

# Preserving Memories

A joint project of the City of West Torrens and the West Torrens Historical Society

## JOHN ANDREWARTHA, Lockleys

**"WE USED TO GO DOWN TO THE LOCAL ELECTRICIAN NEAR AIRPORT ROAD AND WATCH COLOUR TELEVISION IN HIS SHOP WINDOW."**

John's family have lived in the West Torrens area for three generations. Additionally, he has a wealth of knowledge of West Torrens from his involvement with the West Torrens Historical Society as president for almost 30 years.



His community contribution extends to the church and choir, and has authored historical booklets on these.

His family footwear distribution business was conducted from premises in Thebarton.



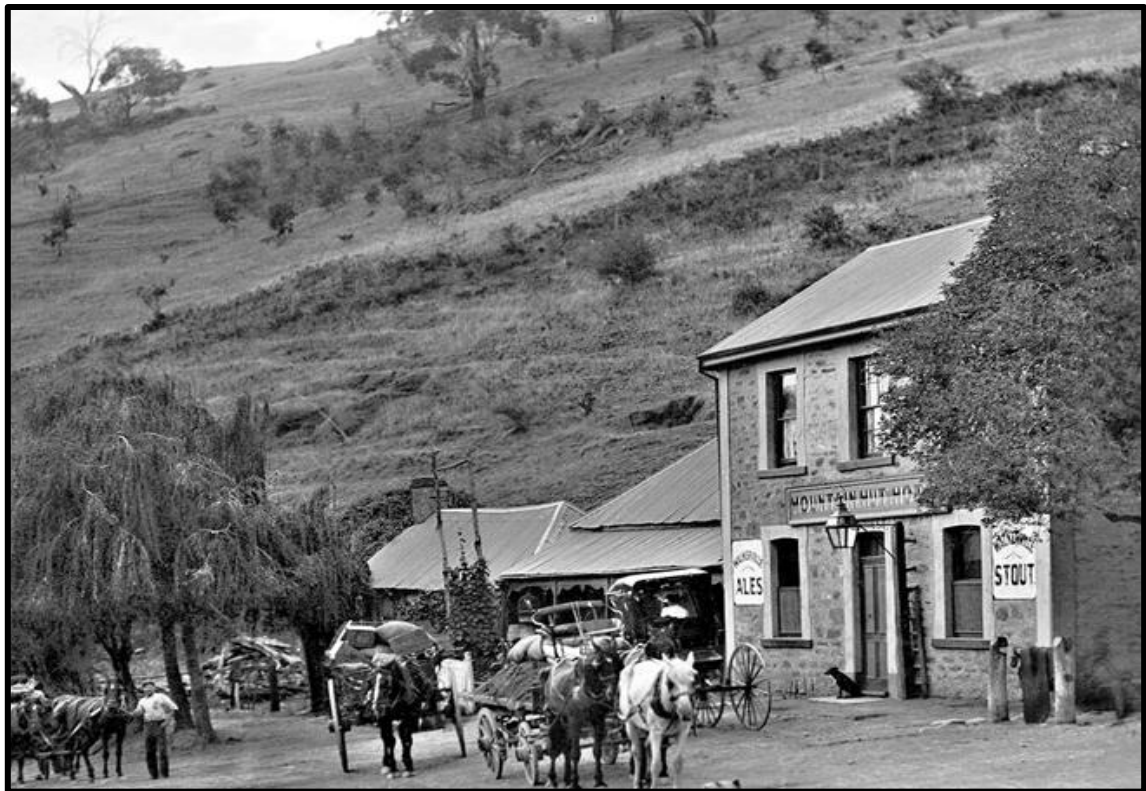
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## Family Background

John's father's family came from Cornwall, (Andrewartha means *the big house* in Cornish).

Arriving in 1847 on the barque *Theresa*, in Port Adelaide, Francis Andrewartha first set up a nursery, in Kent Town, and then in Leawood Gardens near Eagle on the Hill in the Adelaide Hills. His son, Francis James Andrewartha subsequently managed this property.



*Old Mountain Hut Inn at Leawood Gardens next door to Francis Andrewartha property*

The family moved to Melbourne in 1880. After finishing school, his son Arthur John Andrewartha (John's great grandfather) began working in a Melbourne factory and became a French polisher by trade.



*Arthur John Andrewartha*

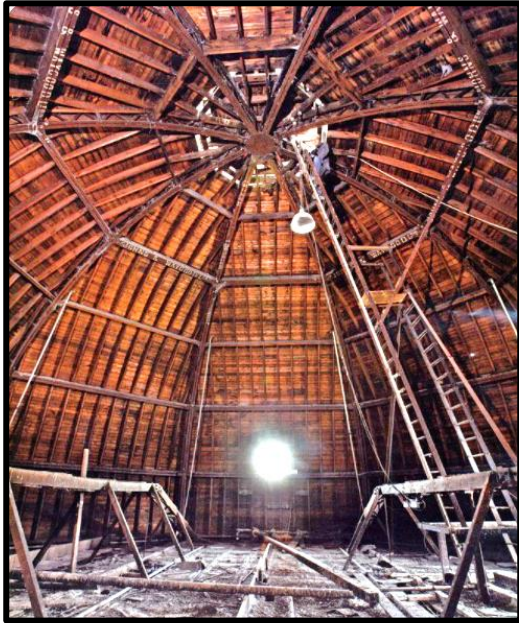
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## Grandfather

Arthur John's son Arthur Harold (John's grandfather) became a tinsmith and was part of the construction team of copper dome on the Flinders Street station in Melbourne.

He went on to work at Wunderlich Ltd in Melbourne.

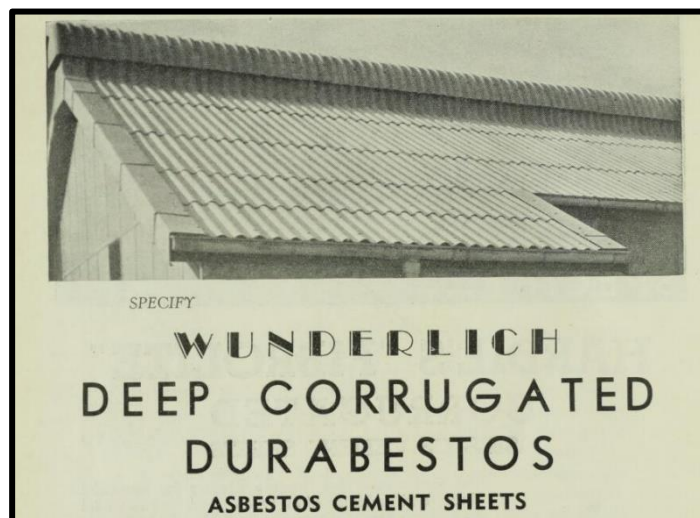


*Flinders Street Station Dome Construction c1910*



*Swanston / Flinders St Intersection Melbourne 1927 [WikiCom]*

Arthur Harold (known as Harold) married Ruby Frances Cordwell in Melbourne and they moved to South Australia, at first renting a home on South Road at Richmond. He continued employment with Wunderlich in Adelaide.



*Building: the magazine for the architect, builder, property owner and merchant. 12 August 1935 p22 [Trove]*



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## Father

John's father, Arthur Keith Andrewartha (known as Keith) was born in Keswick at his uncle's home on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1912. Keith had a sister who only lived for a short time, and a younger brother Alan Maxwell Andrewartha.

In 1920, when the family moved to Hinton Street, Underdale, there were no roads, electricity or gas, only water was supplied to the house. There was a type of septic tank as there was no night cart to the area. There was only 3 other houses built at the time. Lights were oil lamps or candles and later kerosene lamps.



*18 Hinton Street Underdale in floods circa 1930*



Keith Andrewartha went to Lockleys Primary School in Elston Street from grade 3 to 7, Adelaide High School and then to Muirden's Business College. In the late 1920's he began working as a clerk in the Globe Timber Mills on Port Road. As the depression started, he worked for a tannery and wool-scouring company in Hindmarsh, and then in 1933 started his own business.

His Uncle Norman ran Garth's Shoe Store in Glenhuntly, Melbourne. He encouraged Keith to start a footwear representative business in Adelaide, as he felt this was an opportunity lacking in South Australia.

Keith used his mother's car and went around to shops selling shoes that were made in small Melbourne factories. John recalls that, *in those days, it was a bit unusual to have a car.*

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## Mother

Freida Beryl West was born in Medindie, on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1911 to parents Arthur James and Ada Mary West née Langlois, she grew up mainly in the Prospect area. Her parents moved to 11 Elizabeth Street in New Mile End and lived there all their lives. Arthur was a credit manager at John Martins store.

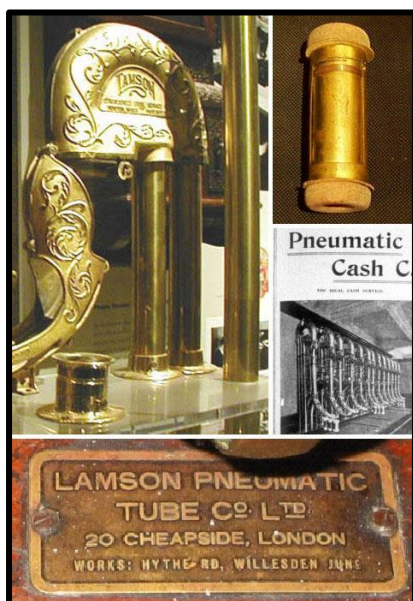


Arthur James & Ada Mary West



West family home 11 Elizabeth Street New Mile End

Prior to her marriage Freida worked at Hammer photographic studios then became a cashier in the 'tube room' at John Martins.



*"... a Lamson Pneumatic Tube Belt Type system, as this was the most suitable to deal with both cash and entry transactions...tubing in ducts under the floors to every department in the house, and in consequence all tubing is hidden from view, thereby causing no disfigurement to any portion of the beautiful interior of the new store...allows for two or three cashiers to operate the whole of the 62 cash stations, entry, and the special services tubes, whilst at busy periods as many as 18 cashiers and 12 authorisers can be put into service. The whole of this modern system is operated by two turbines, driven by two 15-h.p. electric motors."*

*The Advertiser (Adelaide), 4 Jul. 1936, p. 22 [Trove]*

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## Parents Marriage

At age 26 Keith was married to Freida West on 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1938 at Holder Memorial Church on South Road, by Reverend Cowley.



For the first two years of their marriage they lived at Henley Beach and spent the rest of their lives at a home they had built in Howard Street, Underdale.



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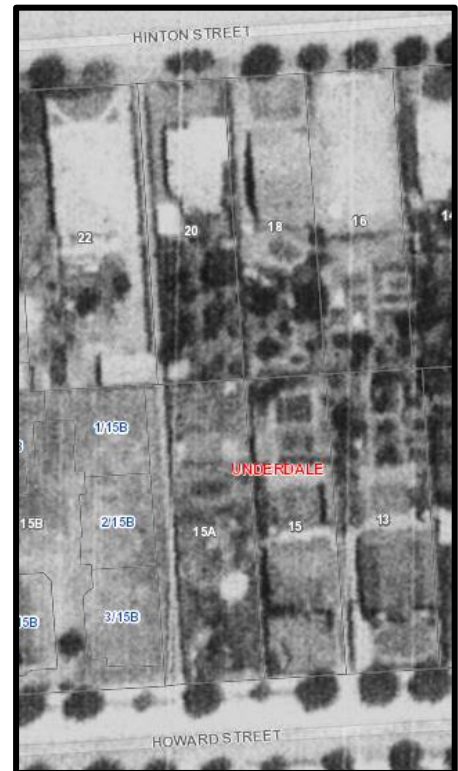
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Keith's father, Harold, had four blocks of land in Underdale between Hinton Street and Howard Street.

He built his house on Hinton Street and then gave the block behind on Howard Street to Keith, Freida and their new baby John.



*Family home at 15 Howard Street, Underdale*



*1949 [WestMaps Public]*

## Arthur John Andrewartha

John, as he is known, was born at St Ives Private Hospital, New Mile End on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 1939. He is an only child.



*Ruby and Arthur Harold Andrewartha with Arthur John 1939*



*Freida with John*

## World War 2 years



In 1942, Keith was called for Army Service. Keith enlisted at Keswick, but because he had eye problems he went into the catering corp. He did a course at Warradale and then went Interstate.

Most of his Army Service was either at Townsville or Duntroon. He did serve a time in New Guinea as an Army cook in the hills behind Port Moresby and Rabaul and returned as a Lieutenant Cook. The last part of his service time was at Duntroon. When he was released from the Army, in 1945 he did trips across the Nullarbor catering for the troops on the Transcontinental train.

Freida remained in Adelaide with John.

The business Keith was running stalled as shoe sales were limited as a result of rationing.  
*Mum used to do the books, and she just kept it going until Dad came back.*

*I remember Dad coming home on leave on various occasions. I found it hard to get used to having someone around the place that was prepared to discipline me, probably a bit more strongly than my mother did. I remember my mother always threatened me with a razors strop which hung behind the bathroom door, and when Dad came home one day, I must have been playing up somewhere, and he said, 'I'll get that razor strop' and I must have said, 'Well, I don't think you will'. But rest assured he did and I never did it again.*

*Mum was quite strict too, really, but she didn't use a razor strop. I think it was more like the wooden spoon. This sort of discipline was expected. When I went through my school days, I never actually received the cane, but some of my mates did and we just accepted that as the norm.*



*Razor Strop [Wiki Commons]*

*One of my teachers at Lockleys School was a friend of Mum and Dad's, so I had to make sure I behaved myself or I would have heard all about it when I got home.*



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## St Gabriels Kindergarten



*St Gabriel's kindergarten circa 1960*

John went to St Gabriel's Kindergarten, next door to their home in Howard Street from around the age three and a half... *I could hear the children next door, and being an only child I was craving some company so Mum used to take me in there during the mornings and I'd come home about lunchtime.*

The kindergarten was part of the St Gabriel's Anglican Church and it was run on Montessori principles up to Grade 3. It was expected that the children then attend Saint James School at Mile End. However, most children went to primary school when they turned five or six. John recalls that there was no childcare in those days.

*[Living next door], I was in the fortunate position that if I got sick of kindergarten, I put on a bit of an act, they'd send me home.*

## Lockleys Primary School

John attended Lockleys Primary from 1945 (aged 5) through to Grade 7 in 1951.

Although Underdale, (now Flinders Park Primary School), was closer, *Mum didn't like the thoughts of me crossing the river [Torrens], so I went to Lockleys.*

When he first went to school, John caught the tram until he had a 2-wheeler bike and then was allowed to ride to the Lockleys School.

*Our street was connected to Henley Beach Road by two laneways, so it wasn't far to walk through and to catch the tram. And when we got to Lockleys I would walk up Elston Street to the school. In grade six and seven, we used to go to woodwork at Thebarton on a Friday and that involved riding our bikes up to Thebarton School, doing our woodwork, and then coming back to Lockleys. Then when I went to Adelaide High School, I didn't ride my bike, I used to catch the tram.*

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*Lockleys Primary school. John Andrewartha back row far left. Circa 1949*

The headmaster in John's later years at Lockleys was David Rees. He was also the choirmaster at the Brooklyn Park Methodist church.

## Adelaide High School

John attended Adelaide Boys High School on West Terrace from 1952-1955, which had just opened as the boy's school. (His father Keith had attended Adelaide High when it was a boy's school in Currie Street). Whilst in high school John saw that the family business was developing and Keith had suggested that he would need help. Keith encouraged John to undertake a commercial course to look after the finances of the business. Despite his preference for the sales side of the business, John completed this course at Adelaide High.

## Sports

John didn't participate in a lot of sports due to suffering from asthma. If the boys were playing football he would be the goal umpire or boundary umpire. He played and was coached at tennis at Glenelg. He followed the local West Torrens football team.

*My father was a very keen golfer. He was captain of the Grange Golf Club for a few years, and he made golf a very large part of his life, and just about drove me mad as a kid growing up. It was the last thing I ever wanted to do was play golf. My mother was just as keen on bowls.*

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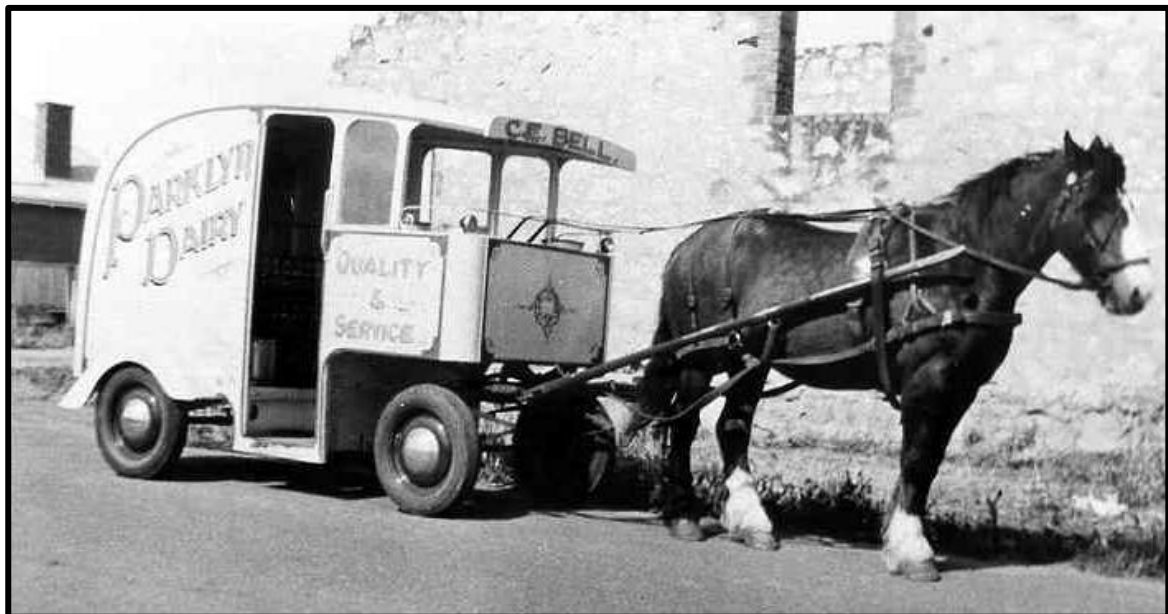
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## Food supply

When John was growing up most of the food suppliers travelled to your house and sold direct.

The dairyman lived about five doors down in Howard Street, and after school John would take a billycan to collect the milk. The cows grazed around Lockleys and would be driven back to be milked in Howard Street.

There was a baker in Holbrooks Road. With no refrigeration, food was bought in smaller quantities and more regularly. A greengrocer would come in his van to their home twice a week, and they would go to the butcher's store about once a week. Later, after the men had returned from war, the baker and the 'milky' called with their horse and cart.



*C.E. Bell's Parklyn Dairy Delivery, based at Brooklyn Park [WTHS LH0526-03]*

The rabbit man come around once a week, and the rabbit was dressed [skinned] in the street out front of their house. *I used to like roast rabbit. Mum used to braise it sometimes, I didn't like that much... We don't have rabbit now because Shirley can't bring himself to eat rabbit, but I think I'd still enjoy a rabbit.*

*Meals were pretty well predictable. Monday's was always the left over roast from Sunday, cold meat, with hot vegetables, and then Tuesday and Wednesday might have been a steak and kidney pie, or something like that. Then Thursday was rabbit. I can't remember what happened Friday, and Saturday was just probably tripe. Mum, particularly like tripe. And then Sunday was the roast. You knew the days of the week by what you were eating.*



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John's' grandparents had about 300 chooks on the next property, but he recalls that chicken was only eaten at Christmas or maybe Easter.

*If one of the chooks was looking a bit sick, I think Grandpa would knock its head off. You didn't have chicken and turkey, it was unheard of until, really until we got married, then Shirley used to cook a Turkey for Christmas.*

*When I was going to school, we're a bit restricted because of wartime coupons, so most of the food we ate was locally grown. Even though Mum was no gardener, my grandfather grew vegetables and fruit.*

*We didn't have a canteen at school, so we used to take our lunch to school. When I went to high school, you had a canteen at the school, so you didn't want to take school lunches.*

*I can't remember having fish and chips, other than when we went into the city. As a treat Mum used to get fish and chips for us at lunchtime. But as far as locally, there was no such thing as a takeaway. When I was married, we did used to get a takeaway once a week or something because by the time we got home, it was quite often late. We started going out for meals which we'd never do in my growing up days at home with my parents.*

John's friends at Adelaide High were from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

*One of my friends was French and he introduced me to wine. I'd never had wine for lunch as a kid because we didn't do that sort of thing. My Italian friends introduced me to all sorts of different foods that we hadn't experienced growing up. When I started to go Interstate, we started to go to Chinese restaurants.*

John says that although he was a trained cook, his dad could only cook in large quantities i.e. a bag of flour!

A combination of being an only child, his Mum being unwell as a result of miscarriages, his parents going away and being a time before 'takeaways', John learnt to cook for himself. John still enjoys a lot of cooking, even experimenting with recipes. Shirley is a keen quilter so John quips that he would eat at 9pm if he didn't do it himself.

*I think I've always been interested in food. I like cooking, I do most of the cooking, I find it intriguing. I do like reading recipes and making up my own recipes. I still like the good old steak, a really nice steak and all the things that go with it. I also like duck of all things; which Shirley doesn't like. If we go out I have duck or steak.*

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## Home Appliances

After the war years because there were coal strikes in Newcastle, electricity supply in South Australia was restricted.

The family home had a gas cooker and John can also remember having to cook meals out in the backyard because of gas restrictions.



*Kelvinator refrigerator circa 1940 [WTHS LH0256-04d]*

After World War 2, the manufacturing of home appliances increased and created more comfortable lifestyles. John recalls that the family used an ice chest until the early 1950's and that his grandmother was the first in the district to have a refrigerator. The Iceman would come around a couple of times a week in the summer months, and then in the winter months he would bring wood for the wood fires.

*We did have the luxury of my grandparents living back-to-back with us and they had a fridge so we did get ice cream now and again.*

John's grandmother also had a telephone and as many homes did not, the neighbors would come to use it.

By the 1960's when John and Shirley were married, many appliances were in most homes.

*We had pretty well everything [appliances] that was going. We didn't have air conditioning, or a dishwasher but we had all the other trimmings because we were both working. We had a washing machine, a twin tub, a refrigerator and Shirley had a mix master. Also the normal radio and a black and white tele.*

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## Leisure and Entertainment

John recalls that most young people belonged to a church or similar sort of group and went on church picnics or youth group activities and camps. John was also involved in the Lockleys Cubs until the age of 12 (1951). John decided not to join the Scouts but preferred to help our Arkela, (Mrs Skuse) who he recalls was rather old!

*We used to organise dances which, in those days, the Methodist Church frowned upon, but at Brooklyn Park Methodist Church we got away with it. I was never a brilliant dancer, but we enjoyed ourselves.*

They would also play board games or cricket games out in the street or park.

## Cinema and Theatre

John recalls that the type of entertainment people enjoyed changed over his lifetime from an active outdoor involvement to more passive indoor form like watching television.

*A lot of people in the district used to have weekly tickets to the pictures, particularly up at Thebarton, and they'd go on a Saturday night. We never did. Mum and Dad weren't all that keen on pictures. Dad was particularly fond of live Theatre, so they used to go into the Theatre Royal or the Majestic to any musicals or plays that were on.*



*Rex Rundle Street, 1959 [SLSA B-14211]*

*In my late years at primary school, we used to go up to the matinees at Thebarton on a Saturday. I don't remember going to Lockley's...most of the films were old hat by the time they got to Lockleys, so more often than not we would end up at the The Rex in Rundle Street, because any good pictures were always on at the Regent first and then the Rex... but it was a rare occasion that we went to the pictures.*



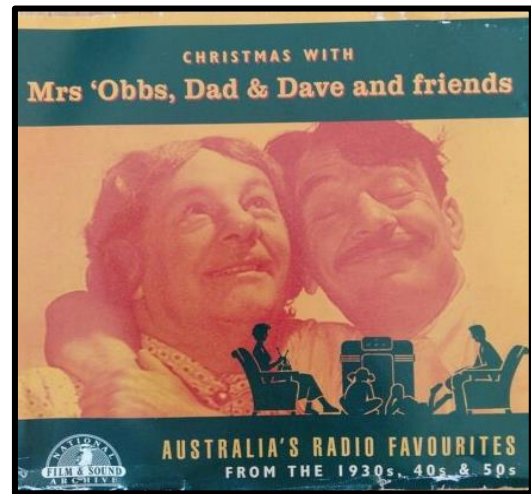
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## Radio Serials

At home the main entertainment was the radio.

*Mrs. 'Obbs was a serial that we used to listen to of a night. I think Mum used to listen to When a Girl Marries. We didn't listen to Blue Hills, although my grandparents did because that was in the middle of the day, and I wasn't home anyway. Martin's Corner was another one. We were only allowed to listen to the radio, I suppose, for about an hour, and then we had other things to do.*



National Film and Sound Archives

## Television

*Television had been around for about 3 years before Dad saw fit to buy us a television set.*

John remembers watching television comedies like *I Love Lucy*. His parents would watch comedy shows or the *Amateur Hour*.

*We used to go down to the local electrician near Airport Road and watch colour television in his shop window. Dad believed that because the black and white television wasn't worn out, we didn't need colour television, but I think eventually, Mum wore him down, and we did get colour television. And we thought that was really something special. Some of our friends had it so we just thought it was a great innovation.*

John recalls that most of the programming was local as they had their own studios in Adelaide, initially through Channel Seven and Nine and later Channel Ten.

*A lot of the shows that we used to watch were produced here or Interstate. My Father and Mother had a real dislike for anything American, but they'd watch English television shows. I used to quite like a couple of the American serials like *Beverly Hillbillies* and *MASH* but that didn't appeal to my father. He just liked the English comedies and that sort of thing.*

John remembers that Ernie Sigley was one of the local shows, and that Ernie had lived in Lockleys and his wife had worked at Lockleys North Primary School.

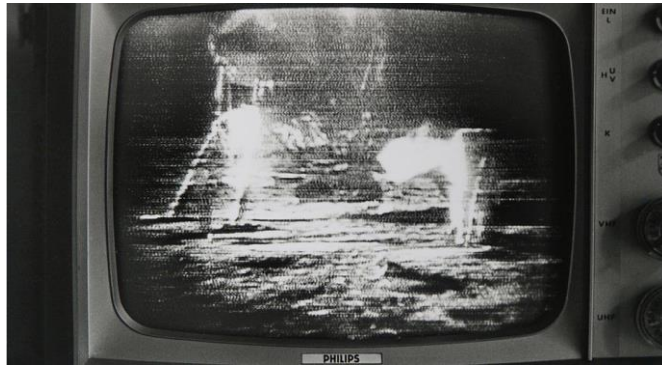
*By the time television came around I was in the youth group or working out in the country where they didn't have tele, I can remember being in Jamestown one night and invited up into the hotel*

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*lounge to watch the [Queen Elizabeth II's] Coronation or something and there was so much snow [interference] you couldn't even see it.*

*My father used to like listening to the cricket but when it came on 'tele', the reception wasn't all that good. So more often than not, we'd just listen to it on the radio.*



BBC.com

*When we saw the Moon landing, we were all gob-smacked. Yeah, that was something that we thought would never happen, but I vividly remember that. But of course I've seen in many times since too.*

## Public Transport

Public Transport consisted of mainly electric trams and buses in John's early days.

*We did have buses on and off quite a bit after the war years because there were coal strikes in Newcastle and so electricity was restricted. With no electricity there were no electric trams, so they used the old buses. In fact, they even had the old open top double decker buses going down Henley Beach Road. We used to think that was fun, but that was just while the strikes were on.*

*When Tom Playford opened the Leigh Creek coal mines with brown coal, it wasn't good enough quality to generate electricity so that they had to mix it with Newcastle coal. But I think initially it all came from Newcastle, but his dream of being independent of Newcastle didn't really work because it wasn't good, the Leigh Creek coal wasn't good enough quality.*

The electric buses went down Port Road and then they extended them out to the eastern side of Adelaide to Linden Park and Burnside. They were double deckers and single decker buses with poles up to touch overhead wires, and known as a Trolley Bus.

*Initially the trams were Direct Current, and they had their own power station, but then eventually they changed over to Alternating Current. I'm not sure about the double decker buses. I think they might have been Direct Current.*

The trams were discontinued in 1957 as it was considered too expensive to extend them into the newer developing suburbs and congestion on the roads was thought to be prohibitive.

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*We were all glad to see the trams go, I can remember that because we thought, well, at least you got a fair go on the roads, [now] you have two lanes of traffic on roads, like Henley Beach Road. They extended one or two of the tram lines and there was some talk about extending the trolley buses down Henley Beach Road but that didn't happen.*



*Trolley Bus Farewell Journey 13th July 1963*

### Lifts in stores - Maple Leaf Café (Adelaide)

John recalls that some of the lifts, the elevators, in the stores in Adelaide were worked on Direct Current and weren't fully enclosed, they had wire cages and from inside you could see all the sparks.

*I used to go into the city during the school holidays. I'd go in with Mum when she was doing a bit of book work, in the office which was in Rundle Street.*

*As a treat, Mum would take me for lunch to Maple Leaf Café and also to the [Wanslea] Tea Rooms opposite the railway station in North Terrace [was 132] and they had one of these old lifts that used to spark and splutter, and they always used to have to have a lift driver because they had to judge where to stop. More often than not you had to step up or down to get out of the lift.*

### Cool And Quiet Lunchroom

Women shoppers, office workers and others would find, during this hot weather, a very pleasant spot at lunch time in the Wanslea tea rooms in Airways House, North terrace. Spacious and cool, the lunchroom, which adjoins the Wanslea shop, is furnished simply but adequately, and customers choose their lunch cafeteria fashion. Appetising salads, sandwiches, cakes and fruit salad are included on the simple menu, with tea and ice coffee.

The profits go to the WANS fund for the maintenance of Wanslea, the children's hostel and home-craft training centre at Payneham, which will be opened in March under the auspices of the Women's Australian National Services.

*The Advertiser Wed 22 Jan 1947 p5*

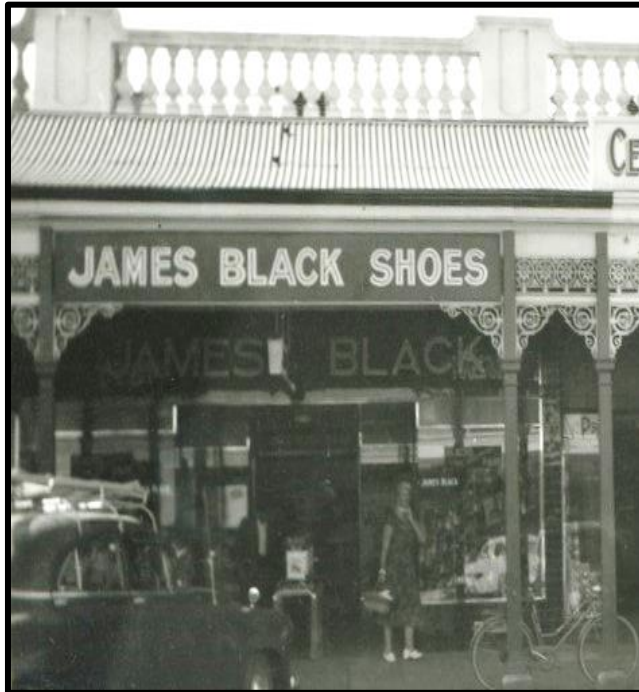


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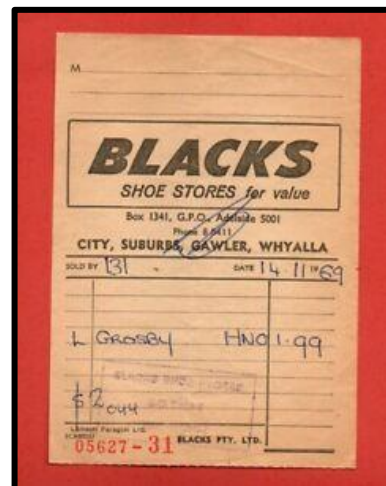
## First job

Whilst at Adelaide High School John worked Saturday mornings at *Blacks Shoes* in Gouger Street and then at *C J Young Shoe Coy* in Rundle Street.



James Black Shoes Gouger Street 1958 B-14037

John's father had wanted him to work for a boss that knew the 'shoe business' and wanted to help him understand disciplines. John enjoyed 12 months (around 1956) working with Albert Black, who taught him the business procedures and work ethics.



## Learning to drive

*I got my license when I was working at Blacks. I went down to the old Institute building on North Terrace at lunchtime and the guy showed me a form and he said, 'Fill this out' and I started to fill it out, and he said 'You don't need to write a composition, I've got to go to lunch'. And he said, 'Do you know the answer to all those questions?' I said 'Yes'. He said, 'OK, here's your licence.'*

*I learned to drive in the 1939 Chev, which was my grandmothers. Gran was always keen to get out and have a bit of a drive, so she suggested that I learned to drive... So on this Saturday I got in this ...great heavy thing it was, and Gran said 'I think we'll go up to Windy Point'... and for someone who had never sat in the car and driven it before it was quiet an event.*



*Gran was a shocking driver. I don't think she ever got out of second gear, and she used to drive around the same pace around corners as she did up the straight.*

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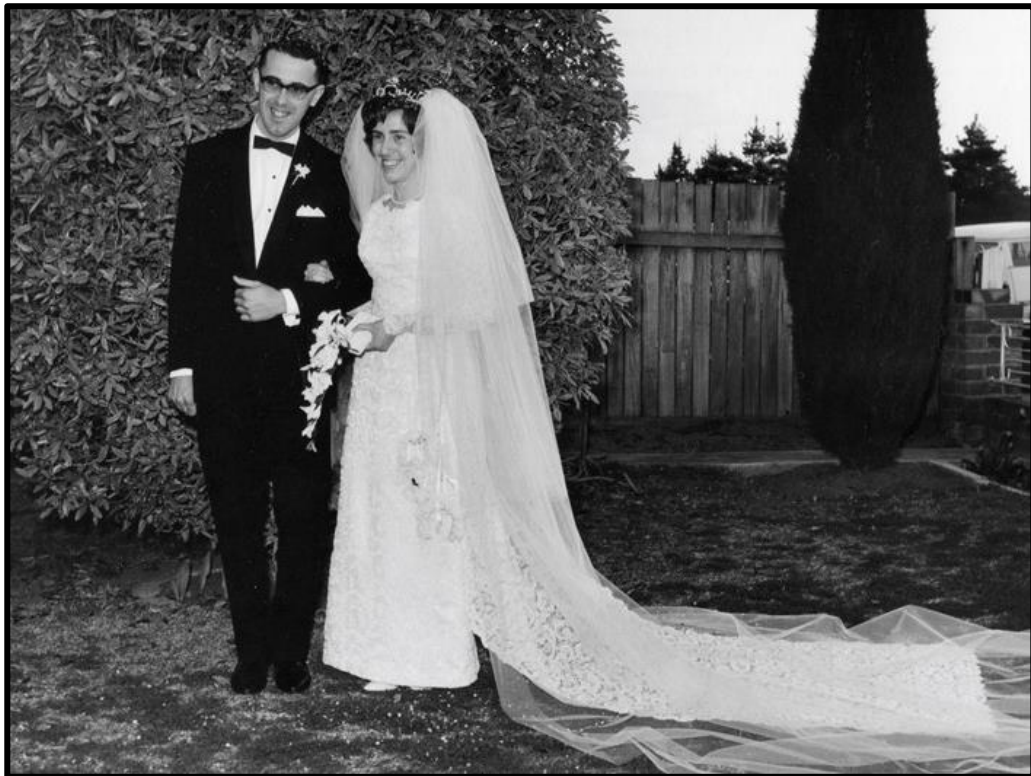
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## Marriage

John met Shirley Patterson while attending the Brooklyn Park Methodist Church.

Shirley's ancestors also came from Cornwall though her mother's family were Polish. They had migrated to Australia in very early days and settled in the Barossa Valley. Her parents were living on the West Coast of South Australia and Shirley was born in Tumby Bay. In 1952 her family moved to Rushworth Avenue, Brooklyn Park and Shirley attended the Lockleys Primary School.

John and Shirley got to know each other through the youth group camps and courted for 4 years. They married in 1966 at the Brooklyn Park Methodist Church with a wedding service was attended by 200 people.



John and Shirley spent the first night of their honeymoon in Adelaide, and knew that the youth group they attended would want to seek them out. They were going interstate so told their friends that they would be staying the first night somewhere along Glen Osmond Road. The youth group searched up and down Glen Osmond Rd for John's car but only the best man knew the secret that they were actually staying at Scotty's Motel at Medindie. From there they went to Victoria, the Snowy Mountains and Canberra.

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## Lockleys home

John and Shirley had a home built in Lockleys. This was 'spec built' by Abolins builders and was the only way to get a house there as you were not able to purchase blocks of land.

*We had bought our house before we were married, but of course our parents would have frowned on us actually moving into the house before we were married. In fact, we weren't allowed. They offered to buy us blinds and curtains, but they made sure they weren't put in until we were away on our honeymoon - so that there was no hanky-panky before we married I suppose.*



*Michael Street Lockleys*

## Children

John and Shirley have two children Michael and Suzi. Both attended Lockleys North Primary school.

John recalls that their two children and grandchildren had much more relaxed lifestyle than they did.

*The lifestyle's even freer for them. But I'm quite happy that I lived through what I did because I think we had a very good life and I don't know whether it's going to be easier in the future.*



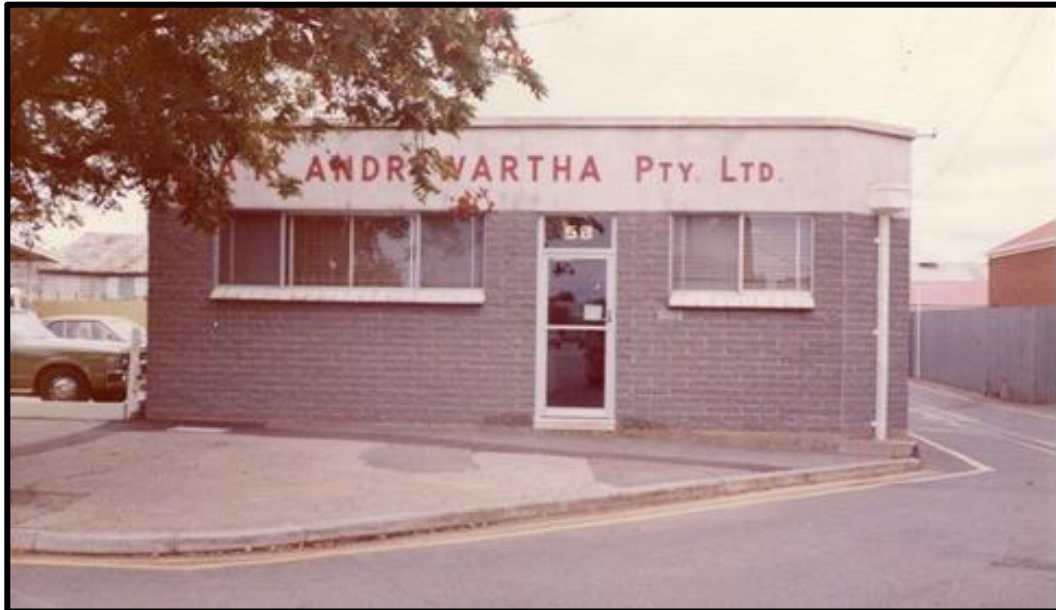


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## **A K Andrewartha Pty Ltd.**

Keith's business was growing and he was looking to expand, so he encouraged John to work in the family business. In 1957, at the age of eighteen, he started working in the newly purchased property at 58 Whitmore Square, Adelaide. John managed this and took on the role of warehouseman, packing shoes and distributing them.



*A K Andrewartha Pty Ltd 58 Whitmore Square Adelaide*

*When I started, Dad was purely an indent agent. He'd go around, show samples of footwear and take orders and send to the factories in Melbourne and the factories would dispatch the goods direct to the retailer. And of course, in those days being straight out of the war, everything was rationed, so Dad had to have special coupons or quotas.*

*By the time I came into the business, it had expanded and Dad could see the advantages of running stock in Adelaide. The retailers in those days were shoe stores and Department stores all through the city and country areas. They weren't in a position to buy large quantities....so Dad saw the potential for us to open a warehouse. We'd buy the merchandise from Melbourne and then later from Sydney, and hold stock in Adelaide.*

*It was my job, once I got the hang of things, we employed someone else to run the warehouse, and I'd then go out into the country selling. Dad never had time to do much country work but he said, 'Well, look if you want to expand the business, that's where it's going to happen, so you get out in the country'.*

*I love travelling and love driving. Dad bought this crumby little Ford Thames van and I'd tootle around the country. I'd be away for three or four nights, every other week. I'd be home for a week and then I'll be away for a week. I went as far as Port Lincoln, Mount Gambier and Broken Hill.*

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## Work vehicles

*My work car was a Ford Prefect made into a van and because it had limited windows, it was hot as Hades. Dad lashed out and bought an Austin Lancer, sedan car, that was a lot better as it had little side windows to let the air in...It wasn't the most powerful engine and there was no such thing as automatics.*

*We progressed to Holden and I had a Station Wagon as soon as they came on the market. I had so many cases to travel around with, anything up to about 16 cases, decent sized cases, and so Station Wagon was essential then. So right through my working life I had a car provided.*

Shirley's Father worked at Holden's at Woodville and eventually John had a Holden for his work car until the 1980's when they switched to a Ford hatchback which was easier to lift the cases in and out.

## Working and driving in country SA

*The roads in those days were pretty bad. It was a bitumen road to Port Augusta. If I went up through Gulnare and Port Pirie. To Broken Hill, the bitumen ran out at Marrabel, before you got to Burra.*

*The South East was pretty good, that was a sealed road most of the way, but this poor old Austin Lancer, every time you went over a decent pothole, the back doors would fly open because I had it loaded up with cases of [shoe] samples.*

*I used to leave home at 6:00 o'clock on a Sunday morning. I'd get to Broken Hill at 12. Going up through Marrabel and Yunta in those days, where the river or creek crossings, were only single lane. There wasn't a lot of traffic on the road, but I remember one time it was after Radium Hill had closed and they transported all the homes from Radium Hill back to Adelaide and various other places. And to do that they had to cut the rails on the sides of the single lane bridges. So they cut the side rails right down to road level and the Creeks were all flooded and it was very hard to see where the bridge ended. So that was a hairy drive up to Broken Hill that time because you couldn't see the sides of bridge. It was a slow, slow trip, but I used to enjoy it.*

*Dad insisted that I join the RAA because he knew I was no mechanic, but I can't remember ever breaking down. Mind you, Dad used to replace the cars about every three years or so.*

*I used to love country work, I have always loved driving around the country, and I made a lot of friends out in the country.*

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*The accommodation in those days was just hotels, no motels so you didn't have private facilities in your rooms. It was pretty primitive, but I enjoyed it because I was free to do what I wanted to do and I enjoyed building, selling and contributing to the welfare of the business.*

## The shoe industry

The business sold all types of shoes including ladies shoes, men's shoes and work boots. John recalls that in the early days the shoes were all made from leather and then synthetic materials were introduced. He says that *once the athletic footwear started to come around that changed the whole concept.*

Initially all the footwear was made in Australia, mainly Victoria with some from New South Wales. They would go regularly to Melbourne. John every four weeks and Keith every two weeks in between. They had a yearly ticket for the Overland train service which entitled them to travel to Melbourne overnight as often as needed.

*Air travel wasn't cheap and we could carry more samples on the train. Until 1955 you had to go out to Parafield airport to get the plane, whereas we just went into the Adelaide station to catch the Overland. I've always liked trains and Dad did too. We had an uncle that lived in Ballarat and he always used to come down and meet us to the platform to have breakfast with us.*



*Keith teaching John the 'shoe business'*

The quality of shoes has changed over John's life with fashion having a big impact on available styles.

*The majority of the shoe stores in the country had a repairer on the premises. And the shoes were made in such a way that they were easily repairable. They were much heavier than the sort of shoes we have today, but I know as a kid growing up, I would have my shoes resoled at least twice before I got a new pair.*

*That was a common thing, and then gradually, as shoe prices became cheaper and overseas imports started to come in, the repairers were pretty well a thing of the past. Most of those repairers just became shoe retailers.*



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*Nowadays, there are very few independent shoe stores around. I used to go to little towns like, Yorketown, and I'd have three people I call on. A shoe store and two general stores. They all stocked shoes. These days you'd be lucky to find anywhere where you could buy a pair of shoes south of Kadina.*

*During the war years the factories used to make work boots and that sort of thing. There was a lot more hand work in shoes in those days. Men's footwear was made on a Welting process, which involved quite a bit of labour and as imports started to come into the country it became less profitable to run these shoe factories. Some of them only employed about 20 people. They were very small.*

*By the late 1960s early 70s, imports started to come in. The government at one stage tried to put on some quota systems to restrict the imports that were coming in.*

*Eventually the local factories weren't making any money and trying to find labour was another big problem. People didn't want to work in shoe factories. They were dirty and noisy and so eventually they just closed down and imports took over.*



*The Canberra Times Sat 27 Feb 1965 p10*

*The fashion shoes mostly came from the UK, Spain and a bit later, from Brazil. That was all leather footwear, but all the budget footwear came from China. A little bit came from Japan and Korea, then in later years from India. But some of the Australian factories actually opened factories overseas, and used Australian leather, but obviously the workforce was a lot cheaper over there, so they assembled the shoes over there.*

*We diversified the shoe business but we couldn't have made a living just out of South Australia. So, eventually we opened offices in Melbourne and one in Sydney and we had a representative there. We used to do Western Australia and Tasmania from Adelaide. And we didn't do Queensland until the very end and then we did a bit of Queensland.*

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The expansion required larger premises and 64 George Street, Thebarton was acquired in 1999.

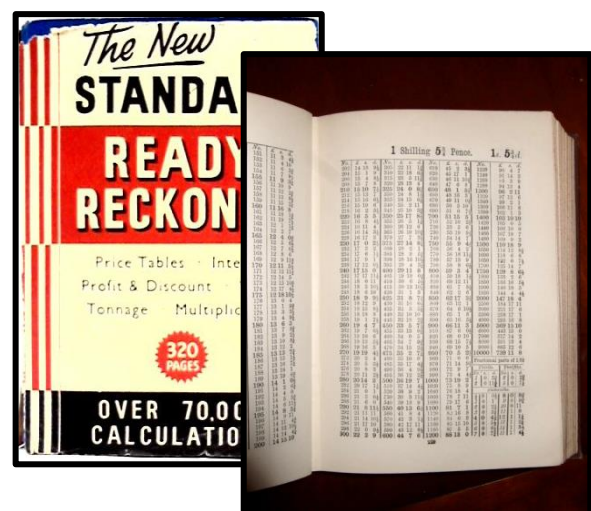


Changes to the industry and selling practices resulting in the decision to close the business about 2016.

## Office Technology - ready reckoners to computers

The warehouse used ready reckoners (which was a book listing standard numerical calculations (John says '*They were awful things*') and then adding machines.

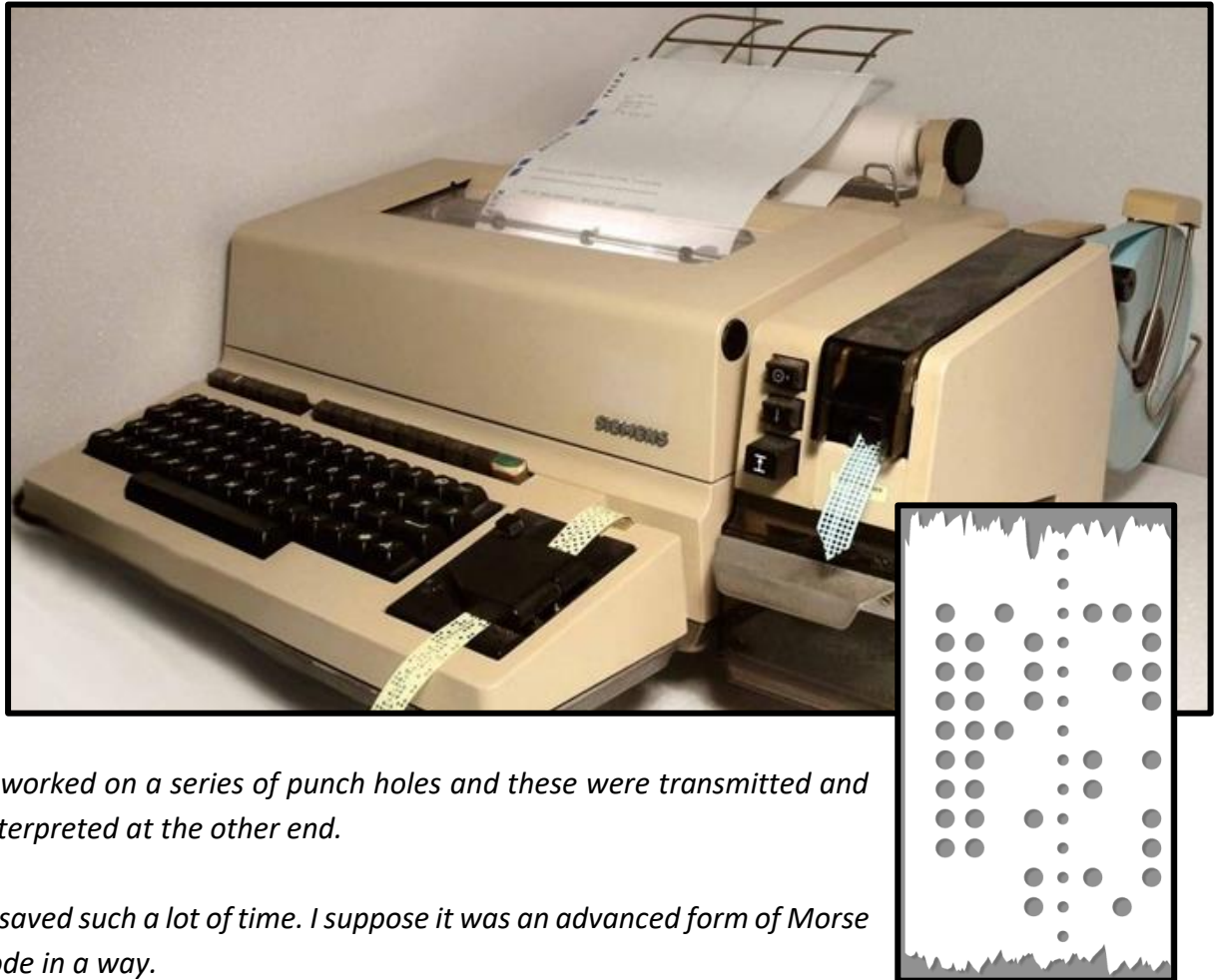
*When the telex machine came in, we thought that was the ant's pants. It took up a lot of room in the office and the 3 girls in the office couldn't stand the noise of it, so it went into Dad's office which meant there was hardly room for him.*



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*Dad could never understand it, he thought it was a waste of paper. With all these strips of paper with holes in them. I got to the stage where I was so used to punching orders and sending them off Interstate, that quite often I could actually read an order off the strip of paper.*



*It worked on a series of punch holes and these were transmitted and interpreted at the other end.*

*It saved such a lot of time. I suppose it was an advanced form of Morse code in a way.*

*I got pretty quick with it, but it probably took me about 10 or 15 minutes to do an order. Because we did have codes for our name and all that sort of thing. But every size and shoe description had to go in. So that was quite laborious.*

*Then the fax machine came in and that made it even easier because punching in all these orders on a telex machine was very slow going and rather noisy. The fax machine was just a matter of copying it off. It meant that we could send orders sooner to the distributors in Sydney and Melbourne. They'd send us a fax message of what was available in stock, and we could immediately reply as to what we wanted.*

*If we had relied on the mail, by the time we got it in Adelaide they have been sold out in Melbourne and Sydney, so it was a distinct advantage. Also, the fax could reproduce catalogues.*



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*Fordigraph hand cranked Spirit duplicator [Kimsaka  
commons.wikimedia.org]*

*It was the forerunner of the Gestetner copy machine which was also rather laborious as you had to type, on these special sheets of paper, and if you made a mistake, you had to cover up a mistake with nail polish. That was a slow process. Photocopiers came later.*



*victoriancollections.net.au*

John would do his own photography for the sales catalogues and found it cheaper to develop his own films in the darkroom he set up in his laundry.

*I used to travel Interstate quite a bit in those days and a lot of the interstate companies had computer rooms. They would connect with overseas clients and the computers were huge. When we went Interstate, we used to see the companies' computers and I thought, well, we will never have one of those, but of course it wasn't very long before we starting to talk about little personal computers. It sped up the communication between us and the suppliers interstate.*

*I can remember that the first computer I had was really more for home use and then as they developed we got a computer at work. I don't think Dad could ever understand it. They were a bit cumbersome initially. I had a personal computer at home. I can't remember what it was called, but it was very restricted on what you could do on it, but everyone was getting computers.*

*A lot of the retailers didn't really have much to do with computers. I think they were frightened of them. I still used to handwrite orders and bring them back to the office. There were no facilities in the country, particularly to be able to send orders back to Adelaide and on Friday I'd hand them in.*

*The retailers wouldn't have had a fax machine either, and to be effective, you had to have a designated phone line and they weren't prepared to do that anyway. I know we did at work, but that was mainly for our contacts interstate.*

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## Travel

*Overseas travel was something that only the rich did.*

*My grandparents, if they wanted to go to Victoria or to Western Australia, they'd get on one of the coastal ships and once a year they'd go Interstate, either to Western Australia or to Melbourne. I can't remember them ever going by train. They seemed to prefer to go by ship.*



*Ruby and Harold off to Western Australia on board ship L-R Ruth, Neil, John, Freida, Keith, Ruby, Harold, Alan  
Front: Sonia, Dean, Jill*

John's parent's first three overseas trips were on boats. Two trips to Singapore from Perth and through the Panama Canal to the UK by ship, flying back via Hong Kong and this was their first overseas flight.

*I don't think I knew any of my friends that travelled overseas apart from the migrants that came into the district and that had come from overseas to Adelaide. There were a few of my friends at Adelaide High whose parents took them back overseas to their relatives. But I was never encouraged to even think about travelling overseas.*

## Preserving Memories

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When John was younger Keith would fly occasionally to Sydney from Parafield or Gawler. John took the train to Melbourne until the early 1960s. When the Adelaide airport was opened in 1955, it was quicker to fly to Melbourne and Sydney.

John would also fly to Broken Hill but he would drive when he had to take a lot of shoe samples.

*Eventually we were flying everywhere because our business expanded into all the states. When my children came into the business, we expanded into every state except Queensland.*

*I used to be a bit frightened of flying in some of the old DC3's. I came back from Broken Hill one night - we were about 3/4 of an hour late getting into Adelaide and the lightning was striking the wings of the old Douglas DC3. My next-door neighbor who worked in Civil Aviation was in the control tower at Adelaide Airport. When we arrived, he said to me, 'I was a bit worried about you.' I said, 'don't you think I was a bit worried too?' We were jumping around all over the place with lightning striking the wings and he said, 'Yeah, but at one stage there I think you were travelling backwards. I think the wind was so strong you were hardly making any progress'. So that was a bit scary.*



*Douglas DC3, Adelaide Airport, 1963 [LH0034 WTHS]*

*Then one time I went to Tasmania for a holiday, on a Sky Master and that had been converted from a freighter, and it had no linings inside it. It had seats, and they were rattling and banging, what have you, so that was a bit scary. I had a woman sitting next to me that was petrified. But once jets came into it, it was a different story.*

*The DC3 was a bit scary particularly when you landed of course, because it used to tilt back, onto its back wheel. I did a lot of flying in the old DC3's, they were pretty reliable. They were not really fast and when the Viscounts came in that really made a difference to our flying times. The old DC3's would play up with your ears but the pressurised aircraft certainly made a difference.*



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John remembers the airlines that transited through Adelaide Airport and that Guinea Airways which flew to Broken Hill, was the main state airline. The other airlines of his time included TAA, ANA and then Ansett and Butler. O'Connor Airlines serviced Alice Springs.

Shirley and John did not fly over seas until the children were older. John's father had died and his mother was still alive, (she lived until she was 102), but she didn't like the thoughts of them going overseas.

John and Shirley went on to do five trips to New Zealand, and two to the UK on two occasions.

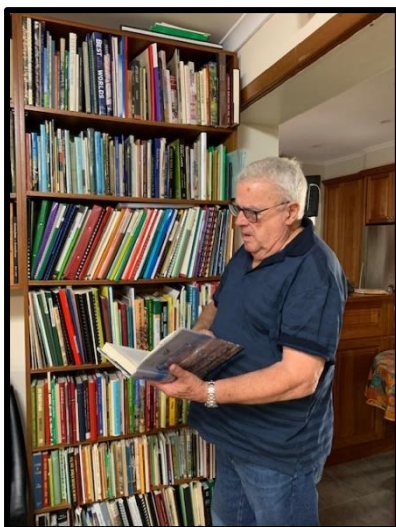


*Shirley and John in the UK 2019*

## History and geography

John's interest in history and geography was influenced by his geography teacher at Adelaide High. In his first year at Adelaide High, a couple of teachers that had been retired but then returned to teaching. Tom Brown, as deputy head, started the commercial course that John undertook and his geography teacher was Ivor G. Symons, (who had been a mayor of Mitcham).

*There were only eight boys in the geography class and he made it just so interesting for us. We were out on trips all over the place. I think at least three of those eight lads went on to become travel agents. One started Lamberto travel.*



*From the time I first started working at Blacks, I used to take off over the Christmas Holiday on my own.*

*I would organise tours by doing research before I went so I knew what was expected to see and I could search out what I thought was interesting. The same with my country work. I always made sure I never travelled the same route coming back from my country trips.*

*I used to go down back roads just because I was interested to find out about places and read up about them. And that's what started my library of books on local history I think.*

John has a collection of over 2000 books at his home.

# Preserving Memories

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*I think my interest in country music is mainly in Australian country music, particularly where it refers to a particular area. So there again the local history comes out. If I'm going on a trip I'll quite often copy off a few appropriate songs for the various places we're going to. We've been to Tamworth Country Music Festival three times but that's more an interest of Shirley's rather than mine.*

## West Torrens Historical Society

This interest in geography and history has ultimately led John to being President of the West Torrens Historical Society from 1992.

*Dad was interested in the local area because he'd lived there all his life and that's why the people at the library talked him into joining the Historical Society.*

*He wasn't a foundation member, but then he said to me, 'Well, you're interested in history, why don't you come along?' Which I did.*

*He was elected to be president of the West Torrens Historical Society. The night that he was to be inducted as the president, he took seriously ill and had an aneurysm. He wasn't expected to live, but he lived for another 10 years.*

*The next meeting they said, 'Well, obviously he can't be our president, would you fill his shoes?' I said, 'I am not really qualified, but yeah, okay, I'll do that'. And I've been there ever since.*

From his committed involvement, John has received various City of West Torrens awards:

1996 Community Service Award

2018 Anniversary Award (President of the West Torrens Historical Society for more than 25 years, John has been integral in helping preserve and record the history of West Torrens.)

2019 History Council of SA Award Nominaton



*John Trainer presenting John with  
City of West Torrens award*

*I enjoy photography as an aid to my history research. So, like most young fellas, I had a Pentax camera and associated lenses.*

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## West Torrens Area

John has watched the West Torrens area change from a predominantly rural area to an outer suburb of Adelaide. He remembers that the Thebarton area was always more industrial and Underdale, was on the edge of the suburbs.

### Market gardens

*Lockleys was all market gardens, sand hills, and open spaces until you got to the sand hills at Henley Beach. Most of the market gardeners and their children that I grew up with at the Lockleys school, if they continued in gardening moved out to places like Virginia. They sold their land as it was becoming valuable. I grew up in an area full of tomato houses and celery...and I just watched it grow into a suburb.*



*Corso market garden Lockleys [WTHS]*

*I remember my Dad saying when they first moved down to Underdale, there were only about 3 houses in the whole street. They drove through boxthorn paddocks to get to the house, so he would have seen the suburbs develop even more so than I did.*

*I remember there were a few Chinese market gardeners in the area. Two or three just down here by Rowells Road, they had galvanised iron shanties.*

*My friends, the Italian and Bulgarian market gardeners had very humble homes. They were mostly made out of wood and iron. But most of the gardeners that I knew and grew up with had reasonable homes. The Hanks had a nice home, the Sheriff's and the Lewis's all had quite substantial homes.*



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## Torrens River

Various Flood Mitigation Schemes have been put in place over the years since settlements were started along the Torrens River. When the Torrens flooded, some of the residents and market gardeners homes were inaccessible, as they understood that to avoid being flooded they would need to build their homes up on the sand hills.

*My grandfather's house in Hinton St had to be sandbagged quite a bit in the early days.*

Depending on the water height passengers would have to alight from the trams at Torrensville or Lockleys and be taken by horse and carts or high wheeled buggies to Henley Beach.

*Once Mum had to be carried off the tram at Torrensville, because the water came up too high.*



*Flooding of the Torrens River on the Henley Beach Road, 1922 [SLSA PG 280/1/39/476]*

In 1936, they built the Breakout Creek from the Torrens into the sea. Prior to that, the flood waters used to bank up behind the sand hills and eventually empty into the Patawalonga and Port Rivers.

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By the 1950's the Torrens River had been cleared of a lot of debris but John remembers there were bamboo trees and big holes where the market gardeners used to pump their water.

*As kids we weren't supposed to go down to the Torrens, we did, but it was pretty dangerous.*

When John moved into the house at Lockleys in 1966, the River Torrens at that stage was still lined with weeds and bamboo. They would collect the bamboo and use it in the garden for training the tomatoes and beans.

*It was a snake infested and pretty awful looking area. In fact, some of our friends couldn't understand why we'd choose to buy a house in this area. Within about five years they started work on the Linear Park and of course now it's quite desirable.*

## The Methodist-Uniting Church

John's mother was involved with the Methodist church in Adelaide, as was his father's mother in Melbourne. His father wasn't very religious, however, as was the convention of the time, he was sent to Sunday School.

John's mother Freida attended the Torrensville Methodist Church in Hayward Avenue, and as a child, John also attended church here.



*Torrensville Methodist hall and Church*

John later attended the youth group at Brooklyn Park Methodist Church, and he has been a member of the Methodist Church / Uniting churches over his life.

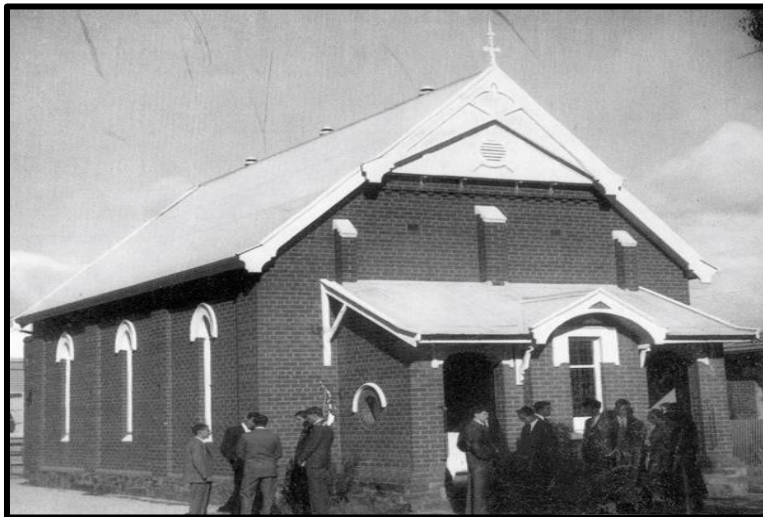
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## Choir leader and other church involvement

*I was choir leader, although I really didn't have the qualifications for such because I never learn to read music. I never played an instrument, but they were stuck for someone to take a junior choir. I had my daughter; Suzi and she was keen to sing in a choir. She was probably a little bit young, but we got the kids together and formed this choir, and I continued to conduct a choir for the next 30 years.*

*I joined a men's choir, to which I still belong. I've also done worship leading, but I've never been interested in preaching. I was involved in the youth group and both Shirley and I were involved in Christian Endeavour.*



Brooklyn Park Methodist church

*I don't know if Church life has changed my life much. I mean, you couldn't say we were staunch Methodists. Shirley's a teetotaler, but I like going out with the boys and having a drink. There are some of the rigid rules and regulations of the Methodist Church that didn't suit me.*

*The Brooklyn Park Church was fairly laidback, and we all had similar interests. It didn't handicap us in enjoying life. We used to, even in the choir, go out for dinners and have a really good time. Had a lot of fun and made a lot of friends.*



1965 Church concert at Brooklyn Park. Shirley facing John



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*Both my children grew up in the church. My daughter is still involved. She's got a nice singing voice and she is still involved in the church. My son started in a youth band as a 6-year-old, playing the drums. He still plays today and he'd be the first to admit that his experiences in his younger days in the church, was a good foundation for him. He is not a regular churchgoer now, but I'd say he's a good Christian.*

*One of our grandchildren sang in the Children's Choir and the other two went to church schools and although they are not regular churchgoers, they don't feel out of place when they come to Church.*

## Retirement

John and Shirley are now retired and spend time quilting (Shirley), researching (John), and assisting at various church and historical society events, as well as spending time with their children and grandchildren.

Michael has property in the Riverland and John and Shirley have a caravan set up there to be able to enjoy the sunshine and relaxed country life.

John is still very active in the church, the choir and the West Torrens Historical Society.



**Date:** 20 January 2021

**Location:** Lockleys