
Westlake Newsletter 2004

This will probably be the last newsletter that I will write. The years are catching up with us – and that includes me. I am thinking of moving to the coast and there I will run into quite a few of the Westlake mob. It seems to me that most of my news is now about those of our community who have died. When young anyone over the age of 20 was considered elderly. Now that I really am elderly I don't feel any different to when I was 18 – just the outside has changed.

Each year there are more to add to the list of those who have died since the last newsletter. I do not have the names of all – only those that people let me know about.

In December last year I received a letter from Charles Law's wife to tell me that Charlie died in September 2003. His ashes were spread on Lake Burley Griffin.

The next to shake off the mortal coil that I am aware of is Eric Menzies who for the past eight years after his wife Olive's death, lived in the Salvation Army Home, Mountain View in Deakin. He died peacefully on 14th January 2004. If he had lived to 26th April he would have turned 98 years of age. Not a bad innings for a man who worked hard all his life and like many, served in the armed forces in World War 2.

Eric is one man that I well recall. The Menzies family lived for most of their Westlake years next door to our place in 28 Westlake. Eric was a keen gardener and I well recall his grape vine that formed part of a covered pathway in the backyard. I took a cutting following the departure of my family from Westlake and these grapes still grow in my daughter's yard at Hughes.

Eric is survived by children Neville, Sylvia, Ray, Les, Delia, Joyce and Fay. John, a twin, died at birth and another son, Jimmy has also passed over.

At 6.30 am on the first June 2004 Doris Smith died. She had been in ill health for a few years. Doris and I had a number of long conversations during the last few years and she was a wealth of information about the early years in Canberra. Her maiden name was Blewitt and during the years of living at

Westlake had many family members nearby including her parents and in-laws. She and her husband Tom – and the kids – moved to Tyson Street in Ainslie where she lived until her death.

Colin, eldest son of Doris and Tom, recently told me that *Sparrow* Hawke also died this year.

Alison Neiberding was born in the FCT on 31st August 1924 – a short time before her parents moved into an Acton workmen's cottage. Her mother was Alison nee Kinlyside and Nairn Stuart. Alison's mother was born at Briar Farm. A couple of years ago Alison was diagnosed with cancer. She fought it well and for a couple of years was in remission. On 3rd September 2004 at St John James Memorial Hospital she died in her sleep.

Alison Neiberding is survived by her son Alan and daughters Rhonda and Linda and grandchildren Stuart and Scott Butt and Chelsea.

Her husband, Ron Neiberding, died a few years back. Alison is buried in Woden Cemetery next to her husband. One sister, Grace, and a brother, Tom Stuart, also survive her.

I met Alison a few years back and will remember her friendship and generosity that included the sharing of her many photographs and knowledge.

Carmel (Maxwell) Koenig now lives at the coast and now and again we get on the phone to have a long chat – During our November catch up she mentioned that Jenny Hancock (a Robinson of 57 Westlake descendent) has also suffered bereavement. Her husband died in mid November.

Hazel (Haines) Kennedy, Roma (Brien) Banks and friend *Gunty* are working on replacing the photographs at Westlake. They have dug deep into their own pockets to buy the Perspex needed to cover them and *Gunty* has been given the job of repainting the Westlake sign.

We had a meeting recently at George Sykes' place to chat about the work that needed to be done and I must admit that we all spent longer there than intended because it is a peaceful

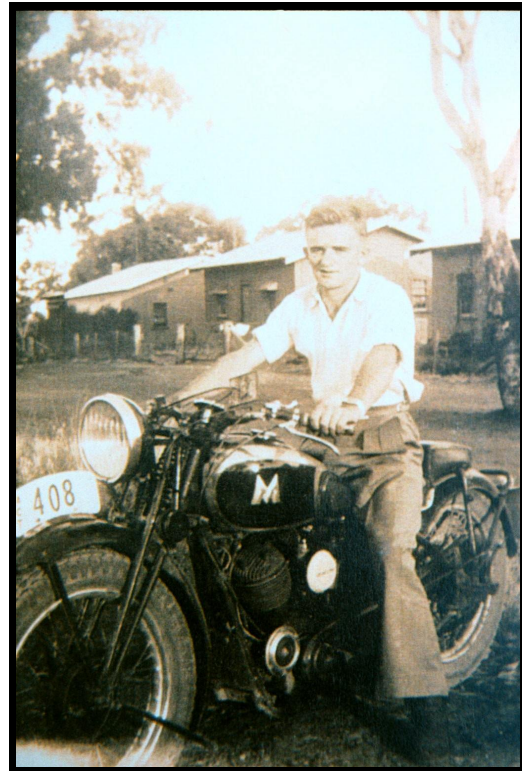
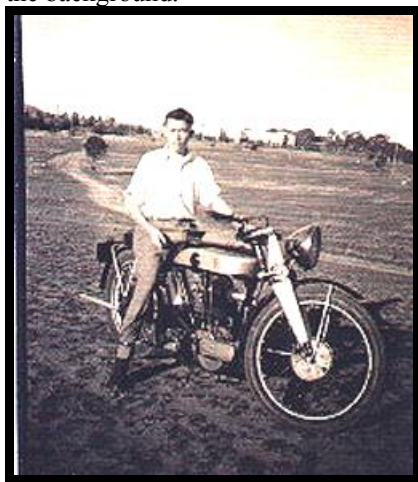
spot. At this meeting I told them about the proposed development of the Eastern end of Stirling Park by the NCA for diplomatic residences. This area on the NCA and ACT maps is Block 1, Section 128 Yarralumla – not Stirling Park. The UBDs and other general maps do not show Section 128.

It is one of those long stories that began for me when I took the hounds for a walk on the site on the 12th September this year. I had been away on the Canning Stock Route in WA for a month. Much to my surprise the majority of fully grown trees had orange dots on them. I then started the phoning to find out what was happening. One week later I had spoken to people in the ACT Environment, Heritage, Planning sections and the NCA and no-one could give me an answer.

The long and the short of it is that the NCA plans to develop this block of land for diplomatic buildings. As part of the requirements they need to have a Heritage evaluation and report of the site. There are rock arrangements on this block that stretch back from Alexandrina Drive for around 200 meters and they range in size from 6 metres by 2 to smaller circles and undulating lines.

It was interesting to me that the chap who did the Heritage report insisted that the arrangements were garden beds put there by people who lived in the houses on that site. He couldn't be persuaded that there were no houses there and that the land hadn't been ploughed in 1952 – that's another long story!

The next two photographs belong to Bill Convine. One is of him on the flat and the other is of one of the Bellchambers' boys on the Convine motor bike. I think it is 46-44 in the background.



Below is Max or Mervyn Haines outside the hall. In the background is Bells – 39.





I think Jimmy Johnston took this photograph. He came with us the day we rode our bikes out to the Cotter. He got a puncture and would pump up the tyre – ride flat out until it went flat and continue with the procedure until he got home. Carmel Maxwell on the left, Poulter, Jimmy Byrnes, Poulter and in front – me (Ann Austin) and Raymond or Jimmy Menzies – the memory is falling apart too. Below is the old Manuka Picture Theatre in the 1930s. There were a lot of jaffas rolled down the wooden floor at the Saturday arvo pictures.



Earlier this year the people of Acton workmen's cottages and nearby met to unveil their plaque near the sites of their old homes. If you are in the area take the time to go down and have a look at the stone memorial. It is near the jetty at Acton. This project began as a dream of Amy West (nee Dunshea) and unfortunately she did not live to see the project completed but I'm sure she would be very proud of the results.

I take this opportunity to wish you all well for the future and to thank you for your memories, memorabilia, photographs etc. Without you the history of Westlake would have been forgotten. We have told our stories. 2004 marked the 60th anniversary of the founding of Westlake settlement in *The Gap*. Howies' settlement was established on the hillside opposite Lotus Bay two years earlier.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS 2004 & A HAPPY NEW YEAR 2005.

ANN GUGLER (NEE AUSTIN)



National Library of Australia

nla.pic-an22840352-v

The above photograph is available on-line in the National Library of Australia Collection. Note the Westlake Bus Shelter. Capital Hill Hostel on right and Hillside on the left. Below is a photograph loaned to me by Brenda (nee Stephenson) – an old school friend. Her father was one of the firemen at the fire station near Manuka.



