

Boom Times, Lights and Local Heroes – 1950 to 1980

1950 TO 1980 – AN OVERVIEW

The boom times that had arrived post-World War II continued. Credit had become available and was commonly used for all types of purchases, not just the family home. People purchased more and post-war shortages became unheard of.



The Andreatta and Lodge families in Melbourne for Queen Elizabeth II's visit in 1954. Elizabeth was the first reigning monarch of Australia to actually set foot on Australian soil.

The 1956 Olympics were held in Melbourne, opened by Prince Philip representing Queen Elizabeth. These were the first games ever to be staged in the Southern Hemisphere.

A new generation, named the 'baby boomers', was born post war, which greatly increased the demand for children's goods and services, most of which their parents had never experienced. Sustained prosperity created new expectations of a life with more material possessions. Cities grew and became more accessible to many rural communities. Better roads, more wealth, greater exposure to global ideas via telephone, radio and television, and increased ownership of motor vehicles led to many of these communities becoming satellite suburbs. Community profiles changed – becoming less rural – with residents becoming less reliant on their neighbours for socialisation and support.

The 1950s brought Elvis Presley and rock 'n' roll, followed by the Beatles in the early 1960s. In 1948, Australian country music singer, Slim Dusty, had Australia's first international music chart hit with 'The pub with no beer'.

Australia's move away from Britain and increasing sense of an 'Australian' identity resulted in a flowering of interest in Australian history and culture. The National Trust was formed to protect Australian architecture and the arts – visual, dance, music, film and theatre – all experienced a surge of interest. Censorship rules were relaxed.

In 1965 the Labor Party's longstanding commitment to a 'White Australia' policy was removed from its party platform. An expanded multi-ethnic immigration program coincided with moves away from Britain and towards increased engagement with Asia and the United States. In the 1960s and '70s the refugee intake began to diversify with refugees from Chile, Uganda, Cyprus and East Timor arriving in Australia. Immigration began to lose political and social favour; the post-war catchery 'populate or perish' becoming redundant. Closer relationships with the United States led to Australian involvement in the Korean War in the early 1950s and the Vietnam War in the late 1960s; involvements that became increasingly socially and politically contentious.

The 1978 *Gallahly Report* formalised the use of the term 'multiculturalism'.

HOW THE DISTRICT AND ITS ROADS WERE NAMED

From early settlement in the 1830s, the area from Janefield to Mt Disappointment was referred to as 'The Plenty', after the Plenty River. The area from Whittlesea to Mt Disappointment was referred to as 'The Upper Plenty'. Over time, areas became more defined. Upper Plenty today is a very small district.

Early local roads were referred to as 'government roads', although referred to by locals by location, geography and resident landowners. From the 1950s, some attempt was made to name roads after the principal landholder, but the official decision was not always approved of by locals. According to some, Munts Road should have been named Duckworths Road after Tom and Mary Ann Duckworth. Although the Munt family were instrumental in having Upper Plenty connected to mains electricity, and James Munt had been Postmaster between 1951 and '54, they were still regarded by some of the older families as 'blow-ins'.

TURNING ON THE ELECTRICITY

One of the biggest events ever held in the hall occurred on 7 December 1962. This was the day electricity was switched on at Upper Plenty. Over 300 people attended the ceremony. Jim Munt, a local resident, was a driving force behind the connection. Neighbouring Wandong had already been connected in 1956.

The extension of electricity to the district is the culmination of the efforts of residents to secure this essential amenity for the past six years ... The new extension will serve 24 residents in the area – 100 per cent of those living in the area ... Something very far removed from the early settlers who made their candles from fat in moulds of 12 at a time.

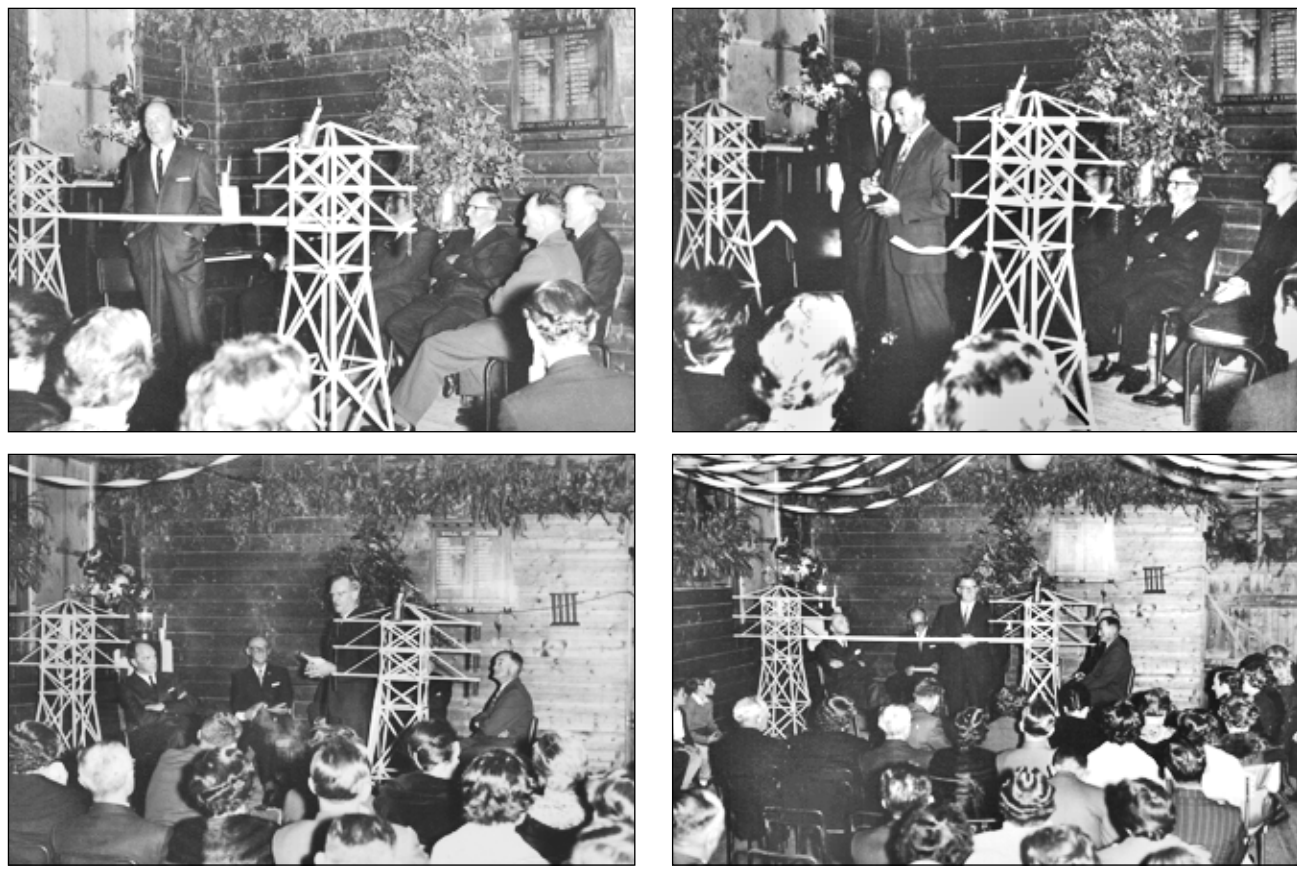
Kilmore Advertiser, 6 December 1962.

I remember ...

"We all had to pay 40 pounds towards getting the power put on. People who didn't have the money could borrow from the insurance [T&G Insurance] at 5.75%."

Dulcie Mugavin, 2004

Before the arrival of electricity the hall was lit by two large kerosene lamps. Postmaster Tom Duckworth took charge of lighting them until his death in 1944. Ken Bramage (Lockerbie Park) and Jim Munt also performed this duty when required.



TOP RIGHT: Mr. Jack Mahady cutting the ribbon. Mr. Archibold, Manager of the State Electricity Commission is standing to his right. The two men to his left are Mr. Jim Munt and Mr. Menzies, both of Upper Plenty. Not so visible is the visiting possum on the unlined wall, which apparently ventured down to nibble on the gum leaves decorating the walls. It then retired to the top rafter and went to sleep.

I remember ...

"I'd been staying with my sister in Reservoir and it was great having electric light, vacuum cleaner and all that. Then I was in hospital having the twins [Ross & Neil] and I thought, 'I don't want to go back there to those candles and flat irons ... And then Laurie came in and said, 'I've got great news! Mr Munt's arranged for the power to go on!'"

Dulcie Mugavin, 2004

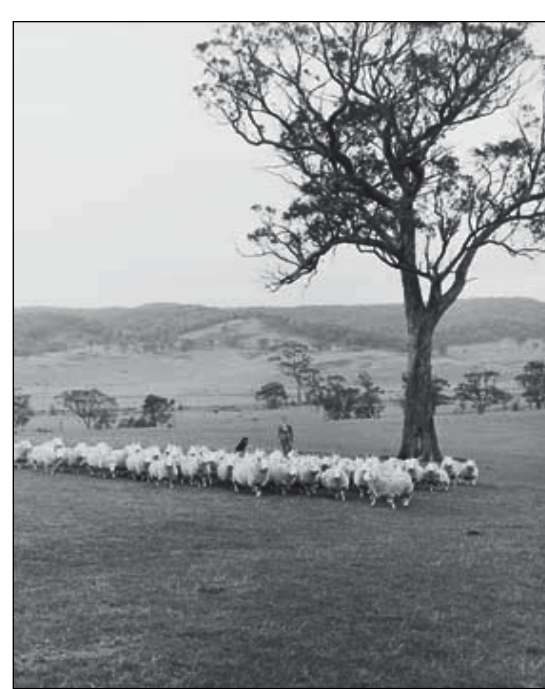
HE'S NO. 1 DINGO HUNTER

Jim Nicholas, **right**, was the Victorian Lands Department's top dingo and wild dog hunter. In 1962 he trapped two out of the three wild dogs that were responsible for numerous stock losses at the Spion Kop sheep stud, which was located at Lockerbie Park – now the Peachey property (Uncle Nev's Trail Rides). He described these two dogs as, 'A pure-bred dingo and a giant staghound-dingo cross'.

Over a period of three years, 'Dingo Jim' trapped 479 wild dogs and dingoes. (Source: *The Weekly Times*, 1962.)



ABOVE: Lockerbie Park: training a ewe to lead a flock. RIGHT: Lockerbie Park – Spion Kop Cheviot sheep stud.



Interestingly, dogs and foxes have continued to be a plague over the intervening years. In 2011 the Victorian Coalition Government started a fox and wild dog bounty scheme.



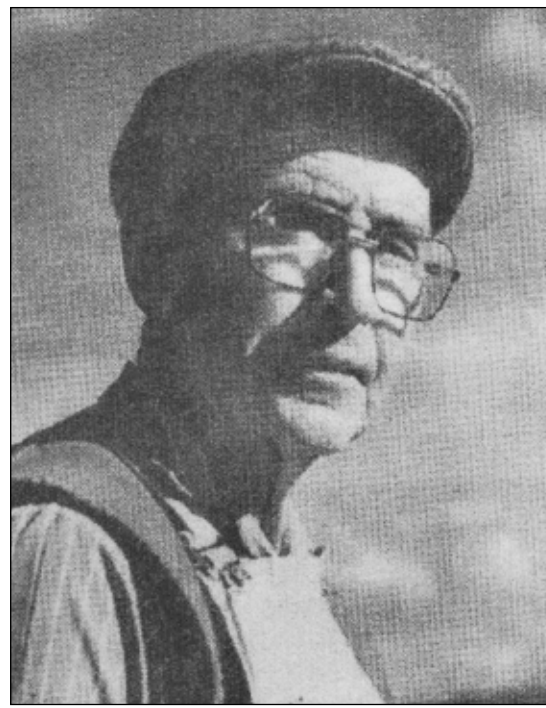
Broadford is one of the state's top ten fox-hunting sites in 2014. \$10 is paid for a fox and \$50 for a wild dog under the bounty scheme.

Whittlesea Post, 1 May 1996.

THE UPPER PLENTY PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

This group was formed by concerned residents who lobbied the council for improvements and repairs to local infrastructure. It appears to have started around 1968. Members included Jim Chapman, Mr McMenomy, John Barber, Laurie Mugavin, plus the McCarthy, Simmonds, Osmond, Walsh, Lawrence and Mahady families. The minutes

of 14 September 1973, recorded 'lack of interest' and, 'a motion [was] moved that the Association go into recess'. It was formally wound up in 1981. A letter from Jim Chapman to Dulcie Mugavin said he had, 'no objections to transferring funds from the Progress Association to the Fire Brigade'. The bank balance from 23 February 1981, shows a balance of \$43.81.



Laurie Mugavin, member of the Upper Plenty Progress Association.

Referring to your letter of 31st August 1971, to our Signal and Telegraph Engineer, we have investigated your complaint of undue delays in raising the boom barriers at the Wallan East level crossing, but our staff maintain the delays are kept to a minimum ...

Letter from W Walker, Secretary for Railways, Victorian Railways, to the Wallan East and Upper Plenty Progress Association, 6 October 1971.

In 1969 the Progress Association approached Kilmore Shire regarding the bad state of the bridge on Mr Mugavin's access bridge.

Cr Parsons warned that if something was not done soon the bridge would either fall down or have to be pulled down. Then it would cost more to provide access ... **Footnote:** The bridge collapsed on Saturday night last.

Kilmore Free Press, 20 February 1969.

I wish to advise that Council has decided to adopt your Association's recommendation that 'Bruce Creek Road' be renamed 'Mahady's Road' [and so avoiding confusion with Bruce Creek Road, Glenvale/Whittlesea].

Letter from Shire of Kilmore to the Progress Association, 11 November 1969.

THE CLOSURE OF THE UPPER PLENTY POST OFFICE

The Upper Plenty Post Office closed on 30 March 1974. The Wallan East and Upper Plenty Progress Association lobbied for it to remain open from as early as 1968, both to the Postmaster-General's Department and also to the local population, encouraging increased patronage.

In view of the relatively high local population in the Upper Plenty area, it is rather surprising how little is the volume of business being transacted at the post office ... it could be assumed that some local people are ... perhaps transacting their business elsewhere.

Letter from Postmaster General's Department to the Progress Association, 15 July 1968.



Upper Plenty Post Office, 1901. Identified in 1968. Although not clear, locals believe this photograph to have been taken much later. Courtesy: National Library of Australia.

I remember ...

"Nancy Lawrence ran the post office, which was a wonderful community hub. We would meet picking up the mail and we would park our bikes there during school time. We caught the bus to Broadford [High School] outside the post office."

Carol Peachey, 2014

I remember ...

"The school, hall and post office were the key ingredients to bring the community together."

Dulcie Mugavin, 2014

THE LOCALS

The Stokes family

Frank Stokes, **right**, purchased land in Upper Plenty in 1969. The family moved from Eltham in 1971, finding the land more affordable at eighty pounds per acre. Frank's two sons, David and Howard, aged 25 and 20 at the time, helped him set up an orchard, which is thriving today.

The Upper Plenty Conference Centre was built by Howard and Wendy Stokes. A project that started around 1980, it emanated from the idea that it would be good to have some accommodation available to people who would like to stay on the property. Today, that idea has grown into 123 beds spread over several buildings, with meeting spaces available to groups wanting to hold residential workshops. The buildings have all been built by the family and most are constructed using mudbricks and hand-adzed timbers from the property. In 2014 the family are engaged in constructing a mudbrick chapel. The Conference Centre has grown into a family business with three generations living and working on the property.



Excavations prior to building the Conference Centre, 1972.



The Upper Plenty Conference Centre, 2014.

Howard was also the driving force behind the construction of the mudbrick art room at the Upper Plenty Primary School in the 1980s.



David Stokes, 2008.

David and Jenice Stokes developed the orchard and, eventually, their retail outlet, Stoke's Orchard, on the Wallan-Whittlesea Road. David tragically lost his life as a result of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires. Much of the orchard was also lost to fire. His son, Anthony, has been instrumental in rebuilding the orchard and reopening the shop – a mammoth undertaking.

There is a plaque dedicated to David Stokes on the Black Saturday memorial in the Upper Plenty hall grounds.

Anthony and his wife, Leanne, brother, Matthew, and his wife, Fiona, are building homes on family land to the west of the shop. Their children attend the Upper Plenty Primary School, the second generation to do so.



Opening day of Stoke's Orchard shop, 2006. Anthony and Leanne standing in front.

The Mugavin family

Laurie and Dulcie Mugavin moved to Upper Plenty after marrying in 1954, calling their new property 'Willow Bend'. Initially, cows were milked at the property. Milk was separated in the old dairy with the cream being put into cans ready for the roadside pickup. Over time the family moved into beef production. As well as farming, Laurie operated a livestock-carrying business and for many locals he was the go-to person when livestock needed to be bought or sold.

Both Dulcie and Laurie were very involved in Upper Plenty community life. Laurie served on the Upper Plenty school and hall committees and was an active member of the CFA. The Upper Plenty fire truck was stationed at Willow Bend for many years.

For Laurie and Dulcie's children, Glenda, Neil and Ross, growing up on a farm revolved around helping with daily chores after school and on weekends. The rewards were having all kinds of animals to take



Mugavin family. Left to right: Ross, Dulcie, Glenda, Laurie and Neil. 1994.

care of and learning to drive different vehicles and farm machinery at a very early age. Farming life provided all kinds of experiences for the children as well as the opportunity to develop many different skills.

Laurie died in 2003. Dulcie still lives on the family farm.



The Mugavin family. Left to right: Laurie, Dulcie, Glenda (Patton) with daughter Lisa in front, Ross, Karen and Neil. 1994.



Laurie and Dulcie's 40th wedding anniversary, 1994.

I remember ...

"I fondly remember the friendly neighbour spirit of Mrs Mahady [Winnie] when I first came to Upper Plenty. She said, 'If you ever need me in case of an emergency, just pour oil on the wood stove – I'll see the black smoke and come running!'"

Dulcie Mugavin, 2014

Nancy and Tom Lawrence

Nancy (née Osmond) and Tom Lawrence married in 1942 and for a number of years resided close to Nancy's parents on Mahady's Road. They had one daughter, Joan, who still lives in the district.

In 1952, Tom had a motorbike accident that left him unable to work. He became a familiar sight to all in the district on his marathon-length walks, often through the forest to Kilmore. He was always accompanied by his dog; the last one being a black-and-white collie that outlived him. Sometimes Tom would lose track of time and Nancy would frantically ring around the area asking if anyone had seen him. Occasionally, the [local] men had to search in the dark for him. He was often picked up by the police and taken back to the station for a cup of tea before being taken home to Nancy.

Tom must have earned the undying gratitude of many a driver for his dedicated efforts to keep the potholes on the unmade roads filled. He lost many a shovel whilst doing so ... As told to Rose King by Mavis Patton, 2004.

Nancy was Postmistress at Upper Plenty for twenty years from 1954 until 1974, when the post office closed. She continued to live in the old post office building until 2002, when she moved to Wallan East to live with her daughter.

I remember ...

"Tom (Lawrence) and his mates used to ride their bikes up here from Reservoir. They hunted rabbits and left the skins and the rest in the school's incinerator. Mr Brownhill always wondered why it smelt so bad when it was lit."

Nancy Lawrence, 2004

The Peachey family

The Peachey family moved to Upper Plenty in 1963. Neville Peachey was born in Westbreen/Pascoe Vale (known then as Box Forest) and was the first son of a farmer, horse-breaker, drover and ranger for the Broadmeadows Shire. Stray stock were herded as far as Upper Plenty into a pound paddock across the road from where the hall now stands.

From the age of 10, Nev drove sheep and cattle with his father from the Melbourne markets to and from Kilmore, picking up and dropping off stock along the way. His friend from boyhood and fellow horseman, Jim Ainsworth, rented farmland from Jim and Olive Munt and told Nev of the property for sale in Upper Plenty.

Nev and his wife, Lorna, and their two children, Glenn and Carol, brought sheep from their Swan Hill property to stock the 360 acres (later expanded to 500 acres) purchased from the Saunders family. Wet winters and feral dogs forced a decision to move away from sheep and into dairying. A change in the milk quotas made dairy farming financially unsustainable, forcing yet another change into beef cattle. Both Lorna and Nev were active participants in community activities.

Nev had always loved horses and started buying and selling to supplement his income. After buying fifty at an auction in the mid-'70s, he encouraged family and friends to come to 'Uncle Nev's' and help get them ready for sale. Thus, the riding school gradually evolved. The riding school today is run by Glenn and Carol.

Lorna died in 2002 and Nev in 2008. They are buried together in the Northern Cemetery, Fawkner, very appropriately located on one of his family's old sheep paddocks.



Lorna and Nev Peachey, October 1986.

I remember ...

... in the 1960s ...

"Upper Plenty was a very small community when we moved here and we were warmly welcomed ... When we arrived the hall had props holding it up."

Carol Peachey, 2014

"Dad loved his dancing and relished the chance to MC the dances at the hall."

Carol Peachey, 2014

School with its own Cork tree



A Kilmore Free Press newspaper article that read: 'Upper Plenty school is one of the few that can boast a cork tree in the garden. In our picture, Laurie Patton, Steven Pollock and Vicki Yeaman study it for a nature study project.' The cork tree is believed to have been planted over 100 years ago.



A music event at the hall, circa 1970.

"... Mr Mooney, the Wallan baker, delivering his bread to the residents of Upper Plenty. If you didn't eat it after delivery you could build a house out of it the next day."

Neil Mugavin, 2014

"Old Jim Munt must have been a bit of a doredevil. He used to repair windmills and would get up the top of them in howling winds, nearly being blown off but just managing to grab on to something in time ... I remember when he was up a really high ladder inside his house when the ladder slipped. He grabbed something and had to hang there until we could put the ladder back under him."

Glenn Peachey, 2014

... in the 1960s ...

"I was going for my driving test on my 18th birthday. I'd been driving since I was a kid ... Olive Munt gave me a couple of practices in her Falcon and was taking me for the test. On the day, she arrived in a brand new Cortina and she said, 'Come on, we'll go around the back roads and get you used to it.' We got to a bit of a hill and Mrs Munt said, 'We'll try a standing start.' I was really excited about going for my licence ... when I tried to put the car into first gear the whole gear stick came off in my hand! We had to cancel the appointment and wait two more weeks. That was the longest two weeks of my life ..."

Glenn Peachey, 2014



Mavis Patton placing a wreath at the unveiling of the WWII Honour Board in 2011 at the Upper Plenty Community Day.



The wedding of Marilyn Patton and Wilhelm (Bill) De Koning, 1979. Reception held in the hall.