORUM TO PROMOTE THE HISTORY & ARCHIVES OF MOUNT COMPASS

No 20 DECEMBER 2022



1920s Mount Compass Transport

In 1924, **Richard Peters & Son** commenced operating the *Thornycroft Transportation Motor Service*, carrying freight between Adelaide and Victor Harbor. The above photograph features Richard's son Syd on the left with their three-ton Thornycroft truck, with Alex Dowell, Richard's son-in-law and Mt Compass Store owner, standing on the right. Their carrier service started with a single vehicle which travelled from Adelaide to Mt Compass on Tuesdays, then delivering goods to Victor Harbor on Wednesdays. The same journey was repeated on the Thursday and Friday.

That first vehicle was a Class X, 40hp Thornycroft truck (*above left*) that was mass produced in Britain during the First World War. This truck had a reported top speed of 16mph (26kmp) in 4th gear and was fitted with solid rubber tyres. Business must have grown quickly as within months a second truck was on order from England. That is the four-ton truck pictured on the right.

As noted in our previous Chronicle, these trucks operated on the Victor Harbor Road in the years just prior to its complete bitumisation. The Peters' family history book notes this service was so successful, the SA government offered to buy the business at 'a good price'. (*This was likely thanks to the expansion of SA Railways into road transportation at that time*). In part compensation, Syd, who was a qualified blacksmith, accepted a job at Mile End with the railways. Richard Peters would also buy a house in Adelaide for Syd, with part of the sale proceeds.

Richard Peters (*above centre*) who was aged about 67 when this photo was taken, possibly started the business with both Syd's financial future in mind and the delivery of supplies to Alexander Dowell's store on Peters Terrace.

A Cornish stonemason, Mr Richard Peters worked on such projects as the Flinders Street Railway Station in Melbourne, the Gladstone Gaol and Corny Point's Lighthouse, as well as the original 1903 Mt Compass Hall and some of the best stone houses in this district. A community-minded man, he was a Justice of the Peace, a member (and Chairman) of the District Council of Port Elliot, including at the time this photograph was taken, and also President of the local Agricultural Bureau Society, amongst other civic responsibilities.

He passed away in 1938 and is buried alongside his wife Cora Peters (nee Jacobs) in the Mt Compass Cemetery.

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Editorial

Welcome to this 20th edition of the *Chronicle*.

Some of you may not be aware that in the 1890s, **Nangkita** took part in an experiment in what many have termed was communism. A very informative history detailing the politics and times that nurtured this scheme can be found in "*Chasing Rainbows in the Rain*" (available from the Archives for \$10) while inside this *Chronicle* is what may be viewed as a companion article. This takes a more personal view of the individual members and their daily struggles in attempting to establish a **Village Settlement**. This group consisted of unemployed men, some with families, from the Port Adelaide area who found themselves trying to establish a functioning community with no housing to speak of, in what was uncleared scrub and swampland. Part 1 of this failed social experiment is placed under the spotlight on page 4.

Many of you will know by now that a major promoter of our district's history, Linton Jacobs, recently passed away peacefully at the age of 96. He will be particularly sorely missed by this publication, both in his role as an information source and also as a generous supporter of the work we carry out. Along with others who have left us recently, further detailed information can be found in our Obituaries page.

Following on from September's edition, which included information about the shops recently destroyed by fire, the burnt ruins have now been demolished and cleaned away. A video taken of this task has been added to our Archives along with a few artifacts retrieved during the cleanup - to be retained for display at a suitable time. The workers demolishing the original butcher's shop were sufficiently supportive to seek out a small block of that historical, depression era wall for storage with the Archives. This was a rare opportunity to salvage a sample of the round glacial stones from Cleland Gully Road that were used in many early Mt Compass buildings, and this will also be made available for public display.

A few topics that further information is currently being sought on are: the Mt Compass Cemetery, Nangkita School, Mt Compass School bus drivers, Chinese farming at Tooperang, World War 1 & 2 Honour Roll veterans, dairy farming and any family histories. If you have photographs, information or memorabilia on these, or indeed any other local topics, we would be keen to hear from you.

Regards & All the best for the Christmas Season,
Steve Kettle (ph. 8556 8444)

News reports from the past

THE UNEMPLOYED.

STONEBREAKING FOR RATIONS.

The Government decided in Cabinet on Monday to reduce the quantity of stone to be broken from 2½ yards to 2 yards to entitle a person to a week's rations.

FEEDING THE HUNGRY.

Sixty-two families were relieved in the Old

MOUNT COMPASS, July 31.

Polling day at Nangkita passed off quietly. The democrats here are much disappointed at the rejection of Mr. O'Malley, but are prepared to accept the inevitable. Complaints were rife about the present locality of the polling-booth, which was fixed when there was a considerable number of village settlers at Nangkita, and hardly any residents at Mount Compass. Now this order of things is reversed, and steps will be taken, before another election, to have the site changed to Mount Compass.

In this respect the residents of Willunga have been very good to them, as each week a supply has been sent. They are specially thankful to Mounted-Constable Toohy, of that township, who from the start has taken a deep interest in their welfare, and has done much to render their lot more endurable. The area under the control of the trustees is to be enlarged by the acquisition of a block nearer the Willunga-road, on which it is hoped to run a number of cattle and sheep. It is somewhat doubtful whether the present site of the settlement is the most favorable, but at the time it was the only land available, and the people could not wait. There is an equally good block within easy reach of the Willunga-road, but as it is held under a miscellaneous lease it could not be secured till the Commissioner of Crown Lands had given the holder of it six months' notice of resumption. The villagers make the Finnis railway-station their headquarters as far as securing supplies is concerned. It is nine miles distant, but the road is exceedingly bad. Had they been able to secure the block of land just referred to they would have had a good road to Willunga, but at present it is even worse to travel to that township than to the railway.

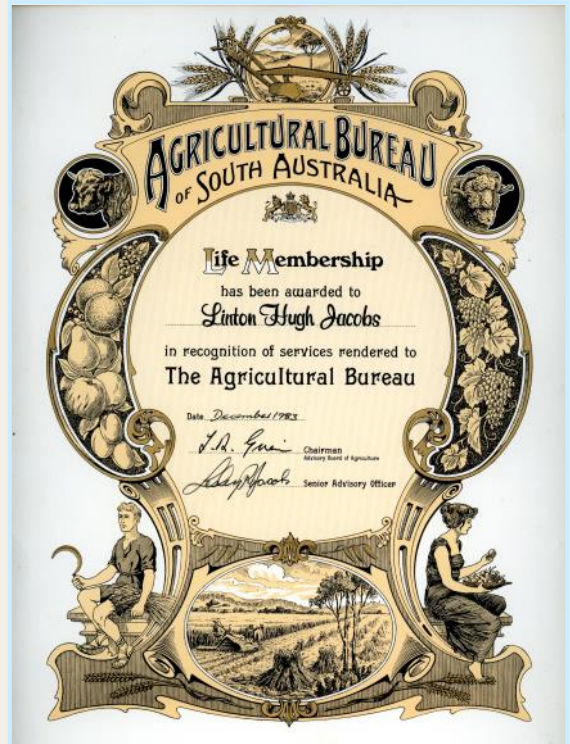
Having bidden the villagers good-bye we started off to walk to Willunga, the drag

Top left: *Stonebreakers* SA Register -13th Feb 1894.
Bottom left: *Population* Chronicle -12th Aug 1899.
Above right: *Willunga supplies the Nangkita Village* Chronicle -29th September 1894.

Linton Jacobs (1925-2022) Few people have contributed more to the history of this district than Linton. His life story was written by Bill Jerram and included in Linton's first book of "Where the Compass Leads You", while the Fleurieu Sun newspaper has more recently also published an article on his life. Linton's contributions to the Ag Bureau (*his life membership certificate on right*) and the Church of Christ are well detailed, so rather than repeat what is already in print, a few words about his work supporting our local history may be more appropriate.

There are four general history books covering this district, with Linton writing two of these (Book 1 & 2 of *Where the Compass leads You*) and his contribution of two articles to a third (the 1946 *History & Development of Mt Compass*). It just so happens that Linton's late wife, Dorothy, also played a major role in completing the fourth book (*Chasing Rainbows in the Rain*).

Apart from his substantial body of work, which included many regular articles in the *Entre Nous* newsletter, Linton was a strong supporter of this publication. He proof-read each edition for any historical errors, prior to it going online - making use of his fastidious eye and desire for accuracy. With his strong memory for names and details, Linton's oversight proved to be invaluable.



To top it off, he contributed greatly to the financial security of the Archives. His books were self-published but he gave little thought to recouping the costs. He sold some and gave others away, the important thing for Linton was to get the information out there. He generously handed over to the Archives, three boxes of his first book and much of his book 2 edition, which we were to sell however we wished. All money raised was to go towards the work of our town Archives - he declined to accept any of the proceeds for himself. Such generosity has contributed greatly to the continuing success of Mount Compass Archives.

Along with Dorothy, Linton recorded a number of interviews the two of them conducted with past residents, and provided the Archives with cassette copies of these, along with detailed, hand-written summaries. Most of the people they interviewed have now passed on, making the value of these recordings even greater. He also gave his time freely to narrate recorded tours around the district, providing information about families and properties of the area. As long as history was being accurately preserved, Linton was willing to help in any way he could.

Even in his final year, at the age of 96, Linton was providing valuable information for Articles in this *Chronicle*. He certainly was one of a kind, and will be missed.

Footnote: *Linton's family has now donated two boxes of historical documents, photographs, memorabilia and recordings to the Mt Compass Archives. Some of these are over 100 years old and will be of great benefit to everyone interested in our local history. Another two boxes of items important to their own family's history have been kindly loaned for scanning into our digital records. This has been an extremely generous and supportive contribution by Linton & Dorothy's family, the value of which cannot be overstated!*

Walter Felix Silzer (1919-2022) Walter was born in Austria one hundred & three years ago and by all accounts was living a happy life there -until Hitler's troops invaded in 1938. Having a Jewish grandfather, Walter considered it wise to escape to the neutrality of Switzerland. There, he would work on Swiss farms for the duration of the war, under the protection of the International Refugee Association (IRO). In 1947, Walter and his new wife Helga, also a refugee, moved to Australia, again with assistance from the IRO. He turned his hand to farming once again, at Woodside and Bolivar initially before purchasing his own property on Cleland Gully Road at Tooperang. The couple raised two daughters, Barbara & Monika on their local dairy farm.

Walter retired in 2002 and moved to Adelaide, where he lived until his passing on 24th August this year.

Jurgen Ollwitz of Nangkita, one of our avid readers of the *Chronicle*, also passed away recently. He deserves a mention following his well-known, long term battle with cancer. For many of his 64 years Jurgen did not allow his illness to define him. His cheerful, positive spirit will be missed around this district. Jurgen was a local land agent with his office in the Main Street of Willunga.

Lindsay Tune (1945-2022) a past student at Mt Compass and son of the school's bus driver & mechanic, Arthur Tune.

The Rise and Decline of Nangkita's Village Settlement

(The problems of living in a commune)

A great depression occurred in the early 1890s, with a high level of unemployment. In Adelaide, the most basic of food was handed out to hungry families, with mass meetings of disgruntled unemployed a regular occurrence. One response of the State Labor Government was to amend the Crown Lands Act, in 1893. This allowed communities to establish Village Settlements, of which eleven would be based along the River Murray, one at Melrose and one here at Nangkita. Three other states along with New Zealand and Canada had similar Acts at this time.

These communities leased Crown land from the government, with control of the Villages placed in the hands of Village Trustees (Boards of Management) rather than with the government. The settlement's members were however, given the power to change both the Board's personnel and their rules.

The annual rental cost for settlement land was calculated at five percent on the declared unimproved land value, which in SA averaged out at 2½d (2-3 cents) per acre. The government initially advanced up to 50% of the value of improvements (such as clearing & fencing) up to a maximum of £50 (\$100) per settler.

No unmarried couples could live together, and alcohol was strictly forbidden. Raising sufficient money to operate these Villages was an issue, with debts accrued on money provided by the colonial government - for which it turned out, the government itself would be ultimately liable.

Any group of twenty or more men over the age of eighteen, could combine to form one of these settlements. Each settler was to work on a co-operative principle, with shared involvement in such tasks as ploughing and the cultivation of crops.

Overall, the scheme was a failure with many communes disappearing within two years. Some of these settlements along the River Murray found they had more success by moving away from the commune style system to individual perpetual leases, and went on to form Village Co-operatives.

Nangkita's Village Settlement, although not successful, did stimulate this area's development. In the year 1900, a Royal Commission was held which proposed closing down this whole scheme, with the original Act finally repealed in 1902.

At its peak in 1894, there were 1,748 people living in Village Settlement Schemes around the Colony of South Australia, with a total of 5,602 acres of land cleared.

The formal formation of Nangkita's Settlement can be traced back to a meeting held on Tuesday, 13th February 1894, in the home of Mr W D Thompson in Russell Street, Glanville. Newspaper reports state that "there were over twenty gentlemen present" with Mr John Mossop, an unemployed soap-maker, voted in as the chair. Five days prior to this meeting, and following discussions with the Crown Lands Department, William D Thompson and George Maybee had viewed some potential land around the Nangkita area. They presented this meeting with both a written and verbal report on their findings.

The two men described how Nangkita's swamp was "thickly covered with reeds, silver wattle and tea-tree, and would require much labour to clear it." They also mentioned that "a channel would also be needed to carry off surface water". (This channel forms a section of what we now call Nangkita Creek.) A later news article said the tea-tree growth "is so thick that it is impossible to walk through without chopping a passage."

Right: An early photograph of tea-tree clearing swampland at Yundi. This gives a fair indication of how labour intensive it would have been to clear by hand. Note the size of the tractor compared to the tea-tree.



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The audience that night was also informed about the ground adjacent to the swamps, described as sand, loam and ironstone, while the local gum and peppermint trees were denigrated as being “*fit for nothing but fencing posts or firewood*”. This meant the timber would not be suitable for housing construction, which became quite an issue.

Messrs Thompson & Maybee had also viewed Miscellaneous Lease land along Cleland Gully, which they praised for its good timber and excellent soil, as well as other nearby land in the Hundred of Goolwa. The Labor Party parliamentarian, Robert S Guthrie MLC, helped advise the group on selecting suitable land, with the view that it should be unimproved lease land to help keep the cost down and allowing the government to resume it from the current leaseholders. The Cleland Gully land had possibly seen too many improvements by this time, increasing its value.

An Association was formed at that meeting with newspapers reporting in March that 25 families, described as pioneer settlers, had now signed up. It was also stated that if successful, it was proposed to receive others willing to work this land. The enthusiasm was clearly quite high in this early stage. The following list of the men involved was published in newspapers of the day:

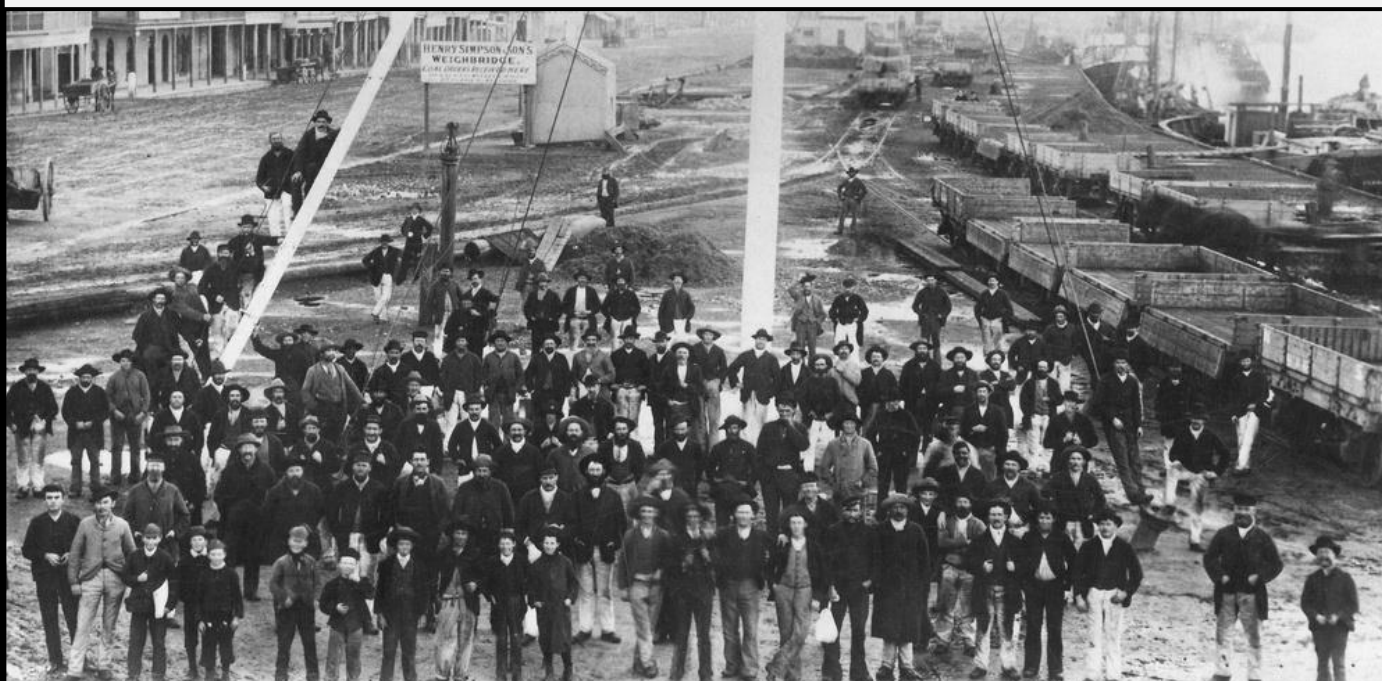
Messrs (W) J Mossop, W J Thompson, C Anderson, J Cutt sen, J Cutt jun, J Douglas, F Hook, J Horton, F McKinlay, S Holmes, R Ryder, C Ryder, W D Thompson, D Coleman, G Biglands, W G Taylor sen, W G Taylor jun, G Maybee, R Fee, E Cook, G Ferguson, H Kast, W Stockley, R Hooper & H Coghlan.

The number of Settlement members appears to have fluctuated considerably as people moved in, or left. Along with the 25 men initially listed above, there were also eleven wives and between 35 and 57 children involved, making a total of between 71 and 93 individuals, mainly from the Port Adelaide & Semaphore district. At various times, the highest number of adult male settlers involved has been listed of as both 25 and 23, with one of the above members reported as having withdrawn in the first month due to a death in his family. (A newspaper report from November 1894 noted the Crown Lands Office was quoting the total number of settlers to be 113 - perhaps the number of children was increasing?)

Once the Association had been established, a government surveyor was called in and reported there was sufficient land at Nangkita that had not yet been extensively improved and had “an abundance of water”. Many areas he inspected were ‘highly improved’ which meant the interest costs for these to be resumed would be too high for the settlers to afford. This possibly included sections 249 and 255 along Cleland Gully Road which Messrs Thompson and Maybee had inspected during their initial tour.

According to their memorandum 1,894 acres was set aside for the Association, with the affairs of this group vested in five Trustees: Mr J Mossop (Chairman), Fred McKinlay (Secretary), W D Thompson, C E Gilchrist, and Henry Kast (soon to be replaced by George Taylor).

Reports at the time mention that all the men knew each other and had been out of work for various lengths of time. *(There would be many marriages between members of these families which will be looked at further in Part 2.)*



A State Library photograph (B70) of men (& boys) waiting for work at Port Adelaide in 1889.

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It was clear from the start that money would be an issue as all of the members were unemployed – at a time when there was no social security system. Requests for support of any kind (including cash) were made by these men and their supporters through sympathetic newspapers. Local businesses around Port Adelaide also donated various goods to the group prior to their departure. Once they arrived on site, a supportive *Willunga Aid Committee* assisted these settlers, raising money to purchase basic items, including food. All money advanced by the government would have to be repaid, although the settlers had been granted an exemption for the first year.

George Maybee (*see page 11*) and six others headed for the new settlement area a week prior to the main group's arrival, to establish shelter sheds and tents. This group was accompanied on the train journey to the "Black Swamp" by Labor MP for Port Adelaide, Mr Ivor MacGillivray, and were greeted here by Messrs Porter, Johnston and Henley. These three local men offered a warm welcome to their new neighbours.

Mr William Porter's own property near the railway line also included swamp land that he was in the process of draining in readiness for grapevines and vegetables. He would become a handy source of first-hand knowledge on farming practices suited to this region.

After travelling the eleven miles to their new homeland, this advance party began the task of erecting twelve tents that would serve as what they called "*temporary dwelling-houses*" for the entire settlement.

The 20th March was possibly both an exciting and yet daunting day for the second group of arrivals, of sixty plus members of the Settlement. Accompanied by another local MP (Mr W Archibald) they left Port Adelaide on the 7am train headed for Adelaide. Once there they transferred to the Southern train and travelled on to Finnis, disembarking for the final trek to the uncleared land at Nangkita. (A few of the women and children delayed joining this settlement for a few more weeks, perhaps in the hope that it would be more established when they did arrive with their young children).

Right: The Finnis Railway Station as it currently looks. This station had the capacity to unload animals at the stock yards on the right, whereas the station closer to Nangkita, **Gilberts Siding**, is today, a much more basic passenger stop - as it may also have been back in the 1890s (see photo on back page). Both stations are reported as arrival points for the new Nangkita settlers.



The main group of settlers brought additional coverings (for shelter), extra food supplies such as flour, potatoes and bread, as well as two drays, a plough, four horses and a cow with calf. This group, which included most of the women and children, did have to wait at Finnis in the rain for an extra hour and a half when their goods arrived late. Again, local settlers assisted their new neighbours in travelling to their new home and settling into their tents. It was noted that the **lack of any bedding** did not seem to dampen the spirits of the group.

In perhaps what was a foreboding sign of their future here, they had almost daily rainfall during the first week of tent living. Some of the initial tasks undertaken included the erection of a stone shelter shed for the horses, fencing and post cutting, and the commencement of draining the swamp.

Only two of the villagers, William D Thompson and George Maybee are noted as having some farming experience, while most of the others did not, with thirteen of the men listed simply as 'labourers'.

Over the first three months, the Government outlaid £187-18-4 for general provisions, tools and farm machinery, as well as horses and bullocks. The nature of improvements offered as security for these government advances was the work completed up to that point, such as grubbing, clearing, fencing and buildings.

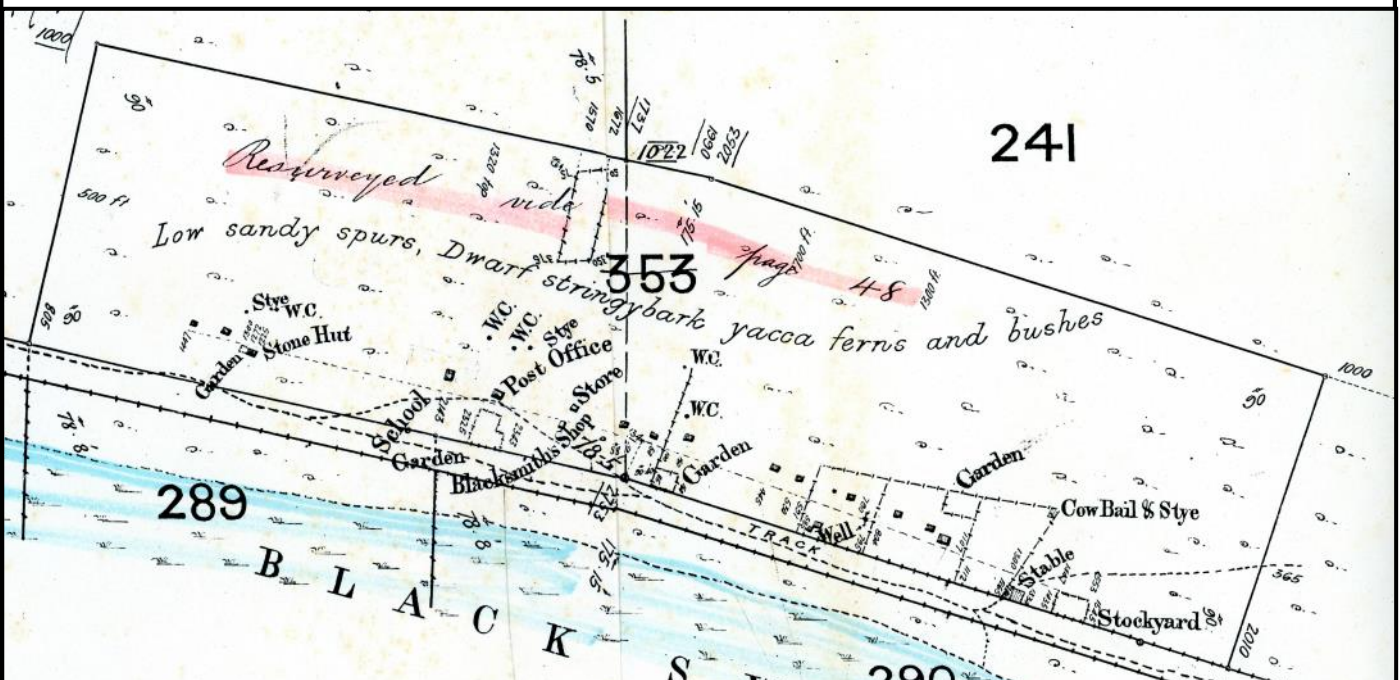
Just a week or so after the main group's arrival it was reported that many of the workers had been busy on the main channel, attempting to drain the swamp. They had completed about 5 chains in length (100 metres) of eight foot wide and two foot deep drainage, throwing up an embankment on the lower side that would then give a final drain depth of 5 foot 6 inches (1.7 metres).

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Those members who had undertaken the task of fencing had, by that first week, completed about half a mile. Acre blocks were allotted to each villager by ballot, as was the order in which their houses would (hopefully) be built. Masons had apparently started working on house foundations by March, although the absence of suitable stone was proving a problem, which was tellingly described as a “*great drawback*.” The Village’s Board of Management had set themselves the goal of reclaiming 50 acres of land in readiness for planting their first crop of potatoes

The Village was soon laid out on the hillside overlooking the swamp and was placed an equal distance from each end of the initial habitable property (Section 353). Although it was reported that a great deal of the land was hardly worth paying rent for, there were some “*most suitable places*” for cultivating vines and fruit trees. The main crop these settlers were expecting to rely on was potatoes, with neighbouring ‘blockers’ sending “*magnificent samples*” to show what could be grown. (These may have come from people such as the hard working Wright brothers who were gardening at the foot of Mt Moon during this time.)

Within two months the Village was beginning to develop. Settlers reported they had instituted Saturday evening concerts and amusements “*at which we have plenty of visitors*” while on Sundays, “*all the country people come to see us*”. They had also applied for their own Post Office and a school by this stage too.



Above: This October 1897 survey shows the Village layout. The “track” running along the bottom, left to right is Nangkita Road. The features noted are L to R: **Stye**, **WC** (*Water Closet*, ie toilet), **Stone Hut** (this is where the Tonkin/Langley house now stands), **School**, **WC**, **WC**, **Stye**, **Post Office**, **Blacksmith’s Shop**, **Store**, **WC**, **WC**, **Well**, **Stable**, **Cow Bail & Stye**, **Stockyard**. Three gardens are also shown. The 12 small squares □ drawn without any labels, are all wattle and daub huts - sadly, none of which remain today.

The ‘old settler’ that greeted them on arrival, Mr Porter, now donated three goats to the Villagers, one of which was giving milk, as their only cow was not yet providing any. He also advised them on how to drain the swamp.

There were two particularly heartbreaking moments for the settlers. One month into the endeavour, a young girl’s body was found by her mother, floating in the creek about 80 metres from the camp. The mother’s screams brought the father John Horton, to the scene, but he was unable to revive his daughter Annie, who was aged just one year and ten months. One of the Trustees, George Maybee, who was reported as having previous experience in such cases, took over the resuscitation attempt - but to no avail.

The Mounted Constable based at Willunga thoughtfully placed his horse and trap at the distraught parent’s disposal, enabling them to take the child’s body back to Port Adelaide.

In June a second death was reported in the village, that of John Douglas’ infant son who died from bronchitis. His body was taken to the Willunga cemetery for burial.

Although there were several houses reported as having been built by this point, a number of settlers were still living in tents, including the member writing their media reports. He mentioned that three inches of rain (75mm) in seven hours had nearly flooded them out, but reported that ‘his tent’ had withstood the elements.

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That same month, a doctor who apparently had sympathy for what was termed the ‘settler movement’, agreed to undertake the medical needs of the village up to the end of that year, “*on very favourable terms*”. A four wheeled trap was obtained, so as to be ready in case of emergency, to convey patients the twelve miles to Willunga.

The ‘copious’ rain of that month did cause problems with the drain when floods removed about 20 metres of the recently built embankment. This occurred after an embankment on the Wills’ property, a mile higher up the valley, had also burst. According to reports, the drain was soon restored however.

The Village Trustees decided to call a temporary halt to all building constructions due to the difficulties in obtaining materials (it was still a period of depression). The decision was made to concentrate their efforts on clearing the swamp, to make the land productive. (At a later stage, the calculation was made that it took one man, working nine hours a day, 40 days to clear an acre of swamp.)

The government kept an eye on any progress made through visits from their Inspector of Village Settlements, who apparently was pleased with progress made at the time of his second inspection in June. The first block had been drained and ten to twelve acres of land cleared, including nine acres of swamp (after some hard physical labour).

The first recorded football match for this district took place in August 1894 when a Nangkita Village Settlers team travelled to Finniss to take on that local side. Around 70 spectators watched Finniss take out the honours 5 goals to 3 goals. (Either neither side scored any points, or they only had two posts at each end of the paddock). Taylor (2) and Ryder (1) kicked Nangkita’s goals, with a newspaper report noting that “*the utmost good feeling*” prevailed throughout the match.

In September that year, while Mr Mossop was the Chairman of Trustees, the South Australian Premier, Hon. Charles Kingston (*right*), paid a visit. Accompanying him was a local MP Mr W J Blacker, the Speaker of the House of Assembly (Sir J Coles), the Commissioner of Crown Lands (Hon. P P Gillen) and eleven other political notables, along with members of the Press.

This was the first Settlement the Premier had viewed first-hand and unfortunately the road in from the Finniss train station was treacherous. The visitor’s cart & horses sank, becoming stuck in mud on the Nangkita track. The settler’s six bullocks were sent for and managed to drag the cart free, but the party’s arrival was delayed considerably, as they arrived late, tired and hungry.

Newspaper reports mention the hospitable welcome from the settlers, with a meeting held in the Village Blacksmith’s shop (which may have been the largest building at the time). It was mentioned that only one stone house had been built at the time of this visit, with the rest of the accommodation consisting of wattle & daub huts and tents. These tents were possibly the “old canvas oilskins” originally listed in the settler’s goods.

This Settlement had been in existence for about 6 months at that stage, with 84 persons then on the land - consisting of 25 men, 16 women & 43 children. It was pointed out to the visitors that with this number of children, a school needed to be opened at Nangkita. Due to the number of people now calling Nangkita home, the Settlement was also gazetted as an official polling place for the first time, in September of that first year.

The Settlement proudly showed the Premier their 15,000 vine cuttings, 3,000 rooted vines, 500 assorted fruit trees and 1,000 basket willows. A few young tobacco plants had also been planted, with a trial of hops planned. Even at that early stage, the settlers were commenting that dairying would be the future for the district. They had by then, 28 cows on the Settlement and six working bullocks, with three miles of fencing in place.

The visiting party stayed overnight in Willunga where they attended a fundraising social in the Oddfellow’s Hall. This was organised by the local branch of the Village Settlement Aid Society to raise further funds for their friends at Nangkita.



**Charles Cameron Kingston
(1850-1908)**

Described as a “colourful character”, Kingston was South Australia’s Premier from 1893 to 1899, and served as an MP from 1881 to 1900.

In 1894 He paid a fact finding visit to the new Village Settlement at Nangkita .

Continued on following page...

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Many people around the state appear to have been charitable in supporting these almost destitute families who were trying to improve their lives. The twenty-eight cows now on the Settlement were donated as the result of an appeal organised by a Mr Pyne of Wellington. The local MP, Mr Blacker had also donated four pigs to help establish a breeding program.

Six months in, the settlers must have been questioning their situation. Discussions were being held about enlarging the area under the Trustee's control, with the acquisition of a block of land closer to the Willunga Road (possibly land where the Nangkita Church was to later be built). The thought was to run cattle and sheep there, with a telling comment that "*It is somewhat doubtful whether the present site of the settlement is the most favourable, but at the time it was the only land available, and the people could not wait.*"

Whichever way the settlers travelled, the Nangkita road was problematic. Travelling towards the Finniss railway station, where their supplies and mail were delivered, was described as "*exceedingly bad*". If they decided to travel towards Willunga however, the road in that direction was described as "*even worse*". The Willunga Aid Committee (and friends) travelled down to visit in November of that first year and after erecting a large marquee, invited the villagers to a "substantial dinner". This was followed by various sports and an inspection of the villager's works carried out so far.

To show their appreciation, the settlers replied with a concert from the "**Nangkita Christy Minstrels**", under the leadership of Mr Harry McKinlay. In attendance that day was the local MP, Mr W Blacker, who gave a speech offering words of encouragement and counselled that if they continued on, success was certain. The evening ended with dancing being "*indulged in*".

The Willunga group proved to be very supportive of the Village settlers and their cause, sending them extra supplies each week, especially of meat. The settlement operated a system of coupons to access supplies from their onsite store. Every member (adult males only) received a coupon valued at 8/- (80 cents) for a week's work, which could then be exchanged in the settlement store for goods. Parents received extra value coupons if one of their boys reached the school leaving age (14).

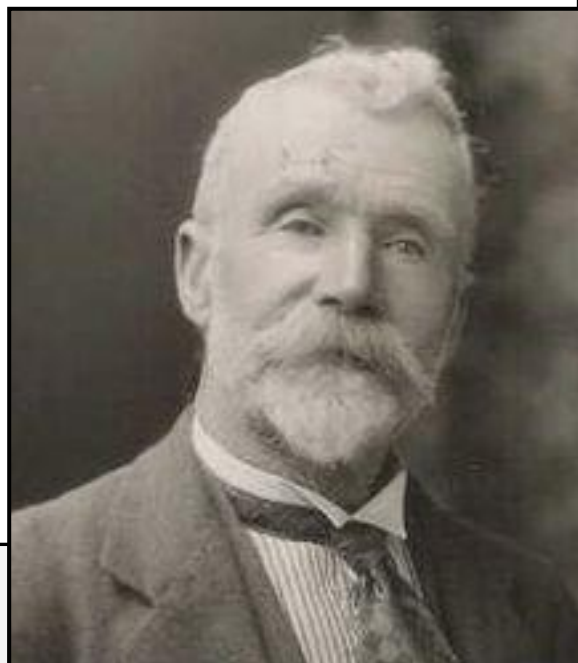
The small store that operated at the Village with its rations of items such as tobacco, sugar, hams etc. was located near the school and Post Office (*refer map on page 7*). These rations were collected from Gilberts Siding (Finniss) once a month by bullock dray. In later life Daisy Arnold (nee Langley) recalled riding in this bullock dray as a young girl, possibly driven by Mr Stockley.

Whether the eight shillings a week was sufficient to cover the amount of work expected of these settlers is debatable. When questioned by one reporter, a member of the settlement stated that if he could find steady work at four shillings a day he would leave at once. Another, a mechanic who stated he could earn £3 to £4 a week, was apparently satisfied with the village. (He had been on strike at Broken Hill where he lost his job during an industrial dispute). The women were supposedly more content with their situation than the men, who complained they did not get enough meat to eat, which was supplied as charity from Willunga. When a member of the press visited in October of the first year, he claimed that "*there didn't appear to be an ounce of meat in the settlement*". His party had been hospitably provided with bread and treacle by the settlers, which he took to be their staple diet.

Although disparaging about the settlers accommodation (huts and tents) which he compared to Aboriginal wurlies, the correspondent did see that members had an element of hope. Everyday they were improving their position, while drawing as little as possible from the government, in order to control their debt level.

An unfortunate accident occurred at that time to one of the settlers. William D Thompson (*right*) was working with others on the drain when, while helping steady a post, he placed his hand on the top. He subsequently received "*a terrific blow from a heavy sledgehammer, which reduced it to a pulp*". A nearby neighbour, Harry Hailstone provided his trap and pair to convey Mr Thompson to Willunga, the nearest doctor available. At the time, the newspaper reported it was feared that at least three of his fingers would need to be amputated.

William Dixon Thompson (c1854–1924) helped select the land for Nangkita's Settlement and became one of the Village's original Trustees, plus a Secretary and Chairman. (*photo from ancestry.com*)



Continued from previous page

Mr Thompson must have survived this experience, as he would go on to be one of the few original settlers to remain here, years after the scheme had been disbanded.

A further newspaper report from December does mention that the Argus newspaper readers “*are regularly supplied with interesting items by its own correspondent at the village.*” No mention is made of the correspondent’s name but it is very possible that Mr Fred McKinlay (*right*) was at that time, still the Village Secretary and hence the person who kept the Argus up to date with information. Whoever it was, this reporting has helped preserve the history of Nangkita’s Village through those early newspapers.

A Post Office was established at the Settlement in late 1894 with possibly Mr William Dixon Thompson as the initial postmaster, however if it was so, George Stockley soon took over the position and remained as such for 11 years. He also brought the mail over from Finniss to this Settlement for nine years. (*Refer to Chronicles No 17 & 18 for the story of this Post Office*).

In January 1985, the first Annual Meeting of the Association was held, with new Trustees elected: W D Thompson was elected Chairman, G Ferguson became the Secretary, while George Biglands, William R Stockley, James Cutt senior and Henry Coghlan joined the Board. This was the third Board installed since the Association was formed. During that last term, eight adult male members had resigned from the Village, which was viewed by some as the cause for many of *‘the ugly rumours afloat at present, regarding the stability of the settlement’*. However reports also stated that new arrivals were expected within the week to take their place, via their agent in Port Adelaide.

Supporters from Meadows donated twenty five sheep to the Village at this time, while another one hundred sheep were soon expected to arrive from friends at Yankalilla and Second Valley following a call for help from the Parliamentarian, Mr J R Kelly. The Village’s correspondent did end that month’s report with the message that they now viewed *‘communistic principles’* as absolutely unworkable, with *‘fair play and no favour as the soundest principle to work upon.’*

Now one year into the Village, draining of the swamp was still listed as their main priority, but with very little help or advice from the government regarding the best method to achieve this, they were finding the task difficult.

In March 1895, while the settlers were celebrating their one year anniversary with a sports day, yet another MP paid a visit. Mr E L Batchelor was proudly shown the 80 acres of swamp that was now cleared, drained and cultivated. Over 500 acres had been fenced with 15 acres of cereal crops planted, 14 acres with fruit trees, 7 acres of potatoes and ¾ an acre of onions planted. 250 tobacco plants were in bloom and standing five feet high.

Despite some glowing reports in newspapers, the settlers still were in need of outside support. During a visit in May 1895 by ‘dignitaries’ accompanied by a party of ladies from Strathalbyn, a parcel of clothing was presented to each villager. They were probably greatly needed in the village as just a few weeks later, when their correspondent wrote the next newspaper article he stated, *“Severe influenza and colds have been suffered by the villagers, owing probably to the insufficiency of warm clothing”*.

Opinions regarding the settlements were undoubtedly viewed through a political eye by those who critiqued such projects. While Labor politicians and the Nangkita Village’s own correspondent saw the scheme as assisting people to help themselves rather than become destitute in the city, others viewed it as a total waste of government money. A letter to the *Evening Journal* from F G Culley of Willunga promoted holding a Royal Commission into all of the Village Settlements.

This person claimed that the Nangkita settlers were simply clearing the land *“after a fashion”* to secure the government advance and then allowing the scrub to grow back. While the author may have been unaware of how just how much work it took to prevent swamp land from reverting back to type, a more disturbing comment was made. The letter stated of the settlers: *“they are quarrelling as only village settlers can. All the men with any grit or go in them are leaving”*.

While this was only one letter espousing such negative views, it was becoming clear that the membership at Nangkita was in decline, possibly due to each individual’s growing debt, or perhaps they could not sustain the hard physical labour for little financial return, and opted for paid jobs in the city - without all the government oversight.



From c1902, this is the only known photograph of Fred McKinlay - 2nd from right. His brother Harry who also joined the Village, is on the far left.

The conclusion to this tale will be in the next Chronicle...

To help appreciate why people joined the Nangkita Village Settlement, it is worthwhile taking a look into the background of some of those who became members. Further information on other settlers will appear in future editions of the Chronicle, with the first one under the spotlight being George Maybee, and his wife Mary.

Who were the Maybees?

George James Maybee was born in England in about 1853. In the UK census of 1881 he was recorded as having been born in Portsmouth but now living in Portsea, with his occupation noted as a bricklayer. For whatever reason, he migrated to South Australia in 1883, aboard the 'Romsdal' as a 30 year old, single man. When he arrived in Port Adelaide his occupation was listed as 'plasterer'.

Perhaps he gained some seafaring knowledge during his time living in English port cities, because by 1888 George was employed as a Petty Officer aboard Her Majesty's Colonial Ship (HMCS) Protector, based in Port Adelaide.

After being commissioned in 1882, this historic ship was built in England before arriving at Port Adelaide in 1884. The Protector (*right*) was a flat-iron gunboat, purchased by the SA government to defend South Australia's coastline and harbors. During the two previous decades concerns had grown about a possible Russian seaborne assault, with the SA colonial government exploring ways to defend South Australia's coastal ports.



The HMCS Protector anchored at Port Adelaide in 1884
(State Library photo B-7057)

As the only ship in the South Australian navy, she was expected to play a key role in the colony's defences, along with artillery batteries at Fort Largs and Fort Glanville, a torpedo station at Port Adelaide's North Arm and the volunteer militias.

HMCS Protector was a relatively small ship but was heavily armed, with a crew size that ranged from between 59 to 90 men. The Protector had two engines producing 1500 horse-power, but was also rigged as a top-sail schooner to conserve coal. In later years HMAS (as she became) Protector sailed to China for the Boxer revolution and served in WW1. More of her history can be found here: <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/the-story-of-hmcs-protector/>

Following the 1893 economic crash and resultant depression, the crew was reduced by half, with the ship spending idle months moored at Pt Adelaide. George Maybee is likely to have been one of those crew members laid off as he was soon to join the Village Association.

In 1894, George played a major role in forming Port Adelaide's **Nangkita Village Association** and was one of the two longest serving settlers, from the few members who remained at Nangkita after it closed down.

George was also one of the men that toured this area prior to the Village's inaugural meeting, reporting back on the suitability of land here. He was also one of the initial group of seven men that arrived on site to set up the temporary shelters, and was one of only two members reported as having some previous farming experience. During the short life of this Settlement, George served periods as a Trustee and as Chairman. When the time came to front a Parliamentary enquiry looking into their dire state of affairs, it was George who was left to answer their questions on behalf of the group.

Once the Settlement closed down George and his new wife Mary, moved onto sections 367 & 371, a combined twelve acres of the previous Village land. For this they paid £3-12 per year on a perpetual lease.

George Maybee had married the 43 year old widow, Mary Jane Cook (nee Sutton) at Adelaide's Registry Office in 1896. Mrs Cook (*right*) was living in Semaphore at this time, following her first husband, Mr W Thomas Cook's death from cancer in 1892. All but one of her seven prior children were born in the Port Adelaide area, raising the possibility that she already knew of George at that time, or mutual friends may have introduced them. They did not have any children together and this would be George's only marriage.



Mrs Mary Jane Maybee (1853-1947)
formerly Cook, nee Sutton

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Mary was a true colonist, having been born in the area known as “Reed Beds” near the Adelaide coastline in 1853, to Robert & Ellenor Sutton. Her first marriage was in 1873 to William Thomas Cook at Kadina. They had four daughters: **Elenor** (aka Lena), **Blanche** (who married Herbert, the son of Nangkita’s Thomas Chaplin), **Olive** (aka Olly) who married Alec Carr, a WW1 serviceman, and **Sarah**, plus three sons **Ernest, Herbert & William Cook**.

Mary’s son, Herbert Clarence Cook, who lived here for a number of years but did not marry, passed away in 1940 at the age of 60, and is buried in the Cheltenham Cemetery. After living with his mother, he took out a lease over the seventeen acre block, Section 293 along Waterfall Drive, when the Village land was subdivided and allocated out.

During their life at Nangkita together, George Maybee who was a devoted Seventh Day Adventist, apparently spent much time with his ‘flock’ at Tooperang. Mary Maybee, of the Church of England persuasion, is remembered for her hard work around the property, ploughing the land with an old bullock & plough, assisted by her son Herb and a ‘state boy’ Bert Finch, who she cared for.

Mrs Maybee would attend the Nangkita ‘Band of Hope’ meetings of which she also became a committee member. *(This group had international roots and was a young person’s temperance society often run in conjunction with Churches and Sunday Schools.)* Family records mention that Mrs Maybee was ‘very tough’, indicated by the occasion when her teeth were pulled out without the need for injections.

Apart from what they could earn from their few acres of Nangkita land, the couple also sought out other work. Mary had apparently been a midwife for the Nangkita & Mount Magnificent area while George successfully tendered to contract road work for the council in 1905. Mary also took on the role of mail driver in the 1912 to 1914 period, with her son Herbert noted as a mail contractor in 1912 (perhaps helping his Mum). The mail at this time was delivered to Gilberts Siding at Finnis from where it had to be collected and brought to the Village Post Office.

The Maybees also took in one of the Nangkita school teachers, Mr Roland P Barnett as a boarder in 1899. The family must have been producing eggs on their land as it was reported in 1907 that George lost 100 fowls to foxes.

By around 1909, the Maybees had left Nangkita, having lived here for about 15 years, and returned to Port Adelaide. George died at the Adelaide Hospital in 1939, which the death notice reported was ‘after a long illness’. Mary was living in Ethelton by this time but was herself in poor health.

The State government held a Centenary Pioneer’s Garden Party event at the Botanic Gardens in 1936, for ‘Colonists’ born before 1860, with the following article appearing in the Adelaide Advertiser:

“A very happy old lady was Mrs Mary Maybee of Ethelton, who was present in her wheeled bed, which her daughter had pushed to the gardens from the railway station. Both the Governor and Lady Dugan paid a special visit to this 83 year old pioneer, who was born at Reedbeds, Fulham and went to school at Virginia. She has been an invalid for 23 years. Her one regret each year has been that she has been unable to attend the celebrations at Glenelg on December 28 because her bed cannot be carried on the trams. She was overjoyed at being able to share in the garden party.”

Mary passed away at Ethelton on the 18th November 1947 at the age of 95. She was buried at Cheltenham Cemetery alongside her 1st husband Robert Cook, son-in-law Bert Chaplin and her son, Herbert.

The family would keep their strong ties to Port Adelaide, with one daughter Mrs E W (Sarah) Lowe, living at 55 Harvey Street, Ethelton and Mary Jane Maybee living next door at number 53. Another of her daughters, Lena Cook, who married Arthur Frederick Darwin in 1907, but died in 1926 (suddenly) in the Adelaide Hospital, was also living in this same street when she died. (This daughter Lena had also been in Nangkita in 1908 when her premature son was born, probably while visiting her mother.)



This photo accompanied the article copied alongside. Lady Dugan (wife of the State Governor) is standing on the left, with Mrs Maybee (spelt as Maybell in the caption) laying on her wheeled bed.

References: Photos & information kindly supplied by Rosalie Chaplin, <https://sahistoryhub.history.sa.gov.au/things/hmcs-protector> <https://manning.collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/sa/defence/naval.htm> wikitree.com, trove.nla.gov.au, BDM records

Newly married couple Greta & Clarence (*aka Clarrie*) Hutchens moved into this area in 1935. They had purchased Sections 245s, 247, 298, 299 and 300, which totalled 315 acres of uncleared scrubland at the corner of Nangkita and Ashbourne Roads (now called Bull Creek Road).

This was during the depression years when the scrubby, sandy land was relatively cheap, with superphosphate and subterranean clover not yet helping this land to become as productive as it later would be.

During the four years they owned the property, they built two homes. The first was an interesting self-built structure made of rolled bitumen drums and red gum off-cuts. The cost of their materials (including wire and nails) was just £11. This bitumen drum resource was used for many structures around Mt Compass, with the sheeting still visible on some sheds today.

The home was basically just one large room, with the sleeping area separated by a hessian wall. The walls and roof simply consisted of the flattened drums which presumably had been left over from the bitumising of Victor Harbor Road. The house itself, was located close to the swamp to permit ease of access to water.

Holes were left in the walls where windows could be fitted at a later date and the floor remained uncovered. At a later stage, four small second-hand windows were purchased to fill most of the spaces left. Packing crates would also be bought and used to line the floor, which was then covered with linoleum.

An issue arose during the summer, when drops of melting tar started to fall from the warming roof iron. This was solved by the purchase of hessian to line the walls and ceiling. Once this was white-washed a few times, it gave the appearance of plaster and solved the dripping tar problem.



The Hutchens' first home - made of bitumen drums

At some stage after this, a bank loan was arranged to purchase material for a new, more respectable house on this block. A builder was paid £20 to construct most of the home, consisting of two bedrooms and a sitting room. Greta and Clarrie worked in the late evenings to add on a kitchen. This house was of timber and corrugated iron construction, lined inside with asbestos sheeting.

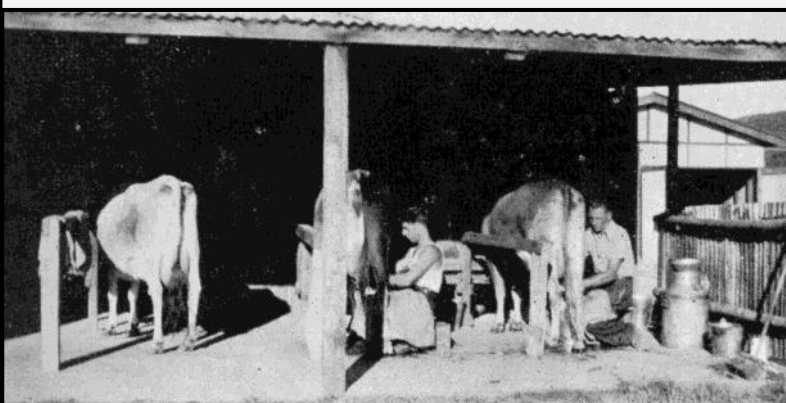
With much of their land now cleared, Clarrie sold this property in 1938, purchasing the following year the 500 acre Section 233 from Mary S Watson. This farm was on Cleland Gully Road, with the home they built there later owned by Keith and Rita Jacobs.

Dairy cows were primarily run on the property, but sheep were also attempted (unsuccessfully). Clarrie worked away from the farm for much of the time, with Greta's brother arriving to help on the land. During World War 2, Italian Prisoners of War were employed to collect stumps and help with the dairying. The Hutchens were hand milking up to 14 cows at the time. During the war, the government was encouraging the maximum food production possible, meaning Clarrie was working flat out clearing as much land as he could, employing three men to assist.

Twice they had two Italian POWs helping, with the neighbouring farm also employing two others. The photo below shows two of their POWs in the milking shed. (*refer to Chronicle no. 2 for further information on POWs in this district*).

During a polio epidemic, the first of what would become an annual Christmas party for local children was held on

their farm. Outdoor events such as this were held to help restrict the spread of this virus (*Refer Chronicle no 10*).



After 15 years at this now cleared property, they sold up in 1953 and moved to a 2,000 acre farm at Tintinarra, where Clarrie would then carry out most of his future scrub clearing.

Much of this information and the two photos are taken from the book "Lantern Glow to Meadow Bloom" by Rose Oakley. Published in 1966, it details the life of Clarrie & Greta.

The Mount Compass to Willunga Road 1907-1911

Below is a detailed description of the road between Mt Compass and Willunga during the early 1900s.

This was part of a collection of documents recently handed to the Archives by the Jacobs family. It has been reproduced from a Skewes family history book compiled by Ron Skewes and sent to Linton Jacobs. It can be read in conjunction with the article on **Victor Harbor Road** in September's *Chronicle*.

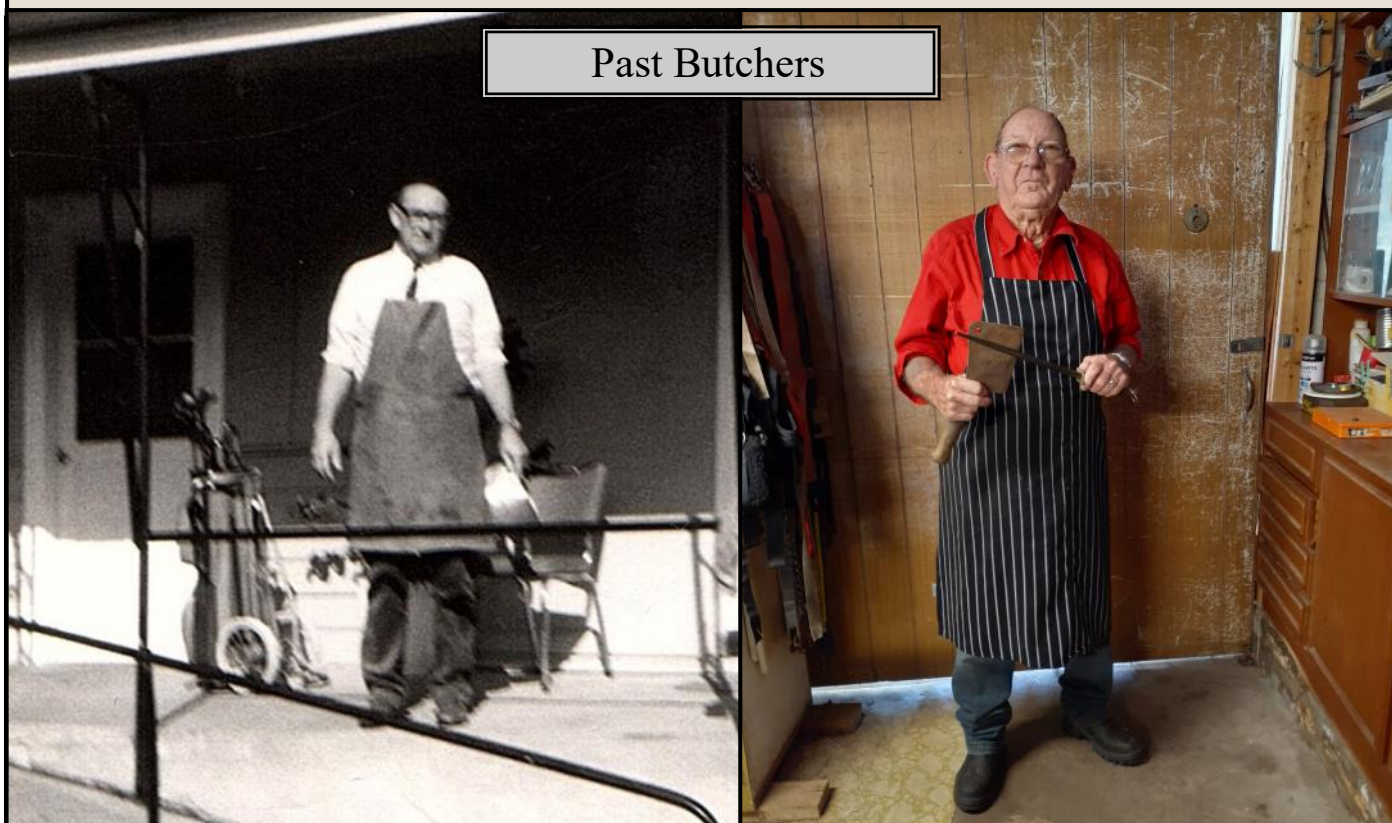
"The road from Mt Compass to Willunga in those days was ungraded metal as graders were unheard of. The stone for the road was carted from the quarry in a tip dray. These tip drays were heavily built and were manually loaded with a shovel. The tip dray had no springs and was unloaded by removing a pin from the front of the dray. The dray was pivoted so that it was evenly balanced in the centre and was thus easily tipped with a jerk from the horse. Draught horses were sometimes used in tandem. The stones were broken up to a suitable size by workmen using hand tools. The small pieces were then shovelled to an orderly heap of triangular sections so that the overseer could measure its cubic content, so that payment could be made. The broken pieces were then taken to the road in a wheelbarrow and levelled off by hand. By the standards of today the roads were very rough but, as every vehicle was horse drawn and had large diameter wheels, no one noticed the bumps.

The spring dray, compared with the tip dray, was of light structure and as the name implies, had two longitudinal springs above the axle. The brake was operated by a lever on the driver's side to a rod which brought the brake shoes into contact with the outside tyre of the wheels. The seat was a wooden board (sometimes with a back) which rested on each side of the dray. The seat was moved fore and aft in order to balance the load and take some of the weight from the shafts. The only light was a candle or a kerosene lamp in a glass sided lantern which fitted into a socket on the right hand side of the dray. On moonlit nights, lights were (by law) exempt. Everyone who was able, had to get down and walk up the hills to relieve the horses.

The road from Mt Compass to Willunga was through uncleared scrub and stringy bark trees with all kinds of wild flowers growing in profusion. Every mile on the road was marked with white painted mile posts denoting the number of miles between Adelaide, Noarlunga, Willunga and Victor Harbor.

(Chronicle No. 18 has further information on the Skewes family)

Past Butchers



Above left: **Eric 'Butch' Barker (1920-2000)** photographed at the rear of his Mount Compass butcher shop. Eric owned the business from 1961 through to 1974. Recent residents may not realise, but he is also the father of Sandra Nash, the Mount Compass pharmacist for many years (who can recall as a young girl, helping to make the popular 'mock chicken' drumsticks using a mould & skewers). Above right: **Barry Gottfried** was the local butcher between 1959 and 1961. He was recently photographed proudly displaying the original cleaver (aka chopper) and sharpening steel that he still owns and which he purchased brand new for his shop in 1959.

Taken from the 1894 Surveyor-General's Annual Report
- a list of the Colony's 12 Village Settlements at that time

	Locality.	Area Applied for (Acres).	Villagers.
Lyrup	River Murray	14,060	70
Waikerie	"	6,322	40
Holder	"	7,640	71
Murtho	"	2,000	20
Pyap	"	10,630	90
Kingston	"	4,800	25
New Era	"	2,096	22
Moorook	"	3,200	21
Gillen	"	9,990	65
New Residence	"	4,000	20
Mount Remarkable	Near Melrose, N.	932	66
Nangkita	Co. Hindmarsh, S.	1,894	23
Totals	—	66,363	533

The success or otherwise of these settlements will depend upon the settlers themselves. They have been started in a favorable season, and though some of them were late in commencing operations, the results are fairly satisfactory. The total population is about 1,750, and, collectively, they have 77 acres of garden and orchard, 195 acres under wheat crops, cleared about 900 acres of scrub, and erected nine miles of wire netting fencing, besides houses, sheds, &c.



The **Gilberts Siding** railway stop
- photographed this year.

The views & opinions reflected in this Journal do not represent the views of the Mt Compass War Memorial Community Centre Inc.

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of articles printed here. If you wish to advise of any corrections required or can add further information regarding any item, please contact me using the address below.

Most importantly: if you have any information, documents or photographs that that could be of interest to the Archives please give me a call or send an email.

Steve Kettle (mtcompassarchives@gmail.com)