

HISTORY HERE 255

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Extant Pre-suburban Buildings #69 – Monash Uniting Church



Though the foundation stone says it was built in 1909, the church itself began 30 years earlier in a home, as churches often did. Being in the Methodist tradition, it was originally part of a large circuit stretching from Rosstown (Carnegie) to Westall. Its name changed five times, from Mulgrave, Clayton, North Clayton, Whitburn, and Monash Methodists and finally to Monash Uniting. Many well-known local surnames were involved: Kennaugh, Foster, Gardiner, Horner. Before having their own building, the expanding congregation met in halls and in Clayton North Primary School, then called Mulgrave Common School. After 1909, that reversed. The growing school hired the church building for some classes. Over the decades the church has continued to grow and serve the local area, impressively across 147 years so far!

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In our rooms:
April – ANZAC ceremonies
May – The Dunny Man
June – Rose postcards
July – Region conference
July – Open Melbourne
Aug – AGM

WHS Publications

Books published by Waverley Historical Society are available from our rooms on Wednesday afternoons. Payment is by cash or direct deposit. Some as-new secondhand copies are available there too.

At other times, our books are available from **Pinewood newsagency** where credit cards are accepted.

REMINDER

This year, WHS will trial general meetings on **the LAST Sundays of the month**, rather than the fourth. This is because some of our members have other commitments on fourth Sundays. Please let us know how this affects you on waverleyhsvic@gmail.com.

Thank you to Matt Fregon MP, State Member for Ashwood District, for assistance with the printing of this publication. If you require assistance with any State Government issues please contact Matt's office.

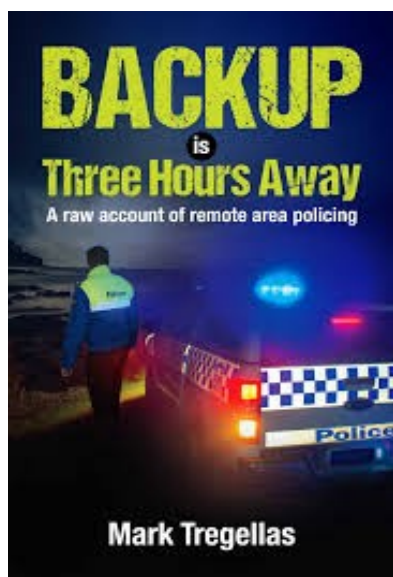
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“Back Up is Three Hours Away”



Waverley Historical Society members gathered last October for a presentation by former Police Officer Mark Tregellas. Mark grew up in Syndal and has fond memories of his childhood. He lived in Lawrence Road and went to Syndal North primary school and Syndal Tech to Form 3, later becoming a tree surgeon under Irvin Earl.

Mark and his friends had great adventures as he grew up, like stealing apples from the old cool store, and putting pennies on the train track for the red rattler to flatten. He remembers television arriving for the 1956 Olympics, and the excitement of Halley’s comet in 1985. In the 1970s Mark was a talented athlete who was 3cm away from qualifying for the Commonwealth Games in high jump. In 1974 he attended the Tino Ceberano karate school in Ashwood which gave him a solid grounding in self-defense and discipline, going on to other martial arts as a teenager.

At about the age of nineteen Mark’s adventuring spirit took him to see the world. He visited fifty-two countries over four years, traveled down the Amazon River by kayak, came close to being detained by the Iranian Secret Police, and discovered that, regardless of cultural differences, people everywhere share essential similarities. His travels brought him back to Australia to enlist in the Army. He qualified as a Green Beret in the Special Air Service (SAS) where less than 8,000 recruits qualify. It was at the SAS base in Perth while Mark was on a night parachute exercise that he nearly lost his life and decided the army was not the career he wanted.

His next adventure would be serving with the Victoria Police. Mark fondly recalled Commander Mick Miller, another Mount Waverley resident who kept a firm lookout not just for Mark but also other local boys who often got themselves into misadventures. Referring to his book, “Back Up is Three Hours Away,” Mark regaled us with amusing and sometimes confronting, heart stopping stories from his time in the Police force. Mark spent most of his career as a country policeman in remote coastal Victoria towns from Portland to Gippsland. Mostly Mark served as the only Police Officer in isolated communities, where assistance—sometimes from NSW Police—was three hours away, such as the night he spent chasing a dirty yellow campervan after reported thefts of petrol and a stuffed kangaroo. In all three such vans were pulled over before the culprits were caught.

The realities of policing in rural areas became most apparent one night when he was off duty. He was called to help after three men had assaulted a woman outside the pub. He attended in his pajamas and with only the karate baton he kept in his car. By the time back-up arrived he had arrested three of the biggest men he had ever seen (and Mark is nearly 7’ tall!) and was providing first aid to the injured woman. It is only five years ago that the police force changed its policy, and now there now must be two police officers for every country police station.

Mark Tregellas has been awarded bravery medals and subsequently three bars, meaning on at least four occasions he put his life second to those he was helping. He was only the third police officer to receive the Clarke Silver medal for bravery awarded by the Royal Humane Society and the only bravery medal where nominations come from the public.

We thanked Mark for his time speaking to us with such compelling stories of life in the police force. I can also recommend Mark’s book to read more stories of the people he met and the communities he served in his thirty-one-year career.



- Carina Leitch

Mark Tregellas & WHS Pres., Ralph Bartlett
(26 Oct. 2025 - Elizabeth Dangaard photo)

Vale Norm Gibbs, the Quintessential Community Man (15/8/1927–26/2/2026)

It is hard to imagine anyone more community-minded than noted Waverley citizen and WHS member Norm Gibbs OAM, JP. He was involved in a vast variety of services, so much so that many (most?) Waverley residents knew him. He has given 70 years of continuous voluntary service since 1947, but when all the different causes are added, it is over 270 years' worth!

For example, he was voluntary Gym Instructor at Hughesdale Congregational Church for 15 years, youth leader at St Phillips for 6 Years, an Hon. Probation Officer for 30 years (gazetted on 14 May 1970), a leading member of Monash Australia Day Committee for 11 years, Chairman of Waverley Red Shield Appeal (10 years), Vice President Waverley Benevolent Society for 13 years, Committee Member for Monash Carols by Candlelight for 12 years, an Hon. Justice of Peace for at least 20 years (and an FRVAHJ, signed 40,000 signatures as JP up until the age of 92), Chairman of the Zodiac Youth Committee Waverley running teenage dances in Waverley with an average attendance of 1000 youths (ACDC, Skyhooks etc!) for 6 years, and from the proceeds procured and drove a 24 seater bus for the use of community groups in Monash. A Community Leadership Award for students has been named after Norm, and what an inspiration he is!



Zodo the clown



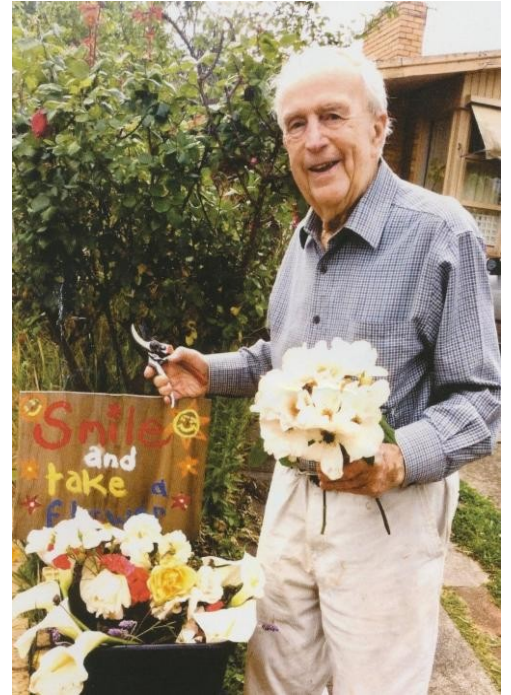
Norm and Topsy Gibbs, married 75 years

He played Santa and/or Zodo the clown until the age of 91(!) for the Variety Club (30 years), Very Special Kids (20 years), Monash Hospital (20 years), Down Syndrome Children (10 years), Monash Carols by Candlelight (12 years), various Pre-schools, Primary Schools and Libraries in Monash for many years, and was in the Moomba Clown Club. He also spent 4 weeks volunteering in Darwin following Cyclone Tracy and welcomed and assisted many Chernobyl and East Timor refugees.

Norm Gibbs was awarded Life Memberships in Waverley Men's Probus, Mount Waverley Rotary Club, South Eastern Volunteers, and Royal Victorian Association of Honorary Justices, and was a Paul Harris Fellow in Rotary Australia and a Fellow of the Royal Victorian Association of Honorary Justices.

He was twice Waverley Citizen of the Year (1975 and 1991), and once Olympic Torch Bearer (2004). He received the Australia Day Citizen Award and Rotary Citizen Service Award (1975), Waverley Newcomers Appreciation (1992), inaugural Sir John Monash Award (1998), Commonwealth Recognition Award Outstanding Senior Australian in The International Year of Older Persons (1999), the Centenary Medal (2001), Victorian Senior of the Year Award (2006), Nominated Australian of the Year (2007), Order of Australia Medal (2011) and Variety Victoria's Presidential Citation Award (2017).

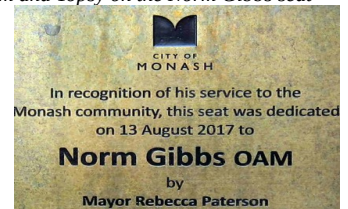
In 2017 the then Mayor Rebecca Paterson unveiled a memorial seat in Norm's honour (appropriately) outside the Mt Waverley Community Centre. Twice this year alone Norm and wife of 75 years Topsy have been mentioned in State Parliament, honouring their many years of amazing community service. (Thanks Matt Fregon for this recognition. Matt says, "That is why we name community leadership after Norm: because not all heroes wear capes.")



Norm cutting flowers from his garden for passers-by



Then Mayor Rebecca Paterson with Norm and Topsy on the Norm Gibbs seat



Detail of the plaque on the seat

The Egregious Railway Tax

The City of Monash's predecessor, the Shire of Mulgrave, needed a transport link with Melbourne in order to be a suburb, not just a satellite town, so from the 1880s the push for a railway began. The first proposal was for it come from Hartwell; later one from Burwood arose. In 1908 when Tommy Bent was premier, a triumphal cavalcade complete with a band was led by Joshua Jordan tracing out a path for a railway ending at Foster's Hill (the future Police Academy site.) Competing leagues proposed various routes and spruiked the benefits of opening up this "Cinderella of shires – the most beautiful and the most neglected."

Darling-Glen Waverley Railway Construction Trust

Construction Rate Notice and Demand for Payment

Shire Hall, 13 MAR 1936
Notting Hill,

Mulgrave

No. in Rate Book..... 3603

Name of Owner or Occupier..... *George Coleman*

Description of Rated Property..... *Part of property for the construction of the railway line*

Net Annual Valuations: 1933, £.....; 1934, £.....; 1935, £.....

By CONSTRUCTION RATES made by the Darling-Glen Waverley Railway Construction Trust on the 25th day of July, 1932, the 29th day of June, 1934, and the 25th day of September, 1935, for the periods ending the 30th day of June, 1933, the 30th day of June, 1934, and the 30th day of June, 1935, the above property is assessed as follows:—

1933,.....	pounds,.....	shillings and.....	pence,
1934,.....	pounds,.....	shillings and.....	pence,
1935,.....	pounds,.....	shillings and.....	pence,

which was payable on the 30th day of July, 1932, the 30th day of June, 1934, and the 30th day of September, 1935, at the Shire Hall, Notting Hill, and the said sums are hereby demanded and application made for same.

The Rates are a charge upon property (See Section 41 (2) Local Government Act 1932) and must be paid on or before the 25th February, 1936, to avoid payment of interest.

Sub-section (3) of Section 41 of the "Local Government Act 1932" provides that the rates are a charge on the property, and, unless paid within six months after they become payable, they shall bear interest at the rate of Six pounds per centum per annum.

1933: No.....	Zone, £.....	@.....	:	16	:	5
1934: No.....	Zone, £.....	@.....	:	2	:	
1935: No.....	Zone, £.....	@.....	:	19	:	3
Arrears.....			:		:	
Interest.....			:		:	
By Credit Over-payment, 1933 Rate.....			:		:	
TOTAL			£	2	:	11
TOTAL			£	3	:	11

GEO. CARMICHAEL, Secretary.

Postage Stamps will not be accepted in payment.

Office Hours: Monday to Friday, 9.30 to 4.30; Saturday, 9.30 to 12. Remittances must have the requisite exchange added or they will be returned.

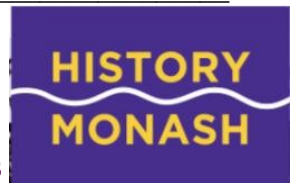
Postal Address:—SHIRE HALL, NOTTING HILL.

Thus it was that the eventual (over spruiked?) Glen Waverley line was to be first class, electrified from the start and without level crossings. However the cost was enormous, and before the line opened, the Great Depression had started. Still, a Railway Tax was demanded from everyone living within two miles of the line, and increased when the line made a loss.

This 1936 Rate notice to George Coleman shows the eye-watering load on Mulgrave residents for years after the line was opened. When many could not pay, their possessions were seized for auction to raise the necessary funds. However the buyers refused to bid against each other, bought the goods at low prices and then returned them to their owners. As we near the centenary of the line (5/5/30) we can remember these struggles. Read more of the story in *Cattlemen to Commuters* pp 159-165.

Oakleigh: a Changing Multicultural Community

Discover the story of local immigration 1945 to late 1970s through photographs, artefacts and personal accounts of those who settled in the Oakleigh area. This free exhibition captures an era of transformation, celebrating the resilience and contributions of migrant communities which shaped modern Australia. See it at Monash Federation Centre Tuesdays 10 am to 2 pm until 29 September 2026. No bookings required for individuals. Enter via double glass doors on north side of building. See <https://www.historymonash.org.au/> for more information.



Member's Voices

Lest We Forget - Our Families' Military Stories

In November the Waverley Historical Society held the second Member's Voices (in recent history) program where Carina presented a short history of The Shrine of Remembrance followed by members sharing stories of their recollections of military service from the Boer War to current service.

For Carina, The Shrine of Remembrance is one of the most interesting places to visit in Melbourne. In this presentation, we learnt many new things about The Shrine including the important role Sir John Monash played in rallying community sentiment to have The Shrine built, the winning design was inspired by the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus – one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and donations to build The Shrine were raised in six months, an incredible achievement considering this was during the Great Depression. Remarkably 300,000 Victorians attended the opening of The Shrine on 11th November 1934, which was equivalent to one third of the Victorian population!



After the presentation members and guests spoke of their recollections of family service and the ongoing impact war had on local communities. A guest spoke of getting dressed in her best clothes so she and her mother could take her father to the troop train at Flinders Street Station. Strangers seeing him in uniform called out their best wishes and good luck as they traveled by tram into the city. Another guest brought along his great grandfather's Boer War medals framed with a photo of his great grandfather. Quite amazing memorabilia considering that war was in 1880 to 1902. A member spoke of family living in Holland under Nazi occupation and the hardships for their family and community. Another member of Italian heritage recalled the internment camps for enemy aliens or people who were not considered British enough. A member brought along his family's World War I service medals, the 1914/1914-15 Star ("Pip"), the British War Medal ("Squeak"), and the Victory Medal ("Wilfred"). These medals had been nicknamed by soldiers from a popular comic strip of the time.

Carina also had a display of World War I memorabilia including two teddy bears, one dressed in the World War I uniform of an Australian soldier and the other in the uniform of The Shrine guard, plus various badges, pins and other items collected over the years.

It was a wonderful afternoon of shared memories, a few tears and some quiet moments reflecting on our families' service and the impact war has on communities back home.

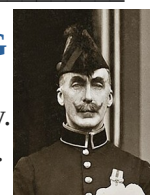


Waverley RSL Fire

Around 7am on Sunday 8th March 2026 multiple 000 calls alerted the fire brigade and police to a fire in the Returned Soldiers League building, and about 60 fire fighters battled the blaze for two hours before getting it under control. Having ascertained that there was no one inside at the time, attention quickly turned to the priceless memorabilia on display. Fire fighters worked with RSL staff and all was saved, though some are smoke affected. This comes at a time when Glen Waverley is already undergoing major change due to the construction of the Suburban Rail Loop, which is also the reason the RSL canceled the 2026 wreath-laying ceremony. The building has now suffered significant fire damage and hastened the move to another location, which was announced on 20th March: *The Ibis* in Glen Waverley will be their new HQ.

Celebrities who have Lived in Waverley #5 - Lieutenant Colonel George Steward KBE, CMG

Sir George Steward (1865 – 1920) was a senior Australian public servant as well as an officer in the army. He was the Official Secretary to five Governors-General, having been first to hold that title at Federation. During that time he established Australia's first intelligence service. He was also Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police from 1919 to his death. He moved into the Brandon Park area in about 1900, and gave it that name; it was his home for 20 years. Afterwards the large property was owned by the Chirnside family until it was subdivided to become the shopping centre, technical school and many homes.





“True Friendship Knows No Bounds”

Professor Emeritus Serge Riviere

On a humid February afternoon, not unlike the climate of Serge’s homeland of Mauritius, WHS gathered to hear his research into a little-known chapter of Captain Matthew Flinders’ life.

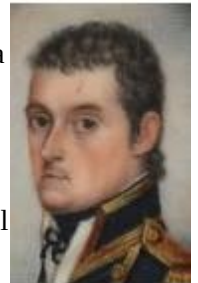
We know Matthew Flinders for circumnavigating Australia and for his publication of *Terra Australis* which lent its name to Australia, but do we know of Flinders’ imprisonment in Isle de France, Mauritius? Serge’s book *True Friendship Knows No Bounds* documents a friendship that developed in those years.

In 1798 Matthew Flinders along with George Bass navigated the land and seas around *Terra Australis* in particular circumnavigating Van Diemen’s Land. Their explorations proved Van Diemen’s Land was an island and Australia was a continent, and led to the naming of Bass Strait and Flinders Island. In 1803 Flinders was sent back to England in possession of important papers for the Admiralty. Flinders was also keen to have his discoveries published ahead of other explorers. The ship he was sailing in for this voyage was poorly built and was barely seaworthy, so Flinders had no choice but to land in Mauritius for urgent repairs before continuing to England.

Unbeknownst to Flinders, seven months earlier war had broken out between England and France, and he was about to be caught up in it in the most cruel and unexpected way. This came in the form of the French governor of Mauritius, General Charles de Caen, who deemed Flinders a spy due to him not having the correct paperwork for the ship he was traveling in. De Caen also hoped to exchange Flinders for French prisoners in Britain. Flinders would be imprisoned for seven years with no formal charges laid nor a trial held for his alleged crimes. During this period Flinders developed a friendship with Thomi Pitot, a French Mauritian lawyer and politician. In his time in captivity Flinders and Pitot exchanged many letters (researched and transcribed by Serge) and Pitot provided Flinders with emotional and financial support. They enjoyed playing the flute together and had many meaningful conversations alongside other friends. Flinders was taught French by the daughter of one and wrote several letters in reasonable French. Despite these friendships Flinders remained a prisoner of the French and became increasingly frustrated and embittered by his captivity.

After his release Flinders returned to England and became a recluse. He never sailed again and died a year later at forty years of age due to ill health from his time in prison. His wife said at the time that though he died at forty, he looked as if he was seventy!

A footnote to this story in 2019, while building an extension to Euston station in London, Flinders’ coffin was found after lying undiscovered under a car park for 160 years! He was re-interred with full Royal Naval honors on the 13th of July 2024 in Donington UK.



It was delightful to spend time in Serge’s company and share his passion for Matthew Flinders’ misfortunes, mishaps and misadventures.

- Carina Leitch



Sixty Years since the Westall Incident

In April 1966 something strange was witnessed by 210 Westall High School students, 49 Westall State School students, 30 students of other schools and 27 teachers. They saw odd lights, dazzling silvery discs with humps on top in the sky over the oval (117 witnesses). Some landed nearby and 165 saw the circles they made in nearby bushland (70 saw both). This is Australia’s most witnessed paranormal event, well known around the world. It was well reported in local papers and mentioned in dailies, but discussion of it has been discouraged. The State Library has a blog on it (<https://blogs.slv.vic.gov.au/our-stories/strange-lights-in-the-sky-the-westall-ufo-event-1966/>) which summarises the facts. A UFO-themed children’s playground and a walking track marks the spot where the circles were seen. A similar event occurred at about the same time in Valensole, France. No accounts of a return of these craft have been reported.

Ken Turner - A Mother's Love – Growing up in Mt Waverley in the 1940s and 50s

Carina visited Ken and Ann Turner in Nunawading, not so far from where he grew up. This is Ken's story.



The house, orchard, market garden on High St Rd west of Lawrence Rd, 1945

Ken's story starts with his great grandparents, Herbert **John** and Catherine **Cornell** (he went by his middle name) who settled in Mt. Waverley in the 1880's on land near the Mt Waverley railway station. The generations of Cornells were pivotal in establishing the Methodist Church in High Street Road Mount Waverley having been among the first Trustees of the church.



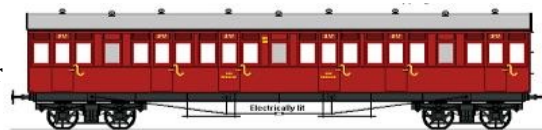
Phyllis at GW school 1939

One of the sons from that marriage, again named Herbert John, married Sarah Doherty at Black Flat (now Glen Waverley). The couple settled on land fronting High Street Road between Lawrence Road and Stewart Street. Their home was a four-room cottage which was brought intact by dray from Richmond. A kitchen and washhouse were later added. It is here they raised six children: Ernest, Leslie, Phyllis (Ken's mother), Albert, Raymond and Kenneth, and established a market garden and orchard. Ken's grandfather took the produce by horse and dray to the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market up until the early 1950's.

All 6 children went to Mount Waverley State School in the 1920s till 8th grade and then worked in the local orchards. Phyllis worked on the property and other orchards in the district. As an adult, Phyllis worked at the Huntingtower Manor for the Houghton family as a domestic and nanny to the children of the family. It was there that Phyllis met her future husband, Frederick Turner, who worked as a groundsman at the Estate. They married in 1941. Three of Ken's uncles served in World War II including Ken Snr after whom he is named. Ken Senior served in the Army at the Battle of Crete and in New Guinea.

After Phyllis and Frederick's marriage, Fred went to work at Yarra Falls in Collingwood. The couple moved to a rented house in Glen Iris where Ken and his two brothers were born. After the war, Ken's grandparents continued to work their orchard and market garden in Mount Waverley, but as they aged, Phyllis and the three boys regularly visited them at Mt Waverley. They travelled from their home in Glen Iris to East Malvern by train where they needed to change trains to a single carriage train called a Dog Box to continue their journey to Mt Waverley.

The walk to the grandparents' home from Mt Waverley Station appeared to young Ken as an adventure. They were regularly greeted by the residents of the few houses along the way. Mr and Mrs Closter in Stevenson's Road always waved, as did the Misses Dillon in St Albans Road, at that time a very rough track. Then on to Mr Owen's the Reservoir Keeper in Fleet Street. Phyllis and the boys would stop by the Brown's small General Store also in Fleet Street where they were treated to a chocolate frog each! On Sundays after a roast lunch with their grandparents the boys would enjoy sitting on the farm fence posts counting the cars passing by on High Street Road which at that time was a narrow bitumen strip. Ken got to count Holdens, Phillip Volkswagens and Colin any other vehicle that passed by. It was a slow game but kept the boys entertained for hours despite only seeing a car or other vehicle every five or so minutes!



"Dog box" carriages had a door to the platform from every seat, eliminating bottlenecks at busy stations.



"Horty Hall," High St Rd

In 1954 when the grandparents' health deteriorated the family moved permanently to the Mount Waverley home where Ken and his brothers continued their schooling at the newly built Syndal State School. Some of the classes were held in the Horticultural Hall next to the church till the school was finished! Ken continued his education at Jordanville and Caulfield Technical schools.

Ken was very keen to play cricket like his uncles who played for the Mt Waverley Cricket Club but sadly there was no junior team as part of the competition. The Methodist Church then formed a team at this time and Ken was able to play for 15 years. Ken also recalls with fondness movies in the Horty Hall and Progress Hall in Syndal, Sunday school picnics, harvest festivals, fetes and gymnastics classes.

Ken's mother, Phyllis was born on 12th July 1908 in the Mt Waverley home and spent a majority of her life there, until her final years in the Strathdon Aged Care Facility in Forest Hill passing away on 15th June 1990 aged 81 years.

Ken's time growing up in Mount Waverley was shaped and moulded by the community in which he lived. The love and kindness of his mother shines through his stories and formed a rich fabric that has continued to be woven into his senior years.



Phyllis at WHS

