

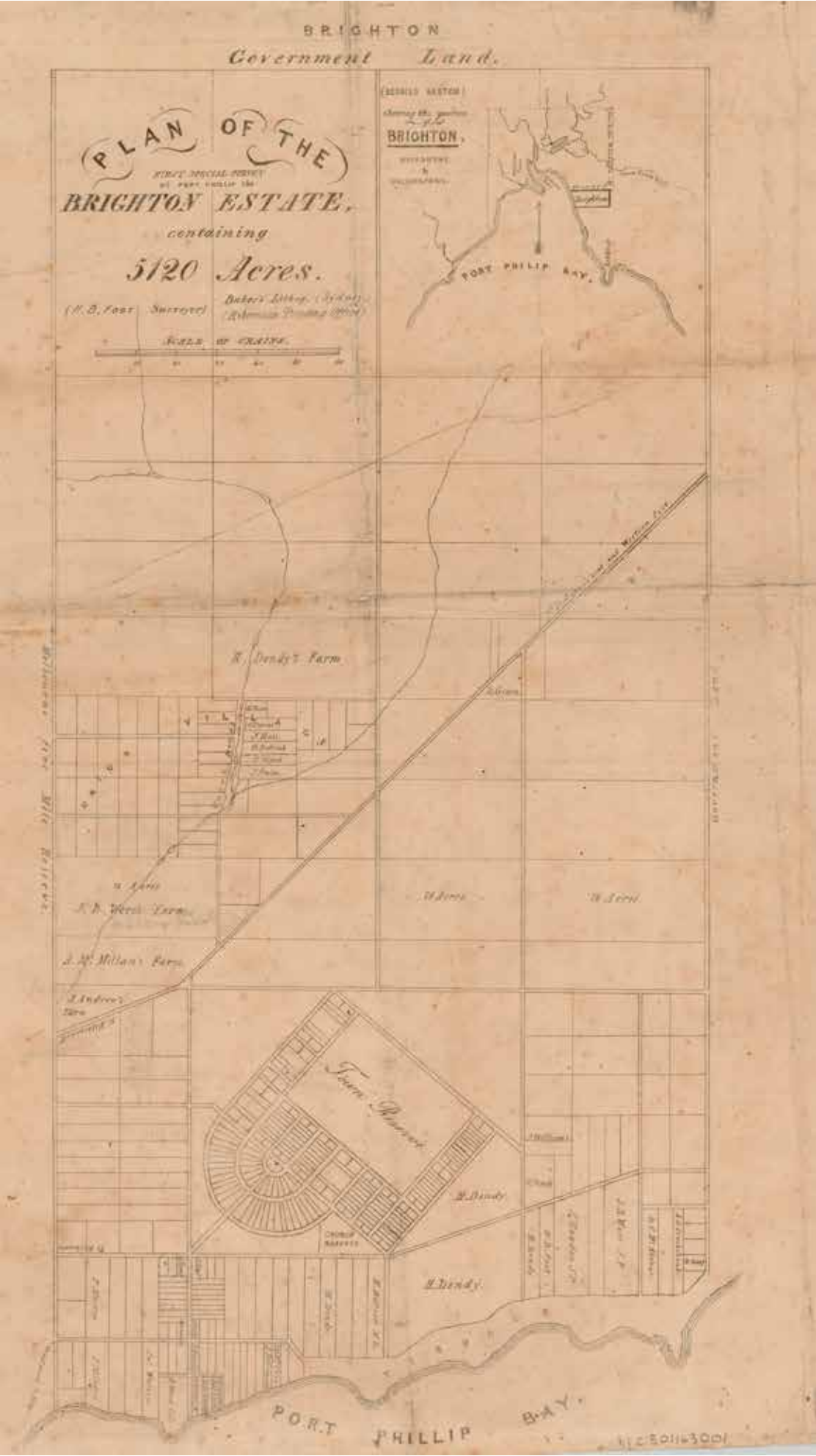
If only the walls could talk



**Whitmuir Hall
Killearnan
The Bentleigh Club**

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City of Moorabbin Historical Society
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Courtesy Victorian State Library



Foward

The start of this story goes back seventy years (early 1950's) I was a young child growing up in post war McKinnon in those days a semi-rural suburb.

My parents had brought land during the war and built a house on the corner of Whitmuir Road and Hopkins Street close to McKinnon Road in 1947. At that time Whitmuir Road was not a through road as it is today. There was a wooden foot bridge at its lowest point over the Elster Creek.

As a child I played with other neighbourhood children at Elster Creek at the bottom of our street which a big part of our playground. I had boundaries that I was not allowed to go beyond when playing, which were Thomas Street, McKinnon Road, "The Creek" and Whitmuir Road. I think this was because I could always hear dad whistle for dinner at night.

Amazingly, I can only remember one instance that got me into trouble. One Sunday morning I crossed the boundary of Thomas Street. I was wearing my good clothes and while playing fell into the creek. Mum was not impressed when I returned home wet and dirty as we were going out to visit friends and I was told NOT to go out playing. Well I was good most of the time!

I first became aware of the old house, which my parents referred to as the Bentleigh Club, whilst building up our fire stacks for Bon Fire nights on the spare blocks in Hopkins Street.

You could look straight across open paddocks down to the Creek (Crozier Court was not there then) and then up the hill on the other side, there stood the old house on the hill.

My memory of those happy days and the view of the old house motivated my curiosity in the history of the old house and its previous owners.

The story of the old house and its occupants has

Carol Poole
Bentleigh East 2022



Adamson's "Australasian Hotel" c 1865
courtesy Queenscliff Historical Society

Walter Adamson born in Scotland migrated to Australia with his wife, Helen and their four children.

ARRIVAL IN AUSTRALIA

The Adamson family boarded the ship *Gipsey Queen*, 839 tons, arriving in Port Phillip Bay on April 6 1849.

BUSINESS

1849 Walter was managing a boarding house “*Yarra House*” in Melbourne.

1850 Walter leased the *Prince of Wales Hotel*, in Flinders Street, Melbourne from James Murray

1853 member of a partnership involved in merchandise, which had a premises at 11 Collins Street East. The firm became insolvent in September 1855. During this time Walter was also involved in token-issuing business.¹

June 1855 Walter sold the Campbellfield Estate, comprising of 660 acres, having a frontage of two and a half miles on the Great Sydney Macadamised Road and a frontage of one mile on the Broad Meadows’ Road.² The sale realised from £22 to £320 per acre.

March 1857 was proprietor of *Roxburgh House* in Queenscliff.

Walter built a hotel on the site of the current Vue Grand, on Hesse Street, Queenscliff, which was named *Australasian Hotel*. In December 1858, Walter announced that the *Australasian Hotel*, was opened for business. The hotel was of a substantial timber construction and contained thirty rooms.

In 1862 the hotel was acquired by John Lang Currier, a grazier from Scotland, due to Walter’s inability to pay his mortgage, but he remained as manager of the hotel.

PASSING

Walter died, aged 68, on the 10th November 1866 at his residence, Vale-street, St Kilda. He was interred at the St Kilda Cemetery.

Walter Adamson

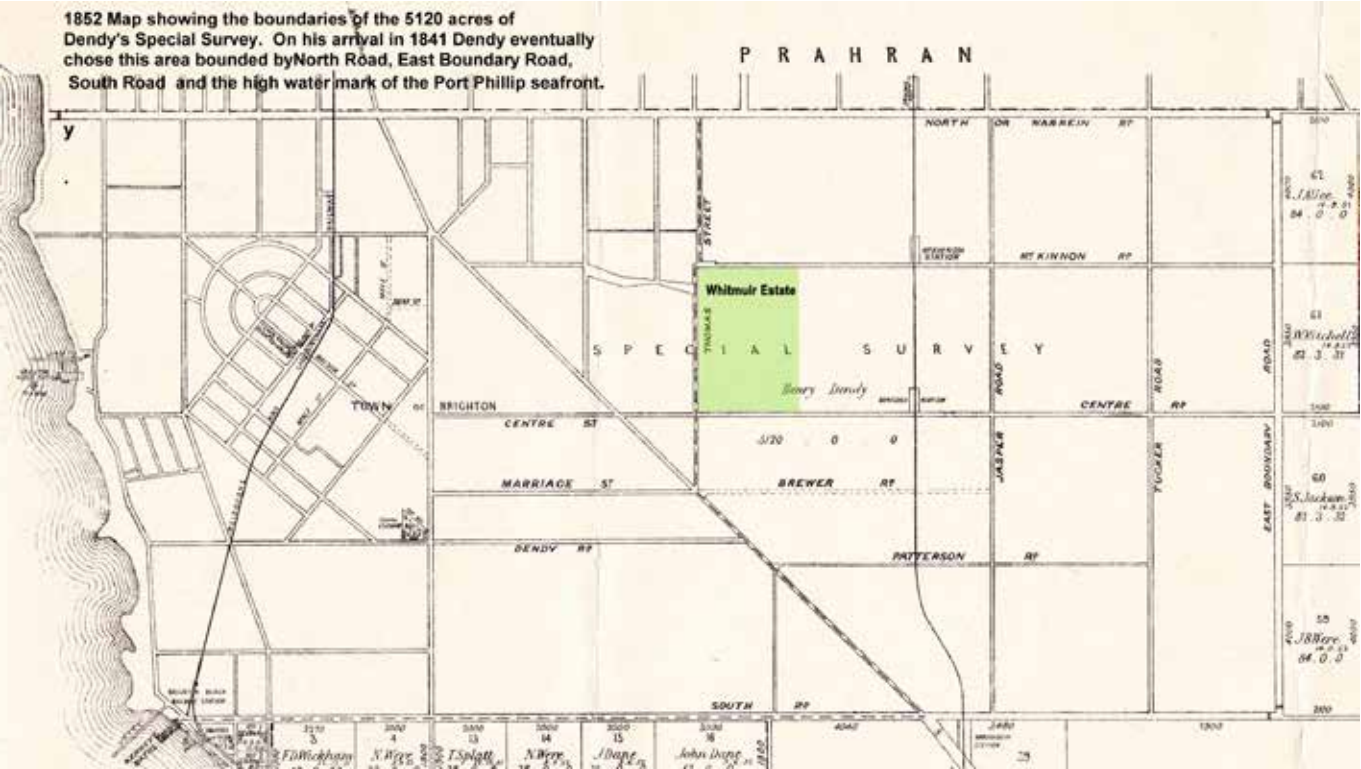
John Adamson	Mary Hume
Walter Adamson	
b. 1798 • St Boswells, Scotland	
d. 10 November 1866 • St Kilda, Victoria, Aus.	

SPOUSE	
Archibald Dunlop	Gideona Burnet
Helen Dunlop	
b. 1801 • Selkirk, Scotland	
d. 13 July 1872 • Heathcote, Victoria, Aus.	
m. 1834 • Saint Cuthberts, Edinburgh, Scotland	

CHILDREN
Gideona Burnette
b. 1835 • Manchester, England
d. 13 March 1913 • Harkaway, Victoria, Aus.
m. James Mackie (Merchant, Melbourne)
15 August 1855 • Little Brighton, Victoria
John Alexander Adamson
b. 1839 • Liverpool, England
d. 22 February 1900 • Essendon, Victoria, Aus.
m. Caroline Maria Cowen Linton
1868, Victoria
Mary Agnes Adamson
b. 1841 • Burtonwood, England
d.
m. Robert Kersley Esq. (Maryborough)
13 July 1864 • Queenscliff, Victoria, Aus.
Helen Isabella Adamson
b. 1844 • Liverpool, England
d. 2 July 1892 • Heathcote, Victoria, Aus.
m. Frederick John Spinks
17 August 1869 • Heathcote, Victoria, Aus.

1 <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/1804>
2 The Argus, Tue 20 Mar 1855, Page 2

Whitmuir Hall early 1850’s



Whitmuir Hall was built on land which was part of the Henry Dendy Special Survey 1841.

In the early 1850’s allotments in this land were sold to the early settlers of Melbourne.

Walter Adamson purchased land within the boundaries of Dendy’s Special Survey, approximately 160 acres bounded by Thomas Road in the west , McKinnon Road in the north, Wheatley Road in the east and Centre Road in the south.

Walter grew fruit trees on his property and in 1855 the local paper printed a story about the soil and climate of being able to grow English fruit.

Walter and his wife, Helen celebrated their eldest daughter’s, Gideon Burnetta, wedding to James Mackie at Whitmuir Hall on the 15 August 1855.

In Walter’s will, which he penned on the 5 June 1854 he asks that his wife occupy and enjoy the dwelling house now being built on his Estate called Whitmuir at Brighton, in the Parish of Moorabbin in the Colony of Victoria or some other house on the same Estate free from all rent.

In 1856, Walter business ventures took a turn for the worst and he, with his business partners found themselves in the Insolvency Jurisdiction. Walter sold his estate, Whitmuir.

Colonial Productiveness.-- As an example of capabilities of the soil and the adaptability of the climate to the growth of English fruit, we were shown yesterday, by Mr. Law, a specimen of “Royal Alexander” apples, which exceed in size anything of the kind we have ever before seen. The specimen in question weighed respectively 15 and 16 ounces and were grown by Walter Adamson, Esq., of Whitmuir Hall, Little Brighton. There were many others of similar size on the tree which bore these. The apples will, be kept on view by Mr. Law for a few days, at his seed warehouse, 82 Swanston street, and will richly compensate for a visit.

The Age, Mon 12 Mar 1855 Page 3

MARRIED.

On the 15th inst., at Whitmuirhall, by special license, by the Rev. James Ballantyne, Mr James Mackie, merchant, Melbourne, to Gideon Burnetta, eldest daughter of Mr Walter Adamson, Brighton.

The Argus, Sat 18 August 1855 Page 5



Flora Rachel Wallace Dunlop

Lt. John Wallace Dunlop | **Magdalene F. Dunlop**
() ()

Flora Rachel Dunlop
b. 1807 • Ayrshire, Scotland
d. 29 August 1891 • Poowong, Victoria Aus.

Flora Rachel Wallace Dunlop, her husband Alexander Cunninghame Wallace Dunlop and five of their children arrived in Port Phillip in the on 20 September 1849.

Flora’s husband was her first cousin. They had eight children, three of whom died in infancy.

Life in Australia

In February 1950, Alexander purchased property in the Western District of Victoria, a property they named Hexham Park.

In 1851 Alexander was appointed a Magistrate of the Hopkins River, Mount Shadwell¹ and in November 1851, an Elective Member of the Legislative Council of Victoria. Alexander died in 1852 at the age of 43.

Real Estate

Flora remained at Hexham Park for a short time and then relocated the family to Brighton.

In the mid 1850’s Flora moved to Brighton and lived there for a time, returning to England in 1861 for a short time.

Flora returned to Australia and lived in Whitmuir Hall for a period (1868-1877).

In the later years of her life, Flora was living in Poowong, Victoria, on a property near her son, John Anthony.

During her lifetime Rachel purchased and sold many different land holdings in Victoria: Western District, Brighton and Poowong and in New South Wales: Sydney and Bateman’s Bay.

PASSING

Flora Rachel died at Poowong in 1891 at the age of 84 and was buried at Melbourne General Cemetery.

SPOUSE	
Anthony Dunlop ()	Anne C. Kilmaurs ()
Alexander Cunninghame Wallace-Dunlop b. 1809 • Scotland d. 1852 • Melbourne, Victoria m. 3 March 1835 • St. Botolph, London, England	

CHILDREN
Annie Flora Wallace-Dunlop b. 1836 • West Derby, England d. 15 October 1911 • Kew, Victoria, Aus. m. John Arthur Macartney 15 January 1861 • Brighton, Victoria
Alexandrina Frances Wallace Dunlop b. 1840 • West Derby, England d. 31 May 1919 • Wellington, New Zealand m. Henry Dundas Robertson, Esq. 8 December 1859 • Brighton, Victoria
Jemima Constance b. 1843 • West Derby, England
Harriet Antonia Wallace Dunlop b. 1845 • West Derby, England d. 21 August 1919 • Sussex, England m. David Lyall 16 November 1875 • Christ Church, St Kilda
John Anthony Wallace Dunlop b. 1846 • West Derby, England d. 22 November 1919, Poowong, Victoria Aus m. Fanny Mawbey 23 June 1875 • Christ Church Warrnambool

¹ New South Wales Government Gazette Tue 28 Jan 1851 [Issue No.11] Page 167

Whitmuir Hall - mid 1850 - 1877

Flora Rachel Dunlop added Whitmuir Hall to her real estate portfolio some time in the mid 1850’s. In an advertisement in January 1858 it mentioned that references and address should be sent to Mrs. Wallace Dunlop, Whitmuir Hall, East Brighton.

In April 1861 Flora returned to England and Whitmuir Hall was advertised to Let.

TO LET, WHITMUIR HALL, Little Brighton, the owner being about to leave for England, one of the most commodious and comfortable family residences in this colony, with abundance of water and an excellent garden. The ground round the house are finely timbered, and the situation most agreeable and healthy. The extent of the property is about 160 acres. Distance, about 20 minutes’ walk from the Brighton Railway Station, and about 2 ½ miles from the beach.

The Argus, Thu 25 April 1861 Page 1

In May 1861, Flora’s household furniture was actioned. An extensive list of household items sectioned off in rooms was printed in *The Argus*, Tue 28 May, 1861 Page 2. The rooms mentioned were drawing room, dining room, six bedrooms, library, pantry, kitchen and laundry. The list of items and the number of rooms, suggest that Flora lived her life in style, see page 12 for a listing of the furniture.

The early rate books of Moorabbin recorded Mrs Wallace Dunlop as owning the land and Whitmuir Hall. In 1862 the property was valued at £225/-/- at and Mr John Brown was listed as living in the property. In 1877 rate book, F R Wallace Dunlop was listed as owner of Whitmuir Hall consisting of 156 acres and 14 rooms, again valued at £225/-/-.

Flora did not live at Whitmuir for a number of years, advertisements in the papers offering Whitmuir to let for quite a few years. The lessees, other than John Brown were unknown. The following articles printed in the daily papers could be families that either leased the property or were employees of the estate.

CHRISTIE - On the 19th December, at Whitmuir East Brighton, Mrs L. S. Christie of a daughter

The Argus, Wed 24 December 1862 Page 4

THIS DAY
Prime Dairy Cows
McCaw & another have received instructions from **John Brown Esq.**, to sell by auction, at his residence, Whitmuir Hall, East Brighton (known as Mrs Dunlop’s), on Saturday, 19th inst., 20 first class dairy cows, 15 heifers, 1 milk cart and harness, 1 good spring-cart and harness. The auctioneers have much pleasure in being able to pronounce these cattle first-class, and for positive sale, in consequence of the proprietor giving up dairying.

The Age, Sat 19 December 1863 Page 2

DONALDSON - GIBBS - On the 3rd inst., at Whitmuir Hall, East Brighton, by Rev. Irving Hetherington, Mr John Donaldson, of Wood’s Point to Mary, only surviving daughter of Mr Andrew Gibb, of Auchinlock, Scotland.

The Argus, Wed 4 May 1864 Page 4

CUNNINGHAM - On the 8th inst, at Whitmuir, Brighton, the wife of Hastings Cunningham, Esq of a son.

The Argus, Thur 10 Sept 1868 Page 4

In 1870, Flora instructed Gemmell, Tuckett and Co., Auctioneers to sell the property. The action was held of Thursday, 20th October at twelve o’clock.

The description given of the property was:

All that very valuable freehold estate, known as Whitmuir Hall, situated in East Brighton, about one mile and a quarter from the Bay Street Station comprising CAPITAL FAMILY RESIDENCE and about 160 acres of land, a good portion of which is under cultivation.

The house contains 10 rooms (several of them large), pantry, and seven large cupboards, separate : capital dry cellar and dairy, bathroom, &c : the kitchen offices, recently erected of brick, comprise kitchen and laundry and two bedrooms, with boot and man’s room.

The house is built of brick on stone foundations, with verandah in front. It is fully supplied with water from two large tanks and a well and placed in commanding position, with shrubbery and park land in front. There are about six acres of garden planted with the choicest fruit trees, all in full bearing, with cultivation paddocks



Sir Thomas Bent

James Bent
(1804 - 1875)

Maria Tomey
(1820 - 1875)

Thomas Bent (Sir)
b. 7 December 1838, Penrith, NSW
d. 17 September 1909, Brighton Vic.

FIRST SPOUSE	
William Hall	Ellen Baker
Elizabeth Hall b. abt. 1839 d. 10 February 1861 • Brighton, Victoria m. 1860	

SECOND SPOUSE	
John Huntley (1812 - 1884)	Catherine Hegarty (1823 - 1885)
Elizabeth Huntley b. abt. 1843 • Melbourne Vic d. 2 January 1903 • Brighton, Victoria m. 1864	

CHILDREN
Elizabeth Hannah Bent b. 1866 • Brighton, Victoria, Aus d. 23 March 1947 • Brighton, Victoria, Aus m. George Bleazby 1897 • Brighton, Victoria, Aus
Gertrude Huntley Bent b. 1868 • Brighton, Victoria, Aus d. 1868 • Brighton, Victoria, Aus - 2 months

Bent was born in 1838 near Penrith, New South Wales. In 1849, his family relocated to the Port Phillip District and, after a short period in Fitzroy, moved to what is now East Bentleigh to set up a market garden.

At the age of 13, Bent left school to help his father on the land and by 21, the enterprising young man had set up his own market garden in McKinnon. In 1861 he became a rate collector for the Brighton Council and not long after that he began buying and selling land in Brighton and Moorabbin, eventually developing the suburb of Bentleigh (named in his honour).

He was Member of the Legislative Assembly for Brighton for 32 years and a Councillor of both Brighton and Moorabbin for 45 years, becoming Mayor of Brighton on nine occasions. Never far from controversy, Bent was an avid land speculator during Melbourne’s boom years and was often accused of neatly overlapping his public role with private interests.

Throughout this extraordinary career, Bent had an exceptional capacity for work, including tenures as Minister for Railways, Vice-President of the Board of Land and Works, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (1892-94) and Treasurer and Premier of Victoria (1904-09). n 1908 he was awarded a Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George (KCMG).

PASSING

When he passed away in 1909 he was given a state funeral and it was reported that it was attended by 25,000 onlookers.

Whitmuir Hall - 1877

WHITMUIR CHANGES HANDS

In April 1877 an advertisement of transfer of land was placed in the papers on behalf of Flora Rachel Wallace Dunlop, the land referred to was:

“A rectangular piece of land, part of the Brighton estate, parish of Moorabbin, county of Bourke , known as Dendy’s Special Survey, 4000 links to the south side of Mackinnon-road by 3900 links to Centre-road, and having Thomas-road on the west”³

Thomas Bent purchased Whitmuir Hall and the surrounding acreage, a month later he transferred it to Walter Robert Johnson, a bank manager of the Melbourne Banking Corporation, before regaining it during September 1877.

Thomas Bent then subdivided the property and sold off the lots, later that month. The subdivision plan is on page 18.

Unfortunately the weather was not favourable and not all the lots were sold. The remainder were advertised to be action on the 16 March 1878, but due to the inclemency of the weather the sale did not take place and was postponed for a week.

Whitmuir Hall was sold with 156 acres, which included the garden and orchard.

Sir Thomas Bent was Commissioner of railways for twenty months between 1881-1883, and during this time he achieved the duplication of the Brighton line in 1882, so essential to the development of his own subdivisions.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22.

At Three O’Clock, on the Estate.

sale of the

**WHITMUIR ESTATE,
BRIGHTON.**

By Order of Thomas Bent, Esq., M.L. A.

G. WALSTAB has received instructions to SELL by PUBLIC AUCTION, as above,

This valuable and beautifully-situate estate, consisting of commodious and well finished

FAMILY RESIDENCE,

containing 6 rooms, kitchen, servants’ apartments, baths, cellars, stabling, &c, and

156 ACRES

of some of the finest land in Brighton, of which about 15 acres, Including garden and orchard, will go with the house, the remainder being subdivided into

20 ALLOTMENTS,

ranging from 1 up to 15 acres each.

This is one of the most desirable properties In this neighbourhood of Melbourne, the situation being unrivaled, commanding extensive and picturesque views, and within a mile of the North Brighton railway station.

The Argus, Mon 24 Sep 1877 Page 2

³ The Argus, Thu 19 Apr 1877 Page 7



Robert Gray Ford migrated to Australia when he was 18 arriving in October 1852 aboard the ship ‘Ellen’. In May 1854, Roberts parents and siblings joined him in Australia.

Robert set up his home at Geelong. In 1854 he married his wife, Mary.

For a short time Robert worked with his father in an engineering business and foundry in Geelong. In 1860, he began his career with the Victorian Railways as the inspector on the Moorabool Viaduct.

THE INVENTOR

Robert was a gifted engineer and inventor with a gift some felt bordered on genius. Robert patented a number of inventions. He saw the need for mechanised rock-drilling and invented drills, air compressors and other ancillary machinery suitable for using in mines and tunnelling¹.

The most important invention being a rock-boring machine illustrated above which was manufactured at the Vulcan Foundry in Geelong and used in the mines at Bendigo and elsewhere on the goldfields.

As a result of his invention Robert was able to purchase *Whitmuir Hall* from Thomas Bent.

PASSING

Robert retired in 1888 and lived a quite life at Whitmuir Hall. He passed away at home on the 22 November 1891 of heart disease, aged 58 years and 4 months.

Robert was buried Brighton General Cemetery.

¹ Journal of Australasian Mining History, Vol. 3, Sept 2005

Robert Gray Ford

Robert Ford
(1808-1881)
Robert Gray Ford
b. 19 July 1833, Gateshead, County Durham, England
d. 22 November 1891, Brighton Vic.

Margaret Gray
(1810-1872)

SPOUSE
Mary Walker
b. 1830
d. 27 August 1908, Brighton-Le Sands, Sydney
m. 1854, Victoria

CHILDREN
Elizabeth Margaret Ford
b. 1854 • North Melbourne, Victoria, Aus
d. 1933 • Fairfield, Victoria, Aus
m. David Fenton
19 August 1880 • Brighton, Victoria, Aus
Mary Jane Ford
b. 1856 • Geelong, Victoria, Aus
d. 1857 • Geelong, Victoria, Aus (11 months)
Emeline Ford
b. 1857 • Geelong, Victoria, Aus
d. 18 June 1918 • Ashfield, NSW, Aus
m. William Dalton
December 1880 • Brighton, Victoria, Aus
Robert Gray Ford Jnr
b. 1860 • Melbourne, Victoria, Aus
d. 1942 • Thornbury, Victoria, Aus
m. Margaret Kennedy Donaldson
1883 • Brighton, Victoria, Aus
Federick William Ford
b. 1854 • North Melbourne, Victoria, Aus
d. 3 February 1898 • Perth, WA, Aus
m. Jessie Mabel Sheppard
1883 • Brighton, Victoria, Aus
Elizabeth Ann Ford
b. 1864 • Sandhurst, Victoria, Aus
d. 1866 • Sandhurst, Victoria, Aus (aged 1)
John Edward Ford
b. 1870 • Emerald Hill, Victoria, Aus
d. 1933 • Melbourne,Victoria Aus
m. Beatrice Camille Bennett
1896 • Victoria, Aus
Albert Walker Ford
b. 1872 • Emerald Hill, Victoria, Aus
d. 1950 • Rockdale, NSW, Aus
m. Emma Clara Fortescue
1903 • Victoria, Aus
Ada Amelia Ford
b. 1874 • Emerald Hill, Victoria, Aus
d. 1933 • Malvern,Victoria Aus

Robert Gray Ford purchased Whitmuir Hall, with 15 acres, including the garden and orchard at auction in 1877 from Mr Thomas Bent. The address of Whitmuir Hall became Thomas Street.

Robert Ford also purchased four and a half acres of the subdivision of the Whitmuir Estate from Walter Robert Johnson, a bank manager. This land was quarried for gravel to use in the laying of the Frankston Railway line and it was suggested that Robert Ford used his position in the Railway department to profit from the sale of this land and was debated in the Victorian Parliament. Thomas Bent defended Mr Ford position in the parliamentary debate.

“At the end of 1879 or the beginning of 1880, Mr R. G. Ford, being engineer of construction in the Railway department, fixed the route of the railway from Caulfield to Mordialloc. In April, 1880, Mr Ford bought certain land in the neighbourhood of the railway route. On May 13, 1881, the contract with Messrs. Falkingham and Bunn for the Mordialloc line was signed, sealed and delivered. On July 15, 1881, or six weeks after the contract was signed, four acres and a half of land were sold by Mr. Ford to Messrs Falkingham and Bunn and others, as a quarry for ballast for the said railway line.”¹

Robert, his wife Mary and their six surviving children made Whitmuir Hall their home.

Two of their daughters were married at the stately home, Elizabeth Margaret and Emmeline in 1880 and 1881 respectively.

Robert Ford let two portions of his land to Chinese market gardeners one for a rental of £100 per annum and the other on which was erected wooden stabling and a weather board house containing 3 rooms, in which the Chinamen lived and cultivated the surrounding land for a rental of £50 per annum.

Robert Gray Ford died in 1891 and left his estate to his wife and children. His probate papers were very extensive and listed in details the properties, 13 acres, 3 rood and 21 perches on the south side of Huntley road with the residence, Orchard and other improvements and another six acres or thereabouts on the north side of the road occupied by Chinamen, the whole property of nearly 20 acres as valued at £4800. The house statuary and fountain which was valued at £1000.

¹ The Caulfield and Elsternwick Leader, Sat 28 Nov 1891, Page 5

Whitmuir Hall- 1878

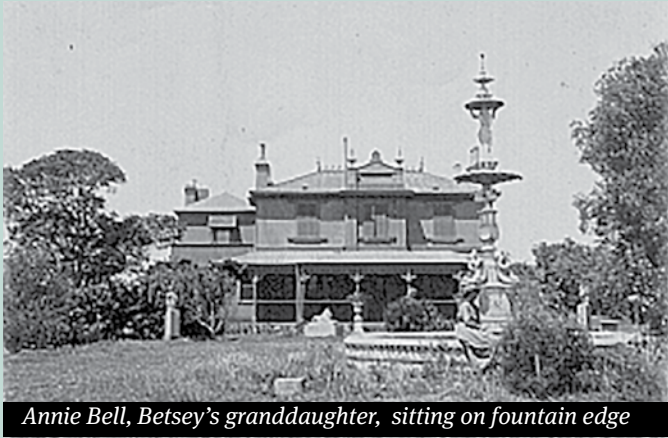
FENTON—FORD.—On the 19th inst., at the residence of the bride’s parents, Whitmuir-hall, East Brighton, by the Rev. Henry Plow Kane, David, eldest son of the late David Fenton, of Geelong, to Elizabeth Margaret, eldest daughter of R. G. Ford, Esq.
The Argus, Saturday 28 August, 1880 Page 1

MARRIAGE.
DALTON—FORD.—On the 29th December, at the residence of the bride’s parents, Whitmuir Hall, East Brighton, by the Rev. Henry Plow Kane, William, eldest son of Joseph Dalton, of Beechworth, to Emmeline, second daughter of R. G. Ford, Esq.
The Age, Wednesday 12 Jan 1881 Page 1

DEATHS
Mr. Robt. Gray Ford, who some years ago held the position of Engineer for Construction, Victorian Railways, died at his residence Whitmuir, Thomas road, East Brighton, last Sunday afternoon, the cause of death being heart disease and exhaustion. The deceased gentleman, who was about 58 years of age, was a man of extraordinary ability, and was connected with the Railway Department at the time when there was a feud amongst the officers, which resulted in a special committee of enquiry being appointed which recommended the retirement of some of the officers, and the transfer of Mr Ford to the Public - Works Department, from which he retired some five years ago.

Many of the most important engineering works constructed in the early days of the colony’s history were carried out by Mr. Ford; His funeral which was a very long one, took place on, Tuesday last, when his remains were interred in the Brighton Cemetery. Mr. J. McDowall, undertaker of Bay street, North Brighton, had charge of the funeral arrangements and gave every satisfaction.

The Caulfield and Elsternwick Leader, Sat 28 Nov 1891 Page 5



Annie Bell, Betsey's granddaughter, sitting on fountain edge

Betsy Sutherland was born in 1837 in Brora, Sutherland, Scotland. She married Thomas Thomson, in Kildonan, Sutherlandshire, Scotland. A son, Alexander Thompson was born in 1855 in Clyne, Sutherlandshire.

MIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA

Betsy and Thomas migrated to Australia, leaving Liverpool on July 22 1856 on the “Mermaid”, and arrived in Melbourne on 20 October 1856.

Just on two years in the colony, Thomas Thomson, died at Sutherlands Creek, Victoria, in 1858, aged 28 years.

In 1859 BetsyThompson marriedAlexanderArmstrong at “Woolbrook”, Teesdale, Victoria.

SECOND MARRIAGE

Betsy and Alexander had eleven children, all were born in the Western District at The Leigh or Warrambeen in Victoria.

Alexander devoted his lifetime to pastoral affairs in the Western District of Victoria. Alexander first managed Warrambine (also known as Warrambeen) for Major John Bell until Bell’s death in 1876. He was left £2000 from Bell’s estate. He then took up a lease on the property Warrambeen Station, near Shelford, Victoria.

Alexander was a councillor on the Leigh Shire Council. He was known as a generous and charitable and a leading member of the Leigh Presbyterian Church at Shelford.

Alexander died in 1876, leaving Betsy with nine children. He was buried at Golf Hill Cemetery, Shelford.

Alexander’s estate was worth more £200,000.

PASSING

Betsy died at her Toorak home Killearnan, Torresdale Road, Toorak and was buried in the Brighton General Cemetery.

Betsy Armstrong

George Sutherland | Jane Mckay

Betsy Armstrong

b. 6 April 1837 • Clyne, Sutherland Scotland
d. 5 December 1923 • Toorak, Victoria

FIRST SPOUSE

Thomas Thomson

b. 1861 • Clyne, Sutherland, Scotland
d. 29 Sep 1858 • Sutherland Creek, Warrambeen
m. 1854 • Scotland

SECOND SPOUSE

Alexander Armstrong

b. 1823 • Sutherland, Scotland
d. 12 January 1890 • Warrambeen
m. 1859 • Teesdale, Victoria

CHILDREN

Alexander Thomson

b. 1855 • Scotland
d. 1895 • Melbourne, Victoria, Aus

Mary Ann Armstrong

b. 1861 • The Leigh, Victoria
d. 1927 • Melbourne, Victoria, Aus

Jeannie Sutherland Armstrong

b. 1863 • Warrambeen, Victoria
d. 1937 • Balwyn, Victoria, Aus

William Armstrong

b. 1864 • Warrambeen, Victoria
d. 1865 • Warrambeen, Victoria, Aus

Willie Armstrong

b. 1866 • The Leigh, Victoria
d. 1922 • Braxholme, Victoria, Aus

George Armstrong

b. 1868 • The Leigh, Victoria
d. 1954 • Goulburn, NSW, Aus

Bessy Alexandra Armstrong

b. 1870 • The Leigh, Victoria
d. 5 June 1952 • St Kilda, Victoria, Aus

Margaretta Bell Armstrong

b. 1873 • The Leigh, Victoria
d. 1941 • South Melbourne, Victoria, Aus

John Bell Armstrong

b. 1874 • The Leigh, Victoria
d. 1944 • Wentworth, NSW, Aus

Sutherland Armstrong

b. 1876 • The Leigh, Victoria
d. 17 June 1925 • Malvern, Victoria, Aus

Christina Armstrong

b. 1878 • The Leigh, Victoria
d. 8 October 1964 • Melbourne, Victoria, Aus

Lillias Effie Armstrong

b. 1880 • The Leigh, Victoria
d. 7 April 1963 • Toorak, Victoria, Aus

Killearnan - 1894

Betsy’s husband, Alexander Armstrong, was a manager and land owner of properties in the Western District of Victoria. At the time of his death, 12 January 1890, he and Betsy were living at the property Alexander leased since 1876, Warrambine (also known as Warrambeen).

Betsy remained at Warrambine until the lease ran expired and in 1893 moved to Brighton where she purchased Whitmuir Hall. Betsy renamed the property to “Killearnan”.

Betsy bought two of her servants to work for her at Killernan, Mr and Mrs John McKerral. John looked after the grounds and the animals on the property.

Betsy increased the land holding from the original 13 acres by adding six acres to include a section of the creek just north of the area. In 1905 she purchased a market garden in Whitmuir Road, off Centre Road, owned by Mr Kelly’s for £60 an acre.¹

When Betsy took possession of Killearnan it consisted of the two-storey white house, private gardens and open paddocks, some of which were used as a private zoo, and a number of market gardens which she rented to the Chinese market gardeners. Also on the property was an apple orchard run by Bill Sisson.

The Chinese market gardeners paid rent of £3/10/- a week when they could pay, and nothing when they couldn’t.

At the time there was no Yawla road, the estate being bounded by Whitmuir Road, Thomas Road (now Thomas Street) and Huntley Road. In a paddock opposite in Whitmuir Road was a gravel pit from which the Moorabbin Council obtained its gravel for roadmaking.

Whilst living at the property Betsy approached the local Moorabbin Shire to improve the surrounding area of her property.

Betsey took a keen interest in her garden and entered her flowers in many of the Brighton Horticultural Shows, often winning a prize, as reported in the local newspapers.

Mrs Armstrong complained of drain in Thomas-road - Attended to. The writer also asked that Whitmuir-road be closed and gate placed in Wheatley road - referred to a special committee meeting to be held prior to next council meeting to consider what action should be taken re the new Unused Roads Bill.

Brighton Southern Cross, Sat 12 Mar 1904 Page 2

Whitmuir Road and Huntley road. - Both these roads are private roads. Mrs Armstrong asked for a crossing to be made from Centre Road to Whitmuir road and from Thomas road to Huntley road. This work would be on the Shire roads. It is necessary to put in pitching in water channel and gravel across footpath to boundary line of Centre and Thomas roads. Each of these crossings will cost 50s. Mrs Armstrong also asks for permission to put a pipe under footpath in Thomas Street. There is no objection to granting this request.

On the motion of Cr. Clements, seconded by Cr. Bent, it was agreed that the work be carried out at a cost not exceeding £6.

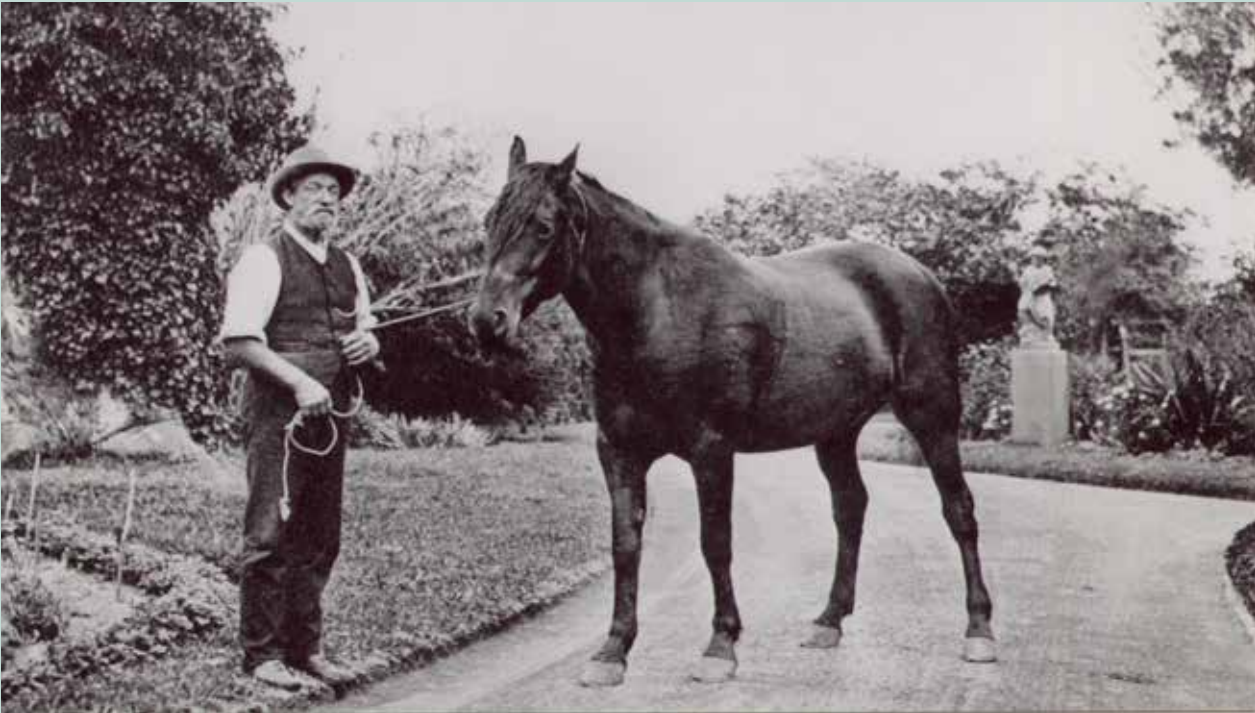
Brighton Southern Cross, Sat 20 Nov 1897 Page 2

Betsy’s dog, a dark sable Collie, strayed from her property. She placed an advertisement in the local Newspaper and offered a reward for the finder when returned to her at “Killearnan”.

STRAYED from “Killearnan,” North Brighton, Dark Sable COLLIE. Finder Rewarded. B. Armstrong, “Killearnan.” Brighton

Brighton Southern Cross, Sat 15 July 1905 Page 23

¹ Brighton Southern Cross, Sat 18 Nov 1905 Page 4



John McKerral was born in Scotland and as a wee baby, of 3 months, migrated to Australia with his parents in 1853 aboard the ‘Hurricane’. His parents settled in the Western District of Victoria.

ROKEWOOD, VICTORIA

John worked as a gardener for John Bell on his property Warrambine, in the Western District of Victoria. He continued working on the property when Mr Alexander Armstrong and his wife Betsy were the owners.

In 1890’s he moved his family to McKinnon to continue working for Betsy Armstong as a gardener on her property Killearnan in Whitmuir Road, McKinnon. John and his family lived on Whitmuir Road, McKinnon.

John McKerral

Daniel McKerral (1831 - 1922) Jane McIlrevie (1831 - 1892)

John McKerral b. 1853 • Campbeltown, Argyll, Scotland d. 1926 • McKinnon, Victoria

SPOUSE Margaret Train Hair b. 1854 • Warrambine Station, Victoria d. 1943 • McKinnon, Victoria m. 1876 • Warrambine Station, Victoria

CHILDREN Alexander McKerral b. 1878 • Scotland d. 1963 • Rokewood, Victoria Daniel McKerral b. 1880 • Rokewood, Victoria d. 1944 • Urana, New South Wales Thomas McKerral b. 1883 • Rokewood, Victoria d. 1958 • Elwood, Victoria Jeannie McKerral b. 1887 • Rokewood, Victoria d. 1935 • Ormond, Victoria John McKerral b. 1893 • Rokewood, Victoria d. 1956 • Caulfield, Victoria

Betsy took a keen interest in local matters, she often helped at the Chinese Mission in Ormond, at one stage she was treasurer and took donations for the building and running of Merton Hall, in Ormond. Betsy and her husband, Alexander had perpetual scholarship for boys from Scotch College entering University.

Late 1911 Betsy leased her house, “Killearnan”, North Brighton as she had purchased another property from L. K. S. Mackinnon², “Dunard” Torresdale Road, Toorak³, which she also named “Killernan”.

The Ormond Presbyterian Church felt much regret at Betsy leaving the district as she had been a great supporter of the church:

“Mr Beattie, in his report made special reference to the profound regret they all felt in the departure of Mrs Armstrong and family Killernan, from the district, mentioning at the same time their great indebtedness for the generous support the congregation had received since its inception. The test of an illuminated address, which the Board of Management proposed to present to Mrs Armstrong, was read and received the unanimous approbation of all present.”

Brighton Southern Cross, Sat 27 Apr 1912 Page 4

Killearnan was vacant for a few years and John McKerral remained as caretaker of the estate until it was sold.



2 Lachlan Kenneth Scobie McKinnon (1861-1935) born in Scotland on the Isle of Skye migrated to Melbourne in 1884 and from 1888 was a partner in Blake and Riggall Solicitors. He was a Company Director and in 1935 Chairman of Victoria Racing Club. The prestigious L.K.S. Mackinnon Stakes is named after him.
3 Table Talk, Thursday 24 Aug 1911 Page 30



Mrs Arthur Crozier and Mr Crozier
snapped in the paddock at Williamstown.
The Australasian Saturday 18 February 1928 - Page 28

Mr. Crozier was a great racing enthusiast, and many good horses were bred by him.

Arthur Crozier born in South Australia in 1856, was a son of the Hon. John Crozier, who was a member of the Legislative Council for many years, and a brother of Mr. John Crozier, the well-known blood stock studmaster, and one time owner of the famous St. Albans racing stud in Victoria.

Arthur married his cousin, Annie Margaret Crozier , the daughter of his father’s brother, Elliot Cozier.

For some years Mr. Arthur Crozier managed *Kulnine (VIC)* and *Morna Stations (NSW)*, on the Murray River, near Wentworth. for his brother William. On the death of Mr William Crozier he purchased *Kulnine Station*, and later acquired *Cuthero Station* from Mr. Ben Chaffey. Most of *Kulnine Station’s* 240,000 acres was resumed by the Victorian Government in 1919 when the lease expired.

Arthur kept ownership of *Cuthero Station* and after moving to *Whitmuir* his sons had managed the property.

Mr. Crozier was a great racing enthusiast, and many good horses were bred by him on his stations. A number of good hurdle racers and steeplechasers came from Mr. Crozier’s stud, one of the best known being Fatal Error, which won many races. On the occasion on which the Goodwood Handicap was run in Melbourne Mr. Crozier won with Lantern.

Mr. Crozier was on a business visit to Adelaide when he died on 13 September 1929 at the Sisters’ Hospital, North Adelaide.

Arthur Crozier

John Crozier (1814 - 1887)	Jessie Taylor (1818 - 1877)
Arthur Crozier b. 26 November 1856 • NSW d. 13 September 1929 • South Australia	

SPOUSE	
Elliott John Crozier (1827 - 1912)	Elizabeth Martyn (abt 1847 - 1894)
Annie Margaret Crozier b. 1867 • Swan Hill, Victoria d. 1938 • Fitzroy, Victoria m. 6 November 1889 • Victoria	

CHILDREN
Arthur Gordon Crozier b. 1891 • Wentworth, NSW d. 17 September 1949 • St George, Qld m. May Victoria Bowes 1923, Hay
Lindsay Keith Ross Crozier b. 1892 • Mildura, Victoria d. 1954 • Mildura, Victoria m. Regina Williams Vera Ballantyne 1920, Melbourne, Victoria
Keith Elliot Crozier b. 1894 • Mildura, Victoria d. 1960 • McKinnon, Victoria m. Miriam Fredricka 1939 • Victoria
Kenneth John Crozier b. 1894 • Mildura, Victoria d. 1970 • Mildura, Victoria m. Elsy Spears 1925 • Mildura, Victoria
Malcolm Vivian Crozier b. 1896 • Mildura, Victoria d. 30 June 1944 • Mildura, Victoria m. Estella Annie (Stella) Ballantyne January 1922 • Mildura, Victoria
Marjory Margaret Crozier b. 1903 • Mildura, Victoria d. 8 September 1981 • Murchison, Victoria m. Thomas Ronald Cameron (Trainer) 6 June 1928
Neil Kulnine Crozier b. 1907 • Mildura, Victoria d. 1942 • Wentworth, NSW
Jean Lorraine Crozier b. 1909 • Mildura, Victoria d. 1977 • McKinnon, Victoria

Killearnan - 1912

Arthur Crozier purchased the 32 acres from Betsy Armstong in 1912. He and his wife with their younger children made the house their family home and used the surrounding acreage to agist and train racing horses.

Arthur Crozier died in 1929 and left the property to his wife, Annie.

In 1929, the Anne Crozier sold six acres of the property surrounding Killearnan.

This land was purchased by land developers. Yawla Street was built and the land was subdivided into 70 residential blocks. The blocks were auctioned on 10 May 1930.

BENTLEIGH, Auction Sale, under instructions Executors in the estate of late Arthur Crozier, on December 11, 1929, at 2.30, in auction room of Orient Building, 352 Collins Street, Melbourne.

Approximately SIX ACRES of Splendid Land, SUITABLE SUBDIVISION, or Market Gardening purposes, together with W.B. Cottage and out-buildings, Frontages to Huntly and Whitmuir rds., BENTLEIGH, handy to station. Gas, water, electric light, and sewerage all available.

Send for Plan With All Particulars.

WILSON BROS., cor. Burke and Wattletree rds., E Malvern.

G. J. MacKay, Auctioneer.

BENTLEIGH, Auction Sale, Wednesday December 11, 1929 at 2.30, in auction room, Orient Line Building, 352 Collins Street, Melbourne under instructions of Mrs. A. Crozier, MAGNIFICENT SUB-DIVISIONAL PROPERTY, 12 acres, situated at BENTLEIGH, frontages to Thomas street, Huntly road, and Whitmuir road. WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY for SPECULATOR. Send for plan.

WILSON BROS., cor. Burke and Wattletree rds., E Malvern.

G. J. MacKay, Auctioneer.

The Argus, Friday 6 December 1929, Page 3

Home Builders’ Opportunity
BEAUTIFUL WONDERFULLY
LAND SITUATED

Killearnan Estate

BENTLEIGH

Auction Saturday, 10th May

at 3 O’Clock on the property in a seated marquee.

70 Beautiful Home Sites 70

Frontages to Thomas St., Yawla St., Huntley and Whitmuir Roads, and surrounding the beautiful Residence of “Killearnan, occupied by the family of the late Arthur Crozier, who was a familiar figure in sporting and pastoral circles.

**The Most Attractive
Land in the District**

Within easy walking distance of Bentleigh Rly. Stn., Shops, Schools, Churches, etc. Well situated on an elevated position with good drainage facilities.

Every Block a Desirable Home-Site

Gas, electric light, water and sewerage are all available.

**Don’t miss your opportunity.
Bentleigh is making Rapid Progress**

“Killearnan” Estate is already surrounded by attractive modern homes and beautiful residences and land in such a favoured locality is difficult to obtain. THE VENDORS are genuine SELLERS and very reasonable reserves have been arranged.

LIBERAL TERMS - £3 DEPOSIT,

£1 per month per lot, balance in Five Years, with interest at 6 per cent, per annum, Payable Quarterly Plans and full particulars may be obtained from the agents:

A. F. ALWAY & SON,

The Herald, Wed 30 Apr 1930 Page 15

Beautiful Land Wonderfully Situated! Home Builder's Opportunity!

MAGNIFICENT

KILLEARNAN ESTATE

THOMAS STREET **BENTLEIGH** will be submitted in Subdivision

By Public Auction

SATURDAY, 10th MAY, 1930

At 3 o'clock on the Land, in a Seated Marquee

70 BEAUTIFUL HOME SITES 70

Frontages to Thomas Street, Yawla Street, Huntley and Whitmuir Roads



KILLEARNAN RESIDENCE, on the Estate

Easy Terms: £3 DEPOSIT £1 Per Month Per Lot

Balance in 5 Years Interest 6 per cent. per annum, payable quarterly

AGENTS

A. F. ALWAY & SON
Opposite Station Malvern, U 1550
and Bentleigh, X 3530
Auctioneer: **G. J. MACKAY**, 54 Queen Street, Melbourne, Cent. 7391

WILSON BROS.
Cr. Burke and Wattletree Roads, East Malvern
Telephone U 2788
454 Collins Street, Melbourne Cent. 19118

Killearnan - 1929

Annie and two of her children, Jean and Keith, continued living at Killearnan. In 1936 Marjory and her husband, Thomas Roy who was a horse trainer, moved back to live at Killearnan.

TURF ITEMS

Autumn Plans - Tranquil Star is not to race again until the autumn Her trainer R. Cameron has given he a dose of physic and next week she will be sent for a fortnight's spell to Miss Crozier's property, Killearnan at Moorabbin.

Sporting Globe, Sat 29 Nov 1941 Page 2

The family continued their father's enthusiasm of horse racing. Jean, with her brother in law Thomas Cameron, had interest in a number of horses, some of which took a spell from racing, grazing on the grounds at Killearnan.

Annie died in 1938, Jean, Keith and his wife Marion who he married in 1930, Marjory and her family continued to live in Killearnan until 1949

On February 7, 1949, the Crozier property, Killearnan, was purchased for £8,100.0.0, and another parcel of land for a tennis court for £375.0.0 by a group of local residents and businessmen realising the need in the district for a Men's Club. "The Bentleigh Club" was born.

Keith Elliot and his wife continued living in the area, in McKinnon Road. Marjory and Jean, built houses for themselves in Crozier Court, McKinnon.

In 1974 Marjory sold her house in Crozier Court.¹

Fashion of the Fields

Mrs Ronald Cameron wore a black suit and hat, her sister, Miss Jean Crozier, being in a grey plainly tailored costume and black hat.

Table Talk, Thu 30 Nov 1933 Page 44

¹ The Australian Jewish News, Fri 22 Nov 1974 Page 29

Tricky Weather On Final Race Day

The tricky weather caused some odd effects in dressing at Flemington on Saturday when the final day of the Cup carnival was held. Women who were determined to give their large hats an airing hastily donned raincoats and fur capes when heavy rain and hail fell during the afternoon and cloak room attendants had a busy time parking fragile headgear.

Miss Jean Crozier wore a brown fur-trimmed coat over a floral frock and a small hat swathed with aqua and petunia veiling. She was thrilled that Tranquil Star's foal so closely resembles her famous mother, and said she had already paid a flying visit to the pair. For years Tranquil Star spelled at her home. Tranquil Star is evidently taking her maternal responsibilities very seriously. Miss Crozier said, for if the foal strays out of her sight for one moment she makes a terrible uproar. Among the possible names suggested for the filly is Tranquil Dawn.

Weekly Times Wed 12 Nov 1947



Annie Margaret Crozier at Kulnine Station.

MELBOURNE & METROPOLITAN BOARD OF WORKS.

DETAIL PLAN No 2847

Scale 40 Feet to 1 Inch

MUNICIPALITY OF MOORABBIN

RETIC. AREA No
DRAWING No

2843

2844

2846

3245

2164

No 2847

3246

3247

Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works - Detail Plan No. 2847 16 November 1927
This plan was drawn up before the property was subdivided.
courtesy Victorian State Library



The Bentleigh Club - 1949

The Bentleigh Club was born in a Catering Room at 368 Centre Road, Bentleigh on the 30th November 1948, after a series of discussions by a group of local residents and businessmen realising the need in the district for a Men's Club.

On February 7, 1949, the club purchased a property known as 'The Crozier' for £8,100.0.0, and another parcel of land for a tennis court for £375.0.0. The following is a brief summary of the way The Bentleigh Club has grown:

Foundation Committee - 1948

A. W. Archer	Real Estate Agent, 426 Centre Road, Bentleigh
C. S. Hall	
C. H. Middleton	
K. W. N. Flatman	Keith W. N. Flatman 464-6 Centre Road, Bentleigh (Hardware / White Goods Retailer????)
E. I. F. Halley	Ernest Ivan Frances Councilor of Moorabbin (1949-1955, Mayor 1951-1952)
W. H. Richardson	stood for election in Moorabbin Council unsuccessful - 1944
E. J. Gregory	
K. I. J Hodgson	
W. J. Riddell	

"Killearnan" underwent many changes over the years to accommodate the needs of club members of the Bentleigh Club.

In 2011, Melbourne Football Club secured the premises and used it as their gaming premises for a number of year.

In 2021 The Bentleigh Club was put on the market and it was sold to a property developer, Metro, for \$23.7 million.



Killearnan as it was in 1892. This and other photos on this page are from a collection given to the Club by Alex McKerral, the son of John McKerral, who was employed on the property at the time

Historic features preserved

The Bentleigh Club has taken pains to preserve as much of its historical background as possible. What statuary that has survived the ravages of time and the onslaughts of earlier vandals – for this is no modern social illness – has been restored and enhanced.

Beautiful stained-glass windows, imported over a century ago, from France and Italy, have been preserved in an enormous panel with special backlighting, for those who want to study a rare craft.

Much of the interior of the building has been preserved as it was in the gracious days of its early occupants.

First known as Whitmuir Hall, the building in its heyday, was the centre of an estate of 156 acres or thereabouts – the “thereabouts” no doubt being a concession to the practice of that time of actually measuring the boundaries with chains – a rather hit or miss method which has left a legacy of headaches for present day surveyors.

Part of the 5,120 acres of the Brighton Estate, known as Henry Dendy's Special Survey, the Whitmuir Hall estate was bounded by McKinnon and Centre Roads, and Thomas and Wheatley Roads.

Much of the history of the building's first 20 years of existence is obscure; some of its land was cultivated for wheat and hay growing; on its grasslands cattle grazed.

Gradually as the population of the district increased, more and more land was taken over for market gardens, dairy farms and orchards.

LOCAL INDUSTRIES

Other local industries included timber cutting and carting and carting to Melbourne. A good trade was done in charcoal, while bark was sold in Melbourne and exported to England for tanning purposes.

Bentleigh then known as East Brighton, was a particularly fertile area, rich in natural spring and well watered – in fact sometimes too will watered, for in wintertime much of it was swamp. Extending as far as St Kilda.

But with cultivation it became the centre of that area east of Point Nepean Road which was the first to provide Melbourne with its supplies of fruit and vegetables.

At one stage this ward was even referred to conde-

scendingly by other Brighton communities as the “cabbage garden.”

Many for the first market gardens were run by the Chinese of whom there were some 200 in Victoria in 1854, and these market gardeners contributed a great deal to the development of the district.

Quite a number of Chinese rented their market gardens on the Whitmuir Estate, even until the turn of the century.

Once heavily timbered, it was gradually cleared of the redgums, wattle, she oaks and tea trees which abounded. In 1850 the scrub was so dense that early settlers ploughed a furrow from Little Brighton, near the intersection of the present Point Nepean and Hawthorn roads, to guide worshippers to the church at East Brighton.

In the 1850's there were no kangaroos or emus, but possums and native cats were common, the latter a menace to poultry farmers.

Similarly at that time there were no aborigines in the area, although the Mordit tribe (from whence Mordialloc got its name) was frequently seen passing through the district on the way to collect Government supplies.

One of their favourite camping grounds was at two waterholes on the present site of Hulingham Park, another was the hill in North Road, which now overlooks the Brighton Cemetery.

Land prices moved with the prevailing conditions. Some of the land at East Brighton which Dendy had bought for £1 an acre in 1841 was sold at auction in 1847 for prices ranging from 5/- to 15/- an acre. Prices remained fairly constant until the land boom which began in the 1860's.

In this period, one of the most colourful in the district's history, settlement became denser, Victoria's population had been swol-

len by the influx of prospectors seeking their fortunes from the gold diggings and gradually the less successful spread out to seek employment in primary production and the growing industries.

For some 30 years the community enjoyed, as did most of Victoria, a general growth in production. Overseas capital was readily available to support development projects that had been stimulated by railway expansion. Investments boosted pastoral prosperity as well as merchant and baking enterprises.

There was also a fifteen year run of good seasons in the 1870's and 1880's – while neighbouring States of New South Wales and South Australia were subject to droughts.

This brought a two-fold benefit; it induced migration from both South Australia and Tasmania, and it tended to encourage British investors to concentrate on Victoria rather than other States.

Building societies were created and began building homes for the newcomers; many pastoral companies became engaged in speculative building.

The railways which fed the whole Brighton area played a big part in the district's development, with two lines serving the area. By 1887 the western line ran through North Brighton, Middle Brighton and Brighton Beach to Sandringham, and the other through East Brighton and South Brighton to Mordialloc.

Five Brighton's situated on two separate lines became so confusing that two were changed to. East Brighton became Bentleigh after Sir Thomas Bent and South Brighton became Moorabbin.

As well as providing essential transport for the district, the railways made a strong contribution to further settlement by what

Bentleigh Club Has With Early History

CLUBHOUSE WAS ONCE PIONEER HOMESTEAD

One of the few surviving physical links with the days when Moorabbin came of age is a two-storey early colonial style building situated in Yawala Road, Bentleigh, now (1962) the home of the Bentleigh Club.

Built sometime in the 1850's from handmade bricks of clay taken from the nearby Elster Creek, the history of the building reflects the changing times and fortunes of the district and the men who helped to write its history.

From its upper windows its early owners, one of whom was the late Sir Thomas Bent, surveyed the thick scrub and stately red gums, the rolling grasslands and swamps and, later the orchards and gardens which signified its development.

Today (1962), surrounded by streets with rows of neat suburban houses. Its smooth bowling greens and well-cut lawns are laid where once Kangaroos, peacocks and emus used to roam, for one of its earlier owners kept a private zoo on the grounds.

Yews, cypress and other evergreens which can do no harm to the bowling rinks have replaced the redgums, the last of which was removed only a handful of years ago still bearing the scar of an aboriginal canoe cut from its massive trunk.

Neat flower beds have taken the place of huge gardens and parkland. New additions have been made to the building, but much of the original still remains to remind the district of its former elegance.



This is the scene that greeted the owners of Killearnan from the front door, with one of the old red gums which abounded in the district in the centre foreground.



A Section of the beautiful gardens of Killearnan taken during the time of Mrs. Armstrong's occupancy. Unfortunately lost to progress, the pond and statues stood where what is now the centre of Yawla Road. Most of the statues were imported from Germany long before the turn of the century.

Strong Ties of Moorabbin

DISTRICT'S GRAND OLD MAN WAS AN EARLY OWNER

It was the boom years that Whitmuir Hall, by then known as Killearnan, came to the notice of Tommy Bent. In the 1850's Tommy Bent was a market gardener near McKinnon (the name has been variously spelt in historic documents as M'Kinnon, Mackinnon and McKinnon).

In 1861, through a vacancy in the Brighton Council caused by the local rate collector disappearing with a proportion of the municipal funds, young Tommy Bent applied for the job. Although still a young man in his early 20's, he was employed – and thus began the public life that was to lead to Premiership.

Shrew and hardheaded in business matters, Tommy Bent well knew, through his job, the current values of the local properties and in 1877, by then a Member of the Legislative Assembly of six years, standing, he bought Killearnan and its surrounding 156 acres.

History doesn't show that Bent ever lived at Killearnan – in fact he hardly had time. Less than one month after buying the property he sold it to Walter Robert Johnson, a banker, and two months later, on 13th September 1877 he bought it back again.

Whatever the reason for the curious action Tommy Bent's intention was clear – to subdivide the land in anticipation of a period of development that was bound to come when the railway line to Mordialloc was opened four years later.

So, on the 16th January 1878, Killearnan, together with “13 acres, 2 rods, 39 perches and 6/10ths of a perch” as the title reads, was sold to Robert Gray Ford, a civil servant.

Ford did not live there long. He died in 1891, and shortly afterwards the executors of the estate sold the property to the tenant, Mrs Betsy Armstrong, a widow who had recently sold her Western District sheep station to live in retirement at East Brighton.

From this point on the history of Killearnan is with living memory. Two of the servants bought by Mrs Arm-

strong to Killearnan were Mr and Mrs John McKerral, the parents of Alex McKerral, a former Superintendent of the Victorian Police Force, and a present member of the Bentleigh Club.

PRIVATE ZOO

Mrs Armstrong added to the original 13 acres another six acres to include a section of the creek just north of the area.

When the Armstrong family took possession of Killearnan it consisted of the two-storey white house, private gardens and open paddocks, some of which were used as a private zoo and a number of market gardens rented to the Chinese gardeners. Also on the property was an apple orchard run by Bill Sisson.

At the time there was no Yawla road, the estate being bounded by Whitmuir Road, Thomas Road (now Thomas Street) and Huntley Road. In a paddock opposite in Whitmuir Road was a gravel pit from which the Moorabbin Council obtained its gravel for roadmaking.

Alex McKerral well remembers the property during the Armstrong's residence; the market gardens rented to the Chinese market gardeners for £3/10/- a week when they could pay, and nothing when they couldn't; the kerosene street lamps along Centre Road which lamp-lighter Bill Gadson lit at night from his pony cart; the plentiful hares, rabbits, snip and quail which provided excellent sport.

Alex also remembers the two roughly built pubs at the corner of Jasper and Centre Roads, one of which was called the “Hit or Miss”, and the other, “Live and Let Live.”

Another recollection is the regular Sunday trips by the Armstrong's to the church in North Road in a phaeton and pair.

Little more than a stone's throw away was Point Nepean Road, for many years the only made road in the district, which was in such poor shape that steel rails were laid for the streams of market garden carts going to and from the city.

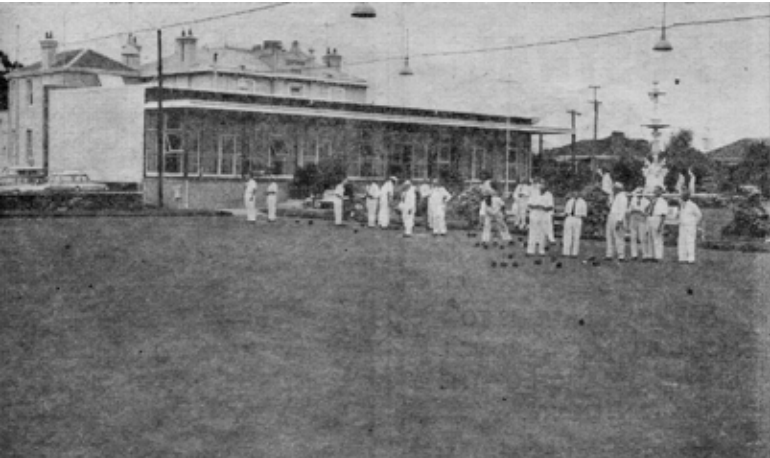
In this the local growers fared better than those further south, for there was a toll gate at the corner of Point-Nepean and South Roads. A charge of 6d. was made on all carts, but if a market gardener brought back a load of manure, he had his 6d. refunded.

After living for many years at Killearnan, Mrs Armstrong bought property at Toorak and went to live there, leaving the house vacant for seven years, with Mr McKerral's father as caretaker.

It was bought in 1925 by the Crosier family, of New South Wales, who occupied it for 22 years. Today (1962) in nearby Crozier court live the descendants of the family.

After a small portion of the land was sold in 1947, Killearnan, by now reduced to just under two acres in size, was then sold to the Bentleigh club in 1949 and its present history began.

Killearnan's spacious lawns



The Bentleigh club today, showing part of the bowling green and the new lounge built in front of the old homestead. This photograph was taken from almost the same position as the illustration at the head f the preceding page, showing the changes in the intervening 70 years.

Bentleigh Club born after informal meeting of friends

The Bentleigh Club was really born in a catering room in Centre Road, in 1949. A Number of local residents and businessmen, realising the need in the district for a club, met on evening to discuss its formation.

From this meeting the first committee was formed with Mr E. Gregory as president; Vice Presidents were Messrs C. Middleton and W. Riddell; treasurer was W. Richardson and hon. Secretary was C. G. Hall. The committee consisted of Messrs. E. Halley, K.G. Putt, K. Flatman, A. Archer, T Young, F Mosely, B. Bolt, K. Hodgson and R. Butler.

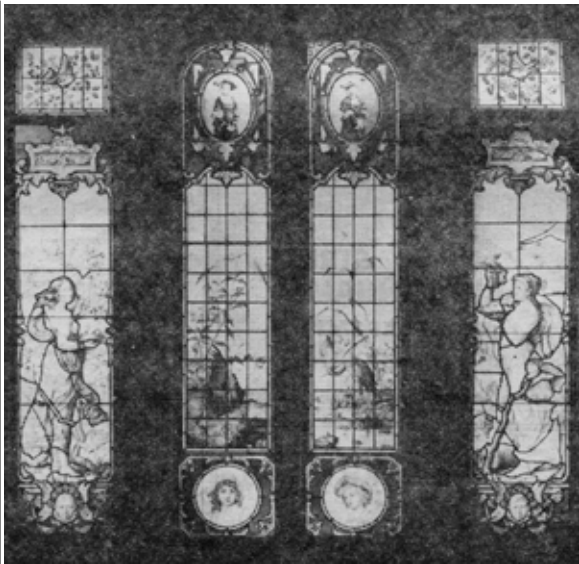
Today (1962) the Bentleigh Club's excellent social, community and sporting facilities are due in no small drive and enthusiasm of these founders.

Shortly after the club was formed it had little more than the old homestead and a membership of 200. Today (1962), only 13 years later, it has shown remarkable progress and development. Membership has grown to 650; a huge lounge and recreation area has been added to the original building and a tennis court and seven bowling rinks established.

The objectives of the Club are to “encourage social, community and sporting activities” and the sporting enthusiasts among the members are well catered for. In addition to the bowling rinks and tennis courts, the Club has three billiards table and the equipment and facilities for table tennis, indoor bowls, putting and quoits.

Games nights are held regularly, and inter-club matches frequently organised.

Social function Include dances, film screenings and card evenings and community activities include working for local charities and



a Christmas Dinner for the members of the Elderly Citizens' Club.

In addition, each year the Club organises a Christmas party for the children of members and up to 700 children, all of who are presented with a Christmas present, are entertained by members.

The business of the Club is conducted by a committee of 12, the present committee, under the presidency of Mr. John Stockdale, being: Senior Vice-president, Mr M. Tye; Junior Vice-president, Mr. W. Betts, and Acting Treasurer, Mr P. Chaundry, with 8 committee men.

The Club employs a full-time secretary-manager, Mr. John Ellis (the original secretary-manager, Mr Jack Nish, retired last March, 1962), a greenkeeper and four full time stewards, the Club having been granted a liquor licence in 1956.

Comfortable though it is, and with all the facilities for the benefit of its members, the Club is only in its first stage of development. Plans have already been

Some of the original stained glass windows which have been preserved by the Club (above). The two centre panels were made in France, and the two outside were actually ones in Italy. Legend claims that the female figures modeled on early occupants of Whitmuir Hall. - Below is a photograph of Bentleigh Club from the front lawn, showing some of the surviving statuary.

drawn up for alteration and additions which will enlarge the building by another 5000 square feet at an estimated cost, with furnishing and equipment, of £35,000.

These will include two squash courts, a new billiard room, two additional lounges and a fully equipped kitchen.

The additional lounges will provide scope for mixed social evenings and private parties. The plan is designed to cater for members' ladies and their friends as well as facilities for entertaining members' teenage children and their friends.

The new Kitchen which has already begun, will enable the club to provide meals and catering facilities for all social activities and dances, including lunches, dinners and suppers, on any

scale. Work on the new plan will be progressively tackled over the next couple of years and by the time it is completed the property will be valued at over £100,000.

In anticipation of the impending extensions to the building, and additional facilities, the Club is in a position to admit a limited number of new members immediately, and membership will then be increased progressively as the plans are fulfilled.

In its comparatively short existence, the Bentleigh Club has become an asset to the district and a source of pride to its members, through both its remarkable development and its early association with the municipal history of Moorabbin.

Executors' Realising Auction Sale

WEDNESDAY, 11th DECEMBER, 1929

at 2.30 o'clock in the Auction Room,

ORIENT LINE BUILDINGS,
352 COLLINS STREET, MELBOURNE

Under instructions from Elder's Trustee and Executor Company Limited, in Estate Arthur Crozier, Deceased

6 ACRES 11 PERCHES

VALUABLE LAND

together with Weatherboard Cottage and Out-buildings erected thereon

Situated at Corner of HUNTLEY and WHITMUIR ROADS

BENTLEIGH

Highly Suitable for Subdivisional or Market Gardening purposes

TERMS: 20% DEPOSIT Balance 30 Days

WILSON BROS. Real Estate, Insurance and
Financial Agents

Cr. Burke and Wattletree Roads, East Malvern Telephone U 2788

Cr. Lower Malvern and Waverley Roads, East Malvern U 6704

City Office: 454 Collins Street Cent. 10118

Auctioneer: G. J. MACKAY

Farrow Falcon Press, Ltd. Lonsdale St., Melbourne.

WEDNESDAY NEXT, DECEMBER 11.

At Half-past Two O'Clock. At Auction-rooms,
ORIENT LINE BUILDINGS, 352 COLLINS STREET, MELBOURNE.
Under Instructions from Mrs. A. CROZIER.
SALE BY AUCTION.

MAGNIFICENT SUBDIVISIONAL PROPERTY.

COMPRISING 11 ACRES, 3 RODS, 17-10ths PERCHES.

Situated at BENTLEIGH, and Surrounding the Fine Old RESIDENCE of KILLEARNAN.
Frontages to HUNTLEY ROAD, THOMAS STREET, and WHITMUIR ROAD.

This LAND is SPLENDIDLY SITUATED on an ELEVATED POSITION, and May be Readily Sub-
divided into SEVENTY DESIRABLE VILLA SITES.

It is Within Easy Walking Distance of Bentleigh Railway Station, Shops, Schools, &c.; Gas, Elec-
tric Light, Water and Sewerage Are Already on the Property, Which is Surrounded by Con-
futable Modern Homes. This District is Making Rapid Progress, and the Sale of Land in
This Favoured Locality Presents a Wonderful Opportunity to SPECULATORS and Others.

TERMS.—ONE-FIFTH DEPOSIT, One-fifth Two Years, Balance 5 Years, Int. 6 Per Cent. Per Annum.
Plans and Particulars Obtainable from

WILSON BROS.,

Property, Insurance and Financial Agents, corner Burke and Wattletree roads, East Malvern
(U2788); and at East Malvern (U6704). City Office, 454 Collins street, Melbourne (Cent. 10118).
(Auctioneer, G. J. MACKAY.)

WEDNESDAY NEXT, DECEMBER 11.

At Half-past Two O'Clock. At the Auction-rooms,
ORIENT LINE BUILDINGS, 352 COLLINS STREET, MELBOURNE.
Under Instructions from ELDERS TRUSTEE AND EXECUTOR COMPANY LIMITED, in Estate of
Late Arthur Crozier.

SALE BY AUCTION OF 6 ACRES 11 PERCHES

VALUABLE LAND SITUATED CORNER HUNTLEY AND WHITMUIR ROADS, BENTLEIGH.

Together With
WEATHERBOARD COTTAGE AND OUTBUILDINGS ERECTED THEREON

This Property is Within Easy Walking Distance of Bentleigh Railway Station, Shops, &c., and is
Highly Suitable for SUBDIVISIONAL PURPOSES, and the Erection of Good Class Villas. The
Soil is Rich Loam, Easily Worked, and Excellent for Market-gardening or Horticultural Purposes.
During the Last Few Years this District has made Rapid Progress, and Vacant Spaces are Fast
Filling Up. This Sale, Therefore, AFFORDS a Wonderful Opportunity for SPECULATORS
and Others to SECURE LAND in This Prosperous Locality.

TERMS.—20 Per Cent. Deposit, Balance Within Thirty Days.

Full Particulars from

WILSON BROS.,

Corner Burke and Wattletree Roads, East Malvern (U2788). Branch offices, corner Lower Malvern
and Waverley roads, East Malvern (U6704). City office, 454 Collins st., Melb. Cent. 10118.
(G. J. MACKAY, Auctioneer.)

Flyer advertising the sale of the Estate of Arthur Crozier.

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