

Sadly we have lost some of our older members recently, though not from the corona virus. Though these hardworking people may not have been current members, each contributed a lot to WHS in the past and are part of the reason the Society stands in such good stead today. Our sympathies go to the families and friends as they mourn these loved ones.

**Ronnie JOHNSTON**

Ronald Alexander Johnston (21.11.1937 – 7.3.2020) was the son of the man after whom Alec Johnston Hall (formerly Wheelers Hill Presbyterian Church, erected 1889) was named. The Johnston family were hardworking founders of this church, which still operates on Ferntree Gully Road as the Uniting Church. They had a market garden nearby and put a lot of time, effort and funds into the church.

Ron was one of seven children and attended Glen Waverley State School (now Black Flat Community Centre). He was active in scouting and was keen on cricket and dancing, attending all the dances in the old Mechanics Institute in Glen Waverley, and more recently in Yarra Glen. Every year on Boxing Day the church would organise a trip to the beach for the families, who travelled on the back of a truck, as often occurred in those days. He married Pat, the love of his life, in that church, to whom we extend sympathy. Many people have happy memories of the Johnston family and their contributions to the growing community of Glen Waverley.

**Beryl BROOKS**

Beryl Isobel Brooks (nee McCallum, 30.10.1930 – 18.2.2020) hated school so left the day she turned 14. She worked in retail until she met her husband Ron. They had three children, Sandra, Glenys and Lawrie, and eventually, four grandchildren. Ron built their home in Lee Avenue, where they lived for 60 years. Opposite lived their good friends the Hutchinsons, who are also members and regular attendees of WHS. Readers will remember their cheerful faces as they served cups of tea after our meetings for many years. Appropriately to Beryl's name, she was instrumental in getting free passes for WHS members to the annual gem show in Brandon Park, and our Society has enjoyed a happy relationship with the Waverley Gem Club for many years.

**Max O'DONNELL**

John Maxwell O'Donnell (4.7.1926 – 16.9.2019) was 9 when the family, led by parents Paddy and Elsie, brought all their worldly goods (just two dray loads!) from Oakleigh to their new 16-acre farm in Waverley Road, Mt Waverley. He remembers sitting high on the load on a securely tied chair and surveying the old apple orchard and bushland, looking forward to a country boy's life – rabbiting, playing cricket, walking to Mt Waverley school, swapping produce with neighbours, picking mushrooms for sale, helping drive 2000 starving sheep onto the unused Glen Alvie estate for agistment, and feeding their orphaned lambs. The apple trees were too old to produce much so most were removed to establish a dairy farm, run by mother and sons while Dad cycled to Oakleigh abattoirs to work. Careful scrutiny of the stone retaining wall on Waverley Rd will reveal the name O'Donnell, still painted in white letters where their front entrance used to be.

Max married his beloved wife Nell (Ellen Hazel Whelan) in 1948. He bought the old family home on a double block when the land was subdivided. There he and Nell raised nine natural children plus two fostered children and worked hard to give them all the best start in life he could. Nell was a tireless worker in the community – meals on wheels, crossing supervisor, Lions Op Shop volunteer, and more. They have 22 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren. Nell, Max, brother Frank and other members of the family were regular attendees at WHS events in years gone by.

**Reg NORRIS**

Reginald William Norris was the son of market gardeners Dick and Rose Norris and brother of Alan, Dawn, Norma and Valerie, two of whom survive him. The Norris families had a market garden in Watsons Road and another near the Police Academy. After Reg married he lived for a time in the old Cheshire Cheese Hotel building, by then no longer a public house. Sadly, he lost a daughter to cancer. He later moved to Dingley and then Lang Lang, where horses took up his time and efforts.

*MarJo Angelico, with thanks to Marie Cooper for some of these details.*



**Established 1970**

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**Contents**

The House .....	1
WHS News items .....	2
ANZAC Day 2020 .....	2
90 years of the Glen Waverley Railway line .....	3-7
Vale .....	8
Ronnie Johnston	
Beryl Brooks	
Max O'Donnell	
Reg Norris	

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**HISTORY HERE 231**

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K. Flynn Nov 2019

**THE HOUSE**

This was the home of Tom Oliver, the popular boot repairer to Glen Waverley through the Depression and war years, opposite the Mechanics Institute and old St Leonards. He was very active in the community – life member of the football club, secretary of the cricket club, Sunday school teacher in the Methodist church, fundraiser for the Red Cross, and more. For the convenience of customers he allowed them to bring in boots for repair when they came into Glen Waverley for church and pick them up the following week. He and his wife had just two sons, but one, Robert, died tragically when he sustained serious head injuries after his bike skidded on Ferntree Gully Road. When their land was subdivided, they asked that the resulting street be named after him. That is why it is called Roberts Street.

Unless otherwise stated,  
General Meetings are held  
at 2pm on the fourth  
Wednesday or Sunday in  
our rooms above Mt Waverley  
Library (Lift Available) 41  
Miller Cres., Mt Waverley.  
For excursions and outings  
please carefully note time  
and location details.

**Coming Events**

**The WHS is in hibernation until the lifting of restrictions on crowd events.**

Our **August birthday** marks 50 years since the founding of the WHS by a group of Waverley pioneers. We are anticipating that restrictions will be lifted sufficiently to allow us to celebrate this event in our rooms.



Dear Members of Waverley Historical Society,

We trust this newsletter finds you well, though of course we are all very much homebodies nowadays! We are living in a history-making time! Though there have been several pandemics in the past couple of decades, this is the first time the country has shut down in response.

Under the present government restrictions, WHS cannot organise meetings, but fortunately our work can continue remotely. Current projects include data entry of our family files, photographs and maps; working on our next publication "Then and Now 2", compiling newsletters, posting mail book orders and answering research enquiries. Also, in order to save time and effort (not because of the virus), a new subcommittee is looking at how we can have a closer affiliation with History Monash Inc. This may include any of: publishing one joint newsletter instead of two, combining websites, and running a shared program. There are many issues to consider and it will take some time. If you have any thoughts, you are most welcome to send them by post or email to MarJo and Kerrie, our delegates on the subcommittee.

This is a great time to complete projects long forgotten in the usual busy round of activities. If you, like many of us, have meant to write about aspects of living in Waverley but never found time, our newsletter editor would love to see the fruits of your free time soon!

Meanwhile we hope all members are safe and well, and redeeming the time as best as possible.

### Association of Eastern Historical Societies

Norma Schultz and Kerrie Flynn represent Waverley Historical Society at the Association of Eastern Historical Societies approximately 4 times during the year. Currently meetings have been postponed during the Corona virus pandemic. However if you want to see the other Historical Societies who are part of this group you can go to their Facebook page by following this link.

<https://m.facebook.com/AssociationOfEasternHist>

### WHERE IS THE WHS?

Our rooms, which are located above the Mt Waverley library in Miller Crescent, are open each Wed (except over the Christmas break), from 1pm to 5pm, or by appointment, for individual research and working discussion groups. If the main library entrance door is locked during meetings, use the doorbell at the far left to gain entry. Members are asked to bring a plate of afternoon tea to general meetings which for 2020 are every second month.

### ANZAC Day 2020

The normal wreath laying ceremony at the Glen Waverley Cenotaph was not held on the Sunday preceding the 25th April 2020, however the WHS recognised this significant day in our history by laying a tribute of native flora at the Mount Waverley Avenue of Honour in High Street Rd on the 25th.



P. Johnstone April 20

### WANTED WHS Family History Records

We have been sorting through the WHS family folders, and would love to see them include more people. We are eager for any members who have information about their families to send us a brief background to your family's history in the Waverley / Monash district.

It doesn't matter how long you have lived here. It all leads to a better knowledge of the history of families in the area. Email:

[kerriewhsv@gmail.com](mailto:kerriewhsv@gmail.com)

or drop in at our rooms when we re-open with any information you have. Or put it in an envelope **clearly marked WHS**, in the Mt Waverley library book return chute.

ceed into that section. If the signalman didn't have the staff sitting in his safe ready to hand to the driver, that must mean that there was a train already in the section.

While the safety of the staff system was excellent for preventing accidents, it did cause delays, as the signalman had to walk from the station office to the front of the train and the driver had to verify that the staff was the correct one. Also, it limited the capacity of the line - no train could run to Glen Waverley until the previous one had finished its run and come back.

Duplication, where separate tracks are provided for each direction, was the obvious solution. It was done in stages, with Kooyong-Gardiner opened in 1955 and the whole line completed in 1964.

This was the first time in Melbourne that a purely suburban line (unlike, say, the St Albans line which also carried country trains to Bendigo, Swan Hill and Echuca) was duplicated along its entire length. Once again in recent years other suburban lines around Melbourne have finally been upgraded to the standard which was, for a long time, a privilege enjoyed only by the Glen Waverley line.

### Awards, Firsts

Our line has several claims to fame:

- The Darling-Glen Waverley section was the first line in Melbourne built with full electrification and no level crossings
- In the 1930s Mount Waverley was named the most attractive railway station in Victoria, because of its flower beds, trees, and overall cleanliness.
- After duplication in the 1950s it was the first fully duplicated suburban line.
- In 1956 the level crossing at Tooronga was fitted with Melbourne's first automatic booms (like the level crossings as we know them today).
- In 1958 the section from East Malvern to Glen Waverley was host to Australia's first Centralised Traffic Control (CTC) system. CTC means that instead of each section of track being controlled by its own signal box, the whole area is controlled from one central signal box,

with an illuminated diagram showing the position of every train on the system. Points and signals are controlled electrically from the same box.

Early in the 1990s Mount Waverley was featured in the TV news because of the strange habits of a certain bird - every time a train came in, it would fly up and down peering into all the windows, as if it had lost a chick into a train!

In the mid-1990s Mount Waverley was selected as the first station to be upgraded to a "premium station" after the commencement of the Metropolitan Transit Authority. This involved installing closed circuit television for security, good lighting, a full booking office, and public telephones.

In 1997 Glen Waverley was the first to be equipped with automatic ticketing barriers. These combined the validation of the electronic tickets with a physical barrier to prevent non-paying passengers from entering the station. These were later rolled out across all the city stations and several other busy stations around the network.



Scene at Glen Waverley Station in the 1970s showing the Red Tait carriages centre, the Blue Harris left, and the steam special train right

### Steam Train Rides

Being a fully electrified line, revenue steam trains have never operated to Glen Waverley - but that doesn't stop train enthusiasts from running steam hauled excursion trains.

In the 1970s, as the last steam trains were slowly being replaced by diesel and electric trains, a group of enthusiasts

who were railway employees managed to convince management to run special steam hauled excursions called "The Vintage Train". I've seen photos of steam trains at Glen Waverley which I presume were Vintage Train excursions.

After the final steam trains had been withdrawn from service, volunteer societies took over. They now run fairly regular steam trains around the suburbs during the school holidays, and when they come to Glen Waverley our members are usually out there for some photos.

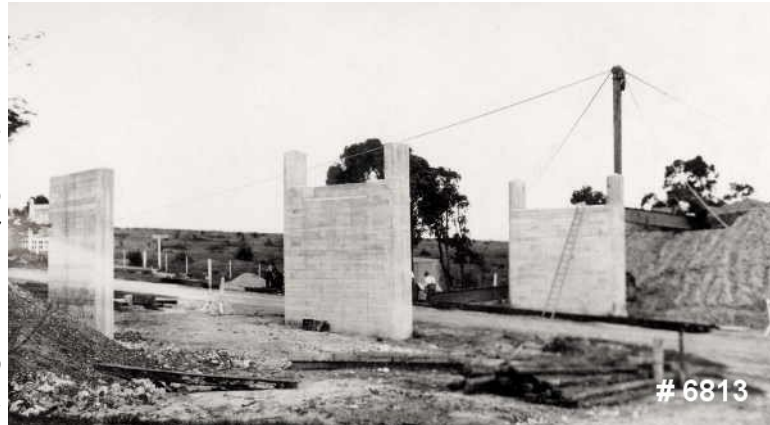
Clearly we have a lot to celebrate on the Glen Waverley line. Happy Birthday, and many happy returns to our railway!



as, there was grass there, and the trains were so infrequent that the line must have been a peaceful place to sit down and chew the cud.

Another story from the early days tells of a farmer who was so fed up at his neighbour's cow breaking through the fence and invading his cabbage patch that he took the cow to the station and bundled it onto the train, where it wasn't discovered for several stations. I wonder who paid for its ride ... and who cleaned up after it!

One railway employee tethered his house cow near the line, so he could stop the train and milk her at the right time. Sometimes there wasn't a train running at the right time, so this involved an extra train journey!



Construction of Huntingdale Rd Bridge, looking South West

One passenger remembers alighting at Mount Waverley station at night. The station was totally unlit, and as he made his exit he tripped over a sleeping cow, which had decided to spend the night on the station platform.

### Development

The friendly early days with cows couldn't last forever of course - in fact, the whole point of the railway was to develop the Waverley area into the busy suburb it is today.

It was a slow process. The service grew from the initial nine services per day in 1935, but by 1953 there were still only 16, and gaps of up to an hour between them. Think of that next time you miss your train and have to wait seven minutes for the next one. By 1965 there were 50, and the span of services ran from 5am to midnight.

The "Flying Matchbox" was taken out of service in 1954 and converted to a parcel van. It had run just about every service for 24 years, with a 4-car Tait "Red Rattler" train (the standard suburban train at the time) taking one run on Sundays to give the shuttle a short rest. The "Flying Matchbox" and the few others of its type which operated similar shuttles around Melbourne, being the only trains which had driver's cabs at both ends, were converted to parcel vans. The Glen Waverley line finally had full length trains running its regular services.

As well as carrying passengers the railway offered a freight service - parcels or larger items could be delivered to the station for local resi-

dents to collect. The recipients were required to pick up their deliveries within two days or pay hefty fees, to discourage people from leaving their parcels to clutter up the station office. The freight offer had ceased by 1964.

The railway houses at Glen Waverley continued to grow too. Eventually there were nine - two brick ones facing Springvale Road and seven prefabricated ones along the side of the line itself. They were all on railway land. In 1963 they were removed, presumably being surplus to requirements as the suburb developed and railway employees no longer needed to be provided with housing.

Also in 1963, Glen Waverley station was moved to allow the shops we see today to be more navigable - the station used to be closer to Springvale Road. The new "end of the line" was subdivided into ten 2-storey shop sites, but the two end ones were never released for sale (and eventually became footpaths) and one in the middle became a walkway to the station. In 2014 this area was further redeveloped, with an additional eight storeys of apartments built.

It is an often repeated myth that the old station site, currently being used as the main car park for the shopping strips, is still owned by the railways (and could therefore become the basis for an extension of the line into the Rowville area) - but according to VicTrack's land holdings map at the time of writing this is incorrect. About ten years ago it was taken over by Monash council.

### Duplication

When it was first built, the line had only a single track for trains running in both directions. With only one train running on the line this was perfectly adequate, but a passing loop was provided at Mount Waverley station so that a train running towards Glen Waverley could overtake a train sitting in the platform.

Whenever there were multiple trains running on the line (eg. trains carrying track maintenance equipment, or in later years when more trains were running) there was a highly regulated process called "staff exchange" to ensure trains were never in danger of collision. A metal bar called a staff, engraved with the name of the section (eg. "Mount Waverley to Glen Waverley"), was handed to the train driver by the signaller on duty. The staff was the driver's authority to pro-

## Ninety Years of the Glen Waverley Railway Line

Michael Angelico

This article comprises much of the content that was planned by Michael Angelico for his presentation at our May 2020 meeting marking the 90th anniversary of the opening of the Glen Waverley railway line.

Believe it or not it's the year 2020, which means that on the 5th of May this year, the Glen Waverley railway line turns 90! Our railway line has quite an interesting history. Let's go back in time and take a walk through the story of the Glen Waverley line.

### Planning

Back when plans were first being drawn up for a railway line to Glen Waverley, the corridor we travel on today wasn't the only one considered. After all, most of the area was farms and market gardens, not residential streets. The land had to be acquired from the property owners, no matter which way it went, so each option had to be assessed on its own merits.

The corridor originally chosen was further north, running between Electra Avenue and Station Avenue in Ashwood - but that would have cut the Riversdale Golf Club (RGC) land in half. The club had only just bought the land in 1927, so rather than redesign their brand new golf course, they appealed the decision. The outcome was that the rail corridor was rerouted further south, so that it only cut off a quarter of the golf club's land instead of half.

RGC sold the southern quarter of their land to Waverley Riding School, which was a good strategic move because the money from the sale helped RGC to survive the Great Depression.

As a matter of detail, there had been many other proposals for a railway line to the Waverley area. The 1880s were known as the "railway boom", a time when investors saw railway lines as a fairly safe way to make a lot of money - which they sometimes were. Examples include:

- In 1874 a line was proposed, running from

Hartwell to Ballyshannassy (Burwood), to Tally Ho, to Black Flat (Waverley Road).

- In the 1880s a tram line, using steam powered trams instead of electric, was proposed to run from Oakleigh to Ferntree Gully.

Needless to say these proposals never eventuated, and the Waverley area had to wait another forty years before any form of rail transport became available.

It's worth mentioning that in those days rail transport, either with trains running on their own right-of-way or with trams running down the middle of streets, was literally the only transport option available apart from a horse or a bullock dray. When a railway arrived at a town, it was suddenly "on the map" - no longer the back of beyond, it was a viable place to live and earn a living. Everybody used it, simply because it was the only option available. No wonder investors saw railways as a kind of get-rich-quick scheme.



With the planning over, the construction of the line started in early 1928. 100 men were employed on the project at the start of the Great Depression the following year.

### Opening

The Glen Waverley line was opened on the 5th of May 1930.

As we know from the publicity photo you've probably all seen here, the first train had a Union Jack draped over its nose - although the Australian flag had been our national flag since 1901. The Great Depression had dried up the available investment funds in Australia, and financiers in London had provided the necessary loans to complete the construction of the line. We Waverleyans are lucky - only a handful of the lines that were half-built at the onset of the Depression were actually completed.

The opening speeches weren't backward in laying the situation out to the locals - it begged them to make good use of the line, as their fares would help to pay for its construction.

Glen Waverley station sat in the middle of a paddock - the only houses nearby were the ones built



to house the railway workers. The roads approaching the station were unmade and unlit. There wasn't even a light at the station, except for the Station Master's lantern.

The station platform was unpaved, it was just a mound of earth with grass growing on it, and muddy shoes - most passengers going into town would carry a clean pair of shoes with them as they walked to the station in the morning, and then change and leave their dirty shoes lined up at the station. In the evening they would then change back into their dirty shoes for the walk home along the unmade roads.

The station buildings were just a basic weather shelter - there wasn't even a ticket office, and passengers had to buy their tickets from the guard via a small window. This of course led to trains being delayed.

But I don't want you to get the idea that our railway was poorly designed or cheap and nasty. It had been conceived in the Roaring Twenties, and all the experience from the railway boom of the 1880s

would be brought to bear to ensure the Glen Waverley line was the best it could be.

There were no back or side fences along the line, neglected by their owners and making the passengers feel like intruders into a stranger's back yard - roads would run on each side, so train travellers could look out over a grassy verge and a tree lined street to see the front of

people's houses instead.

The line was to be electrified from day one - quiet, clean electric trains would run every service. Electricity was a symbol of modernity, like the railway itself. Melbourne was proud to have opened the first railway line in the southern hemisphere, and to have beaten every other Australian city to run electric trains, and the Glen Waverley line would ensure we stayed at the forefront of modern convenience.

There would be no level crossings. Every road running across the new line would either have a

bridge built, or be terminated, in order to avoid delaying people when trains went through. Also, level crossings in those days weren't the booms and bells we see today, which are triggered automatically as a train approaches - each crossing needed manually operated gates and a supervisor on duty (in a small shack) whenever trains were running. Ninety years

later the rest of Melbourne finally seems to be following the lead of the Glen Waverley line.

Many station names were considered, debated, appealed and finally settled. Syndal might have been Maybank after pioneer

Edward May; Highview was considered for Mount Waverley. It was decided that Jordanville station would commemorate Joshua Jordan, but would it be Summerhill after his property, St Johns Wood after the nearby Riversdale property name, or Kabberang?



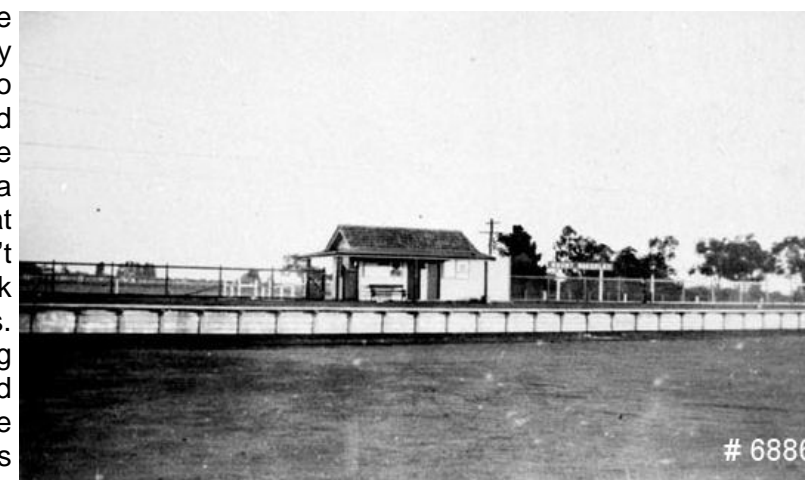
Excavation of the cutting with a steam shovel



Inspection of the bridge across Warrigal Rd. Overhead power wires yet to be installed.



Lawrence Road Bridge, looking East



Mt Waverley Station, looking South West

## The Railway Tax

With the Great Depression making its presence felt, the Victorian government sought to recoup some of the money it had invested in the Glen Waverley line by levying a tax on the local community. No doubt it made sense - the local community would benefit financially from having fast and reliable transport, and fare revenues on their own wouldn't add up to enough. Besides which, fare revenues were only half what had been expected, due to the Depression. The first bank loan was due in 1932 and the government didn't have the money.

It was decided and publicly announced that every resident within two miles of the railway line would be subject to the tax - although when I look at a map of which people were charged and which weren't it looks suspiciously like some people were exempted from the tax for some reason.

The people were understandably angry at being hit with a tax. After all, part of the reason for the tax was because the construction had gone so far over budget - but the major factor behind the blow-out was that a number of politicians, turning their insider knowledge to their own advantage, had bought up the land the railway line was planned to run through, and then sold it to the government at a profit! I guess that sort of thing wasn't actually illegal back in those days. There's nothing new about rich and powerful people bending the rules to suit themselves...

Nevertheless, the tax was levied. Many of the people couldn't pay, again due to the effects of the Depression, and had their furniture and valuables seized by receivers. All these assets were sold at an auction, held at Murrumbena

police station on December 6th 1932, and the receivers were hoping to raise £44 (\$88 in decimal currency, but of course it was worth a lot more back then). But the auction was attended mainly by locals, who knew exactly who the owners of the assets were, and managed to keep the bids low in order to obtain the items and return them to the owners. The total proceeds of the auction were only 27s 6d, which translates to a mere \$2.75 in decimal currency.

## Friendly Early Days

Back when the line was new, the passenger numbers were so low that a single train, with a single carriage, could carry everyone who wanted to travel. People had to change at Darling for a train to the city.

The single carriage train was nicknamed "Tootle" or "The Flying Matchbox" by the locals, probably because of its red paint scheme. It was of an 1880s design called the Swing-Door, which

operated throughout the Melbourne rail system. The Swing-Doors were often known as "Dog Boxes" or just "Doggies" because the crowd of emerging passengers looked like greyhounds emerging at the start of a race.

With just one train and one driver and guard shuttling up and down from Darling to Glen Waverley, the regular passengers got to know the railway people well. The line operated (unofficially, of course) to a fairly relaxed pace. Stories abound of the train waiting for regulars who were running late, and of unscheduled stops in the middle of the line so people could get off the train nearer home.

## Cow Stories

The train was often stopped in the middle of the line because a cow had wandered onto the track